"…new conversations, new ideas…"; mentoring trainee teachers within Ireland's further education and training sector.

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of initial teacher education (ITE) mentors in the further education and training (FET) sector in Ireland. The broader literature suggests mentors play a vital role in the professional formation of trainee teachers during ITE. However, trainee teachers report high variances within mentoring relationships. It seems mentors are willing, but not always able to perform all elements within this multifaceted role. At present, the voice of mentors in FET are underrepresented within Irish research. This interpretivist phenomenological analysis (IPA) study aimed to address this gap, by gathering first-hand mentoring experiences, through in-depth semi-structured interviews with three participants. To go beyond individual realities, to expose visible and invisible social structures, influencing and restricting the practices of mentors, this study applied Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital. Four themes emerged from the analysis: willingness to mentor, the mentor - placement tutor connection, mentoring: an extension of the teacher role, mentoring relationships and functions. The findings of this small-scale study reveal mentors intentionally and voluntarily open their classrooms to trainee teachers: to develop their own practices, to support the next generation of teachers, and to recruit new staff. They perform a wide range of functions in response to the needs of their trainee teachers. Yet, it emerged, mentors casually and informally perform the role, without training and without allocated time, which seems to prevent some mentors from personally benefitting. The study's recommendations outline multiple avenues in which to repay the goodwill of these mentors.

Keywords: mentor, mentoring, initial teacher education, further education and training sector, trainee teacher, student teacher

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List of Irish language words

Céim	The standards for Initial Teacher Education
Droichead	Induction process for teachers
Treoraí	The experienced teacher who supports the trainee teachers

List of Abbreviations

BERA	British Education Research Association
CPD	Continued Professional Development
EA	External Authenticator
ETB	Education and Training Boards
FET	Further Education and Training Sector
HEI	Higher Education Institute
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
NCI	National College of Ireland
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
TT	Trainee Teacher
SPWG	School Placement Working Group
PT	Placement Tutor
QA	Quality Assurance
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the lived experiences of initial teacher education mentors within the further education and training sector in the Republic of Ireland. Overall, the aim of this Interpretivist Phenomenological Analysis study, is to build a clearer picture of current mentoring practices in this context. The study applies Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital as a lens to analyse the stories of the mentors. It is hoped this analysis will enable a deeper understanding of the lifeworld of mentors by exposing specific attitudes, behaviours, functions, motivations, needs, and relationships. This study is influenced by both my professional experiences and interests. Chapter 1 briefly provides an overview of the research topic and background. It outlines the rationale for why it was chosen, and what the study seeks to achieve and how. Next, the chapter gives an account of the methodology and theoretical framework. Lastly, the chapter provides the structure for the overall dissertation.

1.2 Background and Context

According to the Teaching Council, "…The term 'further education' embraces education and training which usually occurs outside of post-primary schooling, but which is not part of the third-level system…" (Teaching Council, 2011a, p.2). Rather than illustrating the uniqueness of the further education and training (FET) sector, this definition focuses on what it is not, by contrasting it with other sectors of education. Some believe this ill-definition has impacted the sector's status (Grummel & Murray, 2015; O'Neill & Fitzsimons, 2019). Interestingly, some suggest this lack of definition is rooted in its diversity, an issue

which has been identified within the UK FE sector also (Ingleby & Hunt, 2008; McGuinness et al., 2014).

Under the Education and Training Boards Act of 2013, the FET sector became a distinct and official sector in the Irish education system (DES, 2013). However, the origins of this sector can be traced back as far as 1889. The FET sector provides programmes which align to the needs of the labour market, and those that address the needs of the community (McGuinness et al., 2014). These differing needs are reflected within the three core pillars of the current FET strategy which are: building skills, fostering inclusion, and facilitating pathways (SOLAS, 2020). According to recent figures, the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETB)s deliver education and training to around 200,000 learners annually (ibid). According to SOLAS, "FET is for everyone" (ibid, p.8), learners include school leavers, lifelong learners, returners, essentially anyone over 16, with the exception of Youthreach. To cater for the needs of these various groups, the range of courses are broad, spanning apprenticeships, traineeships, post leaving certificate courses, and community and adult education. Course delivery options also respond to the diverse needs of FET learners, and therefore include part-time, full-time, evening, and blended learning. While some courses are unaccredited, many are accredited by quality and qualifications Ireland (QQI), ranging from Level 1 to Level 6 within the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Educators within this sector have varied qualifications, some are registered with the Teaching Council under Route 3 – further education, some under Route 2 - post-primary, while others, although recognised as experts within their fields, have unqualified teacher status (Grummel & Murray, 2015).

This sector has undergone huge transformation since becoming a distinct sector ten years ago and continues to evolve with a new funding model announced recently (DFHERIS, 2022), and new tertiary programmes enabling learners to start a degree in a further education institute (DFHERIS, 2023).

The Teaching Council and initial teacher education (ITE)

Since 2014, all teachers in Ireland are required to complete a teaching qualification in order to register with the Teaching Council. The Teaching Council was originally established in 2006 "…to promote teaching as a profession at primary and post-primary levels..."(Teaching Council, 2007, p.11). Later, the Teaching Council expanded its remit to include the FET sector. However, this last-minute bolt-on seems to have resulted in confusing consequences. In some reports the sector is specifically named, while in others, it is not. According to the Teaching Council (2011b), ITE documents apply to all sectors. However, recent changes to programme structures only apply to primary and post-primary sectors (Teaching Council, 2021). This has resulted in a situation where the current guidelines do not name the FET sector, and do not reflect the FET ITE structures. Leading some to question the remit and relevance of the guidelines within the FET sector.

One of the key roles identified by the Teaching Council within teaching placements, is that of the experienced teacher who supports the trainee teacher. This role has recently been renamed to Treoraí, the Irish language word for guide, and replaces the previous term, Co-operating teacher (Teaching Council, 2021). As alluded to by some, these terms seem to include elements of the role, but do not necessarily encompass the more modern and collaborative nature of how teachers nowadays support trainee teachers (Clarke et al., 2014). Indeed, Clutterbuck (2004) includes the function of guide as one of four mentoring behaviours. However, the Teaching Council recommend Treoraí encourage critical reflection,

a function that seems closer aligned with Clutterbuck's (2004) coach function. For this reason, this study recognises the expansive developmental role of the experienced teacher, as not just a guide, but as a mentor. Importantly to note, within Ireland, this critical role in ITE is based on goodwill rather than being a paid position.

Currently, there is no national training for ITE mentors. Instead, within the placement guidelines, the Teaching Council recommends Higher Education Institutes (HEI)s develop continued professional development (CPD) training for mentors (Teaching Council, 2013; 2021). In 2018, the School Placement in Initial Teacher Education report (Hall et al., 2018) identified the lack of mentor training and resourcing, an issue. A recommendation of the report suggested the Teaching Council should gather a working group, who would address the enactment of the placement guidelines policy, with regards to "…roles, responsibilities, resources, and CPD…" (Hall et al., 2018, p.17). Following its publication, the School Placement Working Group (SPWG) was set-up to cost a national professional training programme for ITE mentors (Teaching Council, 2019). Unfortunately, the findings of this group are yet to be published as the reporting deadline has been revised by the Teaching Council (2022). Of importance, although the School Placement in Initial Teacher Education report (Hall et al., 2018) was commissioned by the Teaching Council, it only encompassed primary and post-primary ITE placements. Therefore, some might wonder when the findings of the group are published, if they will apply and/or be relevant within the FET sector.

This section gave a brief background to contextualise my study within the FET sector. Alongside illustrating the expansive and diverse nature of the sector, it also outlined the sector's complicated relationship with the Teaching Council. And finally, alluded to the current lack of training and resourcing within the mentor role.

1.3 Rationale and Origin

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of mentors in the further education and training sector in the Republic of Ireland. The stimulus for this study arose from my role as placement co-ordinator on an ITE programme for Further Education teachers. Within this role, I developed internal policies and procedures for the placement module. This module is recognised within the literature as highly significant within ITE, as it gives trainee teachers the opportunity to integrate theory and research with practice (Hall et al., 2018). One element of the role was my responsibility for updating and sharing the placement handbook, with students, mentors, trainee teachers, and principals. This handbook was heavily informed by the publications of the Teaching Council of Ireland (2013; 2017a; 2021). As such, the handbook outlines placement phases, placement hours, roles, and responsibilities. Within this handbook, the mentor role is specifically outlined, in accordance with the Teaching Council documentation (2013; 2021) (Appendix i).

Through professional conversations with colleagues and trainee teachers, I started developing a concern around the mentor role. Although on paper all trainee teachers had a named mentor, and therefore should have experienced a similar placement experience, the stories from the trainee teachers highlighted a wide variance in mentoring. After engaging with research on ITE placements, I realised this was a complicated issue that spanned beyond my institute's programme, beyond the FET sector into primary, post-primary and across the globe (Dunning et al., 2011; Hall et al., 2018; O'Sullivan & Ó Conaill, 2022). The literature seemed to suggest, mentors are often willing, but not always able to perform all elements within this multifaceted role (Chambers et al., 2012; Farrell, 2020).

From personal experience, I could relate to the frustrations of the trainee teacher who may have felt under supported or over scrutinised by their mentor (Betteney et al., 2018;

Murphy, 2019; O'Grady et al., 2018). As I too had stood in their shoes, while completing an ITE programme in primary teaching. At the same time, I also understood the additional workload of the mentor role (Husband, 2020; McDonough, 2018), having been a mentor to trainee teachers, newly qualified teachers, and my peers in the UK. The resounding message from across many studies was that mentors are not adequately trained for the role (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015; Manning & Hobson, 2017; Richard & Walsh, 2019; Savory & Glasson, 2009). This surprised and shocked me. Whilst teaching in the UK, I attended many mentor education training courses and events. Although admittedly, some were higher quality than others. It was at this point, I suggested our institute should run CPD training for the mentors, which is advocated by the Teaching Council (2013; 2021). While my colleagues supported the proposed training, their major concern was that much of the research on ITE related to the primary and post-primary sectors in Ireland. And focused on the trainee teacher's perspective. So instead, my colleagues recommended first getting a clearer picture of the present mentoring landscape in the FET sector in Ireland, to really understand the present needs of the mentors (Ingleby & Hunt, 2008; Lesham, 2012; Savory & Glasson, 2009).

Consequently, this study was born out of these collegial conversations and my passion for mentoring. Like Clutterbuck (2004), I also believe, everyone needs a mentor. For me, mentoring has helped me process feedback, develop my self-reflection, encouraged mindfulness, supported proactiveness, and prepare for new opportunities. Within each phase of my life, success has looked different. Mentoring has helped me navigate and question why. However, through my conversations with trainee teachers, I realise not everyone is benefitting from their mentoring relationships (Hobson et al., 2009). Although my role has since changed within the institute, I hope to collaborate on future projects that support and enhance the ITE programme. In particular, my aim for this study is to gather a

fresh insight into the issue and identify actionable findings for my institute. These findings, will be related to the wider mentoring literature, thus strengthening their transferability to other institutes and sectors too (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

1.4 Purpose and Significance

Through this study, I aim to develop a deep insight into experiences of mentors in Ireland. And to gain clarity on the breadth and depth of the role from the mentor's perspective. Thus far, this role has been underrepresented within Irish research. By gathering first-hand stories from mentors, this study addresses the dearth in research and attempts to discard distortions and assumptions about the role. Consequently, this research adds to the broader mentor education literature. The research question which lies at the heart of this study is as follows:

> *How do mentors of trainee teachers in the Irish Further Education and Training sector conceptualise and experience their role?*

According to Thomas (2013), a research question should be precise and doable. Creswell and Creswell (2018), propose a good qualitative research question should seek to explore. My question looks specifically at the mentor role, and even more particularly, at the mentor role within the FET sector in Ireland. Through semi-structured interviews, I aimed to explore and discover their views and experiences within the role and in doing so, answer this question. The following sub-questions focused the research:

> Q1. What motivates experienced teachers to act as mentors for trainee teachers in further education?
>
> Q2. How do mentors understand their role?
>
> Q3. How do mentors experience their relationship with trainee teachers?

Q4. Does mentoring trainee teachers impact the teaching practices of mentors?

Q5. How do mentors make sense of their relationship with the placement tutor?

Personal, institutional, and the wider significance

I have also identified broader outcomes for the study beyond the aims outlined above. At a personal level, I hope this study impacts my professional practices by challenging my assumptions and expanding my understanding of mentoring, the mentor role, and the FET sector. At an institutional level, I envision this research contributing to significant adaptions to the ITE programme. In particular, I would like to see the mentor voices reflected within the course handbook, module content, and revalidation documents. For the participants, I would like them to feel respected and heard. I aimed to make the experience a positive one and to actively involve them in the study by sharing my findings and gathering feedback. For mentors in the FET sector, it is my intention to build upon the connections made during this study and inspire future collaborative projects. Beyond my institute, I hope the findings will be relevant and transferable to other HEIs running similar programmes. From a social contribution point-of-view, according to Basu (2020), research in the field of education has the capacity to identify and analyse needs and thereby suggest possible solutions that impact the well-being of society. My aim for this study is to inspire others to also explore and develop the collective understanding of mentoring relationships, so many more can reap the rewards of this form of professional development.

1.5 Methodology and Theoretical Concepts

The methodological framework for this study is Interpretivist Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This approach was identified as the most appropriate methodology to explore the lived experiences of mentors in the FET sector in Ireland. The IPA methodology guided

decisions at each stage of this research study. This interpretivist approach compliments research in the social sciences as phenomenology seeks to explore the phenomenon rather than explain it (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To adequately build a relationship and enter the lifeworld of the three participants, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews reflecting the idiographic mode of inquiry used within IPA studies (Ayres, 2008). This commitment to highlight uniqueness of experiences is reflected within the data analysis and the findings. My subjective interpretations as a partial insider, are recognised and embraced by the hermeneutic influences within IPA (Smith et al., 2009). This hermeneutic circle is reflected within the data analysis and findings. Alongside IPA, the study was also framed by Bourdieu's (1990) theories of habitus, field, and capital. These thinking tools are often applied to qualitative educational research studies. Within this study, Bourdieu's (1990) theory will be used as a lens to support my interpretations of the mentors' experiences and suggest explanations for attitudes, behaviours, functions, motivations, needs, and relationships (Thomas, 2013).

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation contains five chapters in total. Following on from this chapter, is the literature review which gives an overview of relevant literature on mentoring, mentoring in Initial Teacher Education, and mentoring in the FET sector. For a wider perspective, mentoring within other teaching contexts are also considered. Alongside the mentoring literature, Bourdieu's theoretical framework of habitus, field, and capital are introduced and related to this study. Chapter Three presents an in-depth look at the IPA research tradition. The rationale for choosing this methodology to research the experiences of mentors is outlined, as is the participant snowball selection strategy, semi-structured interview process and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents the final four themes emerging from

analysis of interview literature, which are a combination of the voices of the three participants, alongside my interpretations. These findings are then brought into dialogue with the work of others in the domain. Chapter Five provides a conclusion to the study, the research questions are addressed individually, the main findings are summarised, and the implications outlined.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of this research study to uncover the voices of mentors within the FET sector. It has outlined why the topic was chosen, discussed the background for the research, indicated why this topic is important, and introduced the chosen research methodology. The following chapter delves into the literature on the topic of mentoring.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter Two aims to explore the literature relating to mentoring within education. This topic has been studied from various angles by educational researchers for decades. The review presents the perspectives of trainee teachers, mentors, and at times, principals, course directors, and placement tutors. My study seeks to build upon this body of research, particularly from the lens of the mentor within the FET sector in Ireland. Firstly, the review begins by outlining sponsorship and developmental mentoring conceptions. Next, the many and varied functions and approaches to mentoring are illuminated. After which, mentoring relationships become the focus, particularly regarding evolution and collaboration. And finally, mentoring conceptions specific to teacher education are explored. Within the main body of the review, mentoring is first touched upon within the context of international initial teacher education and induction. Leading on from this broad overview, initial teacher education within Ireland's primary and post-primary sectors become the focus. Continuing-on from this, the review's gaze becomes narrower yet again, to focus on initial teacher education in the FET sector. The third part of the review summarises the works of Bourdieu and explains how his concepts of habitus, field, and capital, connect with this study. Finally, the concluding section summarises the most salient points.

2.2 Conceptualising Mentoring

While mentoring can be a one-to-one relationship (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995). Others report nontraditional forms of mentoring, where mentors meet with more than one mentee at a time. Such as group, intrateam, and interteam mentoring (Ragins & Kram, 2008). It seems at times a mentor may be older, or perhaps just a more experienced

colleague, or even a peer. Indeed, an individual may have one or multiple mentoring relationships at any one time (Higgins & Kram, 2001). In a sense, each mentoring relationship is unique, and is influenced by the personal histories and needs of the mentee and mentor. However, central to mentoring is the context and culture in which it takes place (Clutterbuck, 2004). Mentoring relationships may be informal or connected to a formal programme, which in turn, may be influenced by policy (ibid). A mismatch between mentoring conceptions implied within policy and personal conceptions, has been identified as a source of tension for mentors (Orland-Barak & Klein, 2005).

Given this description, it can be argued, mentoring is an expansive and flexible domain (Cove et al., 2007). Although mentoring is not a new concept, having featured in Greek mythology, it continues to be refined (Ragins & Kram, 2008). And, as such, seems to lack a shared understanding (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002; Savory & Glasson, 2009). Contributing to the confusion, are the many ways mentoring is defined in terms of conception, functions, model, relationship, style, and so on. It is interesting to note, that there are other developmental roles, such as coach and counsellor, which have cross-over behaviours associated with mentoring (Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). Indeed, Rose and Best (2005) highlight the supervisor role, within health science education programmes, as a professional development role which overlaps with that of the mentor. Similar to the mentor role, they allude to the supervisor role also lacking clear definition. Like a mentor, they suggest a supervisor is a more experienced colleague. Importantly, they point out, the supervisor role does not include an assessment function, and is a separate role to that of a line manager. Mentoring is often viewed in the literature as a non-judgemental developmental relationship (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). In contrast, despite the seemingly non-evaluative role of the supervisor, some believe the medical roots of this term

has resulted in a lasting association with surveillance and assessment (Lennox et al., 2008). Alongside, this historical view, some suggest the role of the supervisor is narrower than that of the mentor and is more typically associated with "socialisation" (Walkington, 2005). In fact, others have found learning is one-way in supervisory relationships, from the supervisor to the mentee (Clarke et al., 2014). Again, Rose and Best (2005) argue this apprenticeship model of learning within supervisory relationships, is in fact historical. Instead, they suggest that modern supervisory relationships, like mentoring relationships, emphasise mutual learning. However, within the Irish education context, it seems the term supervisor may be more strongly associated with the role of the university placement tutor rather than the mentor (Dunning et al., 2011; Farrell, 2020). As outlined, although there are many similarities between the roles, it seems they continue to be conceptualised and perhaps even enacted differently.

Considering mentoring's lack of shared understanding, it seems essential to outline and define a mentoring conception, which is "…an internally coherent set of beliefs about the goals, sources and nature of mentored learning to teach…" (Van Ginkel et al., 2016, p. 4). The following section describes two distinct mentoring conceptions. The first conception is closely associated with Kram's (1983) model of the phases of mentor relationships. Her seminal research explored mentoring relationships within an American organisation. The findings were based on two-rounds of two-hour interviews, collected across 18 mentor-mentee relationships. For the purpose of this study, Kram's (1983) mentoring conception will be referred to as sponsorship mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2004). Alongside Kram, this study also applies Clutterbuck's (2004) work, which is a culmination of multiple research projects dating back over the last 30 plus years. This conception is known as developmental mentoring. Together, these mentoring conceptions offer useful insights into mentor

attitudes, behaviours, functions, motivations, needs, and relationships. Therefore, this study will draw upon both conceptualisations as a lens in which to explore mentors' experiences.

Developmental and sponsorship mentoring conceptions

Fundamental to mentor role enactment, is the underlying mentoring conception. According to Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002), sponsorship mentoring evolved in North America and is typically career-orientated support. The relationship is guided by the mentor who is more senior, and usually older than the protégé. In contrast, Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) suggest developmental mentoring emerged from Europe. It prioritises mentee personal growth, and yet can include career support too.

Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995) define developmental mentoring as "…off-line help from one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking". This definition highlights several important elements within their conceptualisation of developmental mentoring. Firstly, key to developmental mentoring, is that mentors are chosen in connection to their experience, rather than seniority. This shift from hierarchical relationships reduces the power imbalance between the mentor and the mentee. Hence, they describe mentoring as "off-line". Mentoring is a form of "help" which encompasses many functions. These are performed by the mentor, in response to both the personal and professional needs of the mentee. Mentoring is "one person to another" rather than a group situation. And finally, "significant transitions" represent the exchange system within the relationship. Of note, this system is reciprocal in a developmental mentoring relationship.

Functions and approaches

Mentoring conceptions can influence the roles and behaviours of mentors. Within the sponsorship mentoring conception, Kram's (1983) research identified two overarching functions performed by the mentor. These included career and psychosocial functions. Indeed, Chambers et al., (2012) used Kram's research (1985), to outline the wide and often varied career functions mentors perform to support the professional development of their trainee teacher. According to Ragins and Kram (2008), career and psychosocial functions have different origins and are dependent on the mentor and the relationship the pair develop. Ali and Adel's (2020) mixed-method study drew upon the psychosocial mentoring functions identified by Kram (1985), to explore the impact mentoring has on a teachers' professional development. Importantly, Ragins and Kram's (2008) research illustrates how some relationships emphasise one function, while others encompassed both.

Clutterbuck (2004) identified four approaches associated within the developmental mentoring conception. These are coach, networker, guardian, and counsellor. Figure 1, adapted from Clutterbuck (2004, p.16-19), illustrates the four approaches and depicts developmental mentoring as the diamond spanning across all four quadrants. According to Clutterbuck (2004), developmental mentoring is the combined application of all four approaches, at various stages of the relationship, and in response to the changing needs of the mentee.

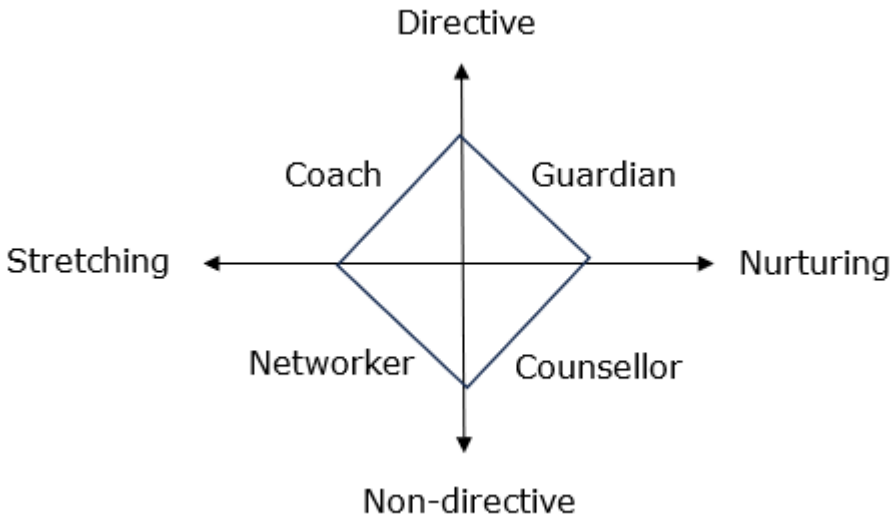

Figure 1: The dimensions and approaches within developmental mentoring

In fact, Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002) argue the relationships identified by Kram (1983), are closest aligned to that of a coach, rather than a mentor. Again, Kram's (1983) notion that a mentoring relationship may address only one type of mentee need, is incongruous with the developmental mentoring conception.

Phases of mentoring relationships

Another significant aspect of mentoring which was identified by Kram (1983), was the evolution of mentoring relationships. Within her research, she identified four distinct phases within the mentoring relationship: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. These phases are marked by distinct functions, experiences, and interactions. Kram's (1983) model is used within the theoretical framework of Mellon's (2023) narrative research, in order to understand how the mentoring relationships change and develop over placement. Similarly, Hallam et al.,'s (2012) case study research draws on Kram's (1983) work to highlight the value in tracing mentoring relationships over time.

However, Clutterbuck (2004) argued that Kram's (1983) relationship phases were more indicative of sponsorship mentoring, as her research included hierarchical relationships. For this reason, Clutterbuck (2004) identified stages in-line with developmental mentoring. These stages include: the start, the middle, dissolving the relationship, and restarting. He argues these stages differ significantly to Kram's findings, in terms of timings, behaviours, and interactions.

Dimensions of collaboration

Another significant aspect of mentoring is collaboration. Clutterbuck (2004) perceives collaboration along two dimensions, which are represented within Figure 1. On the one hand, he defines the relationship in terms of: who's in charge? This dimension is depicted as a continuum from directive, where the mentor is in charge, to non-directive, whereby the mentor is reactive to the mentee's needs. An effective developmental relationship is typically associated with highly proactive mentees, and mentors who are relatively passive (ibid). Klasen and Clutterbuck argue mentoring should facilitate mentees to "learn how to learn", rather than the mentee passively receiving information through transmission (2002, p.44). The second dimension identified by Clutterbuck (2004), defines the mentoring relationship in terms of the mentee's individual needs. This dimension is inclusive of both intellectual and emotional needs, from stretching to nurturing. Relationships that primarily focus on learning or challenge, can be positioned towards the stretching end of the spectrum. Whereas, a relationship that focuses on support, can be placed towards the nurturing end of the continuum. He argues, an effective mentoring relationship addresses both needs. The mentor should move along both dimensions, in any direction, in response to their mentee's needs (ibid). Indeed, this model is used within

Manning and Hobson's (2017) study, to identify, directive versus non-directive mentoring relationships.

Significantly, Clutterbuck (2004) argues developmental mentoring is strongly associated with collaboration and enables both parties to learn. Clutterbuck maintains that relationships that do not have positive outcomes for both parties, may not have longevity. As mentioned previously, hierarchical relationships have been identified as incompatible with developmental mentoring (Hobson, 2002; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002). Indeed, Kram's (1983) research recognised that being a mentor may present conflicting objectives. And that, a mentor may in fact feel threatened by the 'rising star' mentee. From the mentee's perspective, openness might be limited for fear sharing information might impact progression. As such, mutual learning may not occur.

Mentoring conceptions specific to teacher education

While the mentoring conceptions, functions, and roles, identified by both Kram and Clutterbuck, support much of the findings within this study, their mentoring conceptions are not specific to teacher education. Therefore, to further bolster the findings within this study, mentoring conceptions by Clarke et al., (2014) have also been applied. Indeed, Hall et al., (2018) illustrate the historical developments within the role of the mentor, by drawing on this influential research. The mentoring conceptions identified by Clarke et al., (2014), vary in terms of functions and the degree of collaboration.

Towards the lowest end of the continuum of collaboration, is the classroom placeholder mentoring conception (Clarke et al., 2014). Within this conception, the mentor leaves the classroom assuming the trainee teacher will learn by immersion, with minimum collaboration. Further along the continuum, is the supervisor of practica (ibid). The mentor

in this conception proactively manages the relationship, the learning is one directional. Next, along the continuum, is the teacher educator (ibid). This conception is associated with two-way learning, as mentors encourage trainee teachers to connect theory with practice. However, some suggest this role more closely aligns with that of the placement tutor, than mentor (Farrell, 2020). Instead, Farrell (2020) extends the mentoring conceptions identified by Clarke et al., (2014), to include the co-inquirer mentoring conception. This conception proposes both mentor and the mentee can influence one another's practices. According to Clarke et al., (ibid), for collaboration to be genuine, permission is sought and granted by both parties, known as the invited space.

Alongside identifying mentoring conceptions, Clarke et al., (2014) unpicked the functions performed by mentors. From their research, eleven categories of participation were identified: Providers of Feedback, Gatekeepers of the Profession, Modelers of Practice, Supporters of Reflection, Gleaners of Knowledge, Purveyors of Context, Conveners of Relation, Agents of Socialization, Advocates of the Practical, Abiders of Change, and Teachers of Children. Indeed, Hall et al., (2019) draws on these functions in relation to their participant's mentoring experiences.

As others have done, this study includes the work of Clarke et al., (2014), as a scaffold to gleam further insights into attitudes, behaviours, functions, motivations, needs, and relationships within mentoring. These mentoring conceptions are particularly suited to this study, as they were developed in relation to teacher education, and utilise language which is common to most practitioners. Complimentary to these studies, are the aforementioned works of Clutterbuck (2004) and Kram (1983). As alluded to, there are many parallels that can be drawn between the studies. And, as such, they will be used in

tandem to gain a deeper insight into the experiences of the participants. The next section gives a broad overview of mentoring within ITE and induction.

2.3 Mentoring within ITE and induction

In a sense, it is argued that mentors work across multiple realities with multiple boundaries, one in which they are teachers of students, and another in which they are teacher educators (Betteney et al., 2018). Within the literature, mentors are recognised as agents who induct trainee teachers into social norms and support the reproduction of behaviours (Aderibigbe et al., 2014). Their motivations can be broadly categorised into others-orientated motives, self-orientated motives, and at times both (Van Ginkel et al., 2016). Mentoring is associated with numerous potential benefits, particularly for trainee teachers, although some have found mentors benefit from the process too (Aderibigbe et al., 2014; Bowman, 2014). In line with broader research (Kram, 1983), mentoring relationships seem to evolve and change as placement progresses (Hallam et al., 2012). However, mentoring has limits and may at times become harmful. Indeed, tensions can result in emotional and personal struggles for mentors and the trainee teacher (Betteney et al., 2018; Kennedy, 2005; McDonough, 2018), leading to replication of practice rather than innovation (Hobson et al., 2009; Lesham, 2012). Some suggest training can reduce tensions and misunderstandings surrounding roles (Lesham, 2012). And importantly, it seems mentors that have been trained are more likely to use developmental mentoring (Hobson et al., 2009).

From the international mentoring literature across ITE and induction, we see mentors perform multiple roles and multiple functions simultaneously. Mentors have varied motivations for doing the role, alongside the trainee teacher they too may benefit from the

process. However, mentoring can have negative side effects for the mentee and the mentor. Mentor education training seems to support the developmental and positive sides of mentoring. These findings give a glimpse into mentoring at an international level. However, as alluded to, mentoring is context specific and influenced by culture, so we must be cautious when drawing conclusions based on findings from other sectors and jurisdictions (Betteney et al., 2018). The next section looks more specifically at mentoring practices within the Irish context, and as such, these findings should hold more relevance and transferability to the FET sector in Ireland.

2.4 Mentoring within ITE in Ireland's primary and post-primary sectors

This section draws upon mentoring research in the primary and post-primary sectors in Ireland. Like the FET sector, these teachers must also complete the placement module during ITE. While there is much to be learned by embracing research within these sectors, placement requirements can vary from the FET sector. Firstly, within the primary and post-primary sectors, placements are arranged on behalf of the trainee teacher. Whereas FET trainee teachers typically arrange their own placement. Secondly, primary and post-primary trainee teachers are required to complete placement across a minimum of two settings. While FET trainee teachers may complete their full placement in one setting. Thirdly, primary and post-primary trainee teachers are required to complete placement for either 24 or 30 weeks, depending on the award type. However, typically FET teachers complete 130 hours on placement. These variations are important to bear in mind, as they may impact particularly on the mentor- trainee teacher relationship. For that reason, transferability of findings cannot be assumed, and should be cautiously applied between sectors.

Mentors have been found to play a vital role in the professional formation of trainee teachers in Ireland (Hall et al., 2019; O'Grady et al., 2018). However, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the absence of national training, there seems to be considerable variation in the interpretation and performance of the mentor role. Research which seems to encapsulate this variance is O'Sullivan and Ó Conaill's (2022) IPA study. Through semi-structured interviews with seven mentors, they found the mentor role was influenced and shaped by personal understandings and past experiences. Likewise, Farrell (2020) and Hall et al., (2018) found Irish mentors are willing, but underprepared to perform all elements within this multifaceted role. In fact, a study commissioned by the Teaching Council of Ireland (Hall et al., 2018), found that only half of mentors seemed aware of the Teaching Council of Ireland's school placement guidelines and only 29% agreed the guidelines relating to the role were helpful. This general unawareness of national policies, alongside an absence of national mentor training, has led many to identify a mismatch between policy documents and current mentoring practices (Dunning et al., 2011; Farrell, 2020; O'Grady et al., 2018; O'Sullivan & Ó Conaill, 2022; Richard & Walsh, 2019).

One area which seems to illustrate this policy-practice mismatch, is mentor feedback. A longitudinal study (Hall et al., 2019) focusing on mentoring and assessment within primary and post-primary ITE placements, found feedback was highly valued by trainee teachers. However, significantly, the untimetabled nature of the mentor role seems to have led to inconsistencies in this feedback (Hall et al., 2018; O'Sullivan & Ó Conaill, 2022). Interestingly, within the primary and post-primary sectors, we see mentors are willing to give placement tutors feedback about the trainee teacher, but only when asked (Hall et al., 2018). Yet at the same time, Hall et al., (2019) found schools were reluctant to contribute to the grading process. This confusing situation seems to suggest a lack of clarity around the mentor role. It

also reminds us of the voluntary nature of the role. And, as such, demands cannot be made of mentors. However, the lack of training, and the untimetabled nature of the role, seem to also have a part to play.

This practice-policy divide is further reflected within the highly variable mentor-trainee teacher relationships. Although it seems many mentoring relationships are positive, there is a growing body of research that illustrates how some relationships are, in fact, dysfunctional. A study which exposes and raises the awareness of this issue, was conducted by O'Grady et al., (2018). This study interviewed twelve trainee teachers, eight seemed to have experienced dysfunctional mentoring relationships, and so were included in the findings. The professional opinions of these trainee teachers were found to be suppressed by "biting one's lip" and blending in, rather than challenging the practices of their mentor (O'Grady et al., 2018, p.377). These findings unfortunately do not seem to reflect the "collaborative" and "sensitive" mentoring approaches envisioned within the placement guidelines (Teaching Council, 2021, p.20). Furthermore, O'Grady et al., (2018) suggests these dysfunctional relationships may stem from the informal selection and appointment process of mentors, in which the HEI has no oversight. Once again, this finding seems to relate to the unpaid and voluntary nature of the role, while also drawing attention to areas of conflict within the partnership approach to placement.

Notably, dysfunctional relationships also impact mentors. Young and MacPhail's (2016) study examined how mentors support trainee teachers during placement. Their findings were drawn from journals, interviews, and a focus group. This thorough study found mentors experienced personality clashes, unmotivated trainee teachers, and conflict due to differences in role perceptions. Similarly, other studies highlight the difficulties encountered by mentors, including trainee teachers that are closed to observations and feedback (Farrell,

2020; O'Sullivan & Ó Conaill, 2022). So, while the placement guidelines specifically refer to observations and feedback (Teaching Council, 2013; 2021), we see in practice, mentors cannot perform these functions without permission from the trainee teacher. Again, this policy-practice mismatch illustrates that instead of collaborative mentoring relationships, some are experiencing dysfunctional ones, which oppress the professional identities of trainee teachers, and prevent mentors from performing their role. The literature seems to suggest, these issues stem from role uncertainty, lack of training, and an imbalance within the partnership approach.

The policy-practice gap is outlined within the findings of the extensive ITE placement report prepared by Hall et al., (2018). Unsurprisingly, the recommendations include further resourcing for the mentor role, role clarification, and training for ITE mentors. One recommendation is the development of boundary spanning roles to enable mentors to work across schools and HEIs. While the recommendation has proven successful in other jurisdictions, and indeed seems to hold merit as it reflects the partnership approach and would no doubt support collaboration between partners. However, others warn against applying international processes, without fully considering country contexts and systems (Betteney et al., 2018). This recommendation, alongside multiple others, seems to address many of the issues outlined within this section. Unfortunately, thus far, additional resources and training have not yet been announced. Nor indeed, as previously mentioned, have the findings of the School Placement Working Group (SPWG). A surprising finding within the report prepared by Hall et al., (2018), is how mentors apply induction mentor training, to their ITE mentor role (Hall et al., 2018). Within the induction process, Droichead, mentors receive training by the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT). However, the

induction process and its associated mentor training are not currently extended to the FET sector (Teaching Council, 2017b).

The range of research studies illustrated in this section, give a clear, current, and robust view on mentoring within the primary and post-primary sectors in Ireland. The studies illustrate the lack of clarity around the mentor role. This seems hampered by an unawareness of the relevant Teaching Council documents. Alongside this, is the absence of national mentor training. This has led to a situation where mentors do not seem clear on what to do, or even how to do it. This uncertainty seems to be reflected within the varying feedback and dysfunctional mentoring relationships. While we eagerly await the findings of the SWPG, we also wonder if the findings will apply to the FET sector. Next, we zoom in on the FET sector and illustrate how some of the findings from this section overlap, and so are relevant and can be cautiously applied.

2.5 Mentoring within ITE in the FET sector

Until recently, mentoring has been generally regarded as a neglected area of study within the FET sector in Ireland. As such, Mellon's (2023) narrative research study lays a foundation, which those who follow can build upon. Alongside Mellon's (2023) study, this section also draws upon mentoring research from the UK further education (FE) sector. Similar to the Republic of Ireland, the FE sector within England, Scotland, and Wales seems to be aimed at a diverse cohort of learners. They too offer an expansive range of programmes with varying levels. And like in Ireland, they also have recently experienced vast changes in relation to teacher qualifications. Even still, this study acknowledges that transferability of findings beyond the UK FE sector may be limited. A further point of consideration is that while every effort was made to ensure this review was based on

mentoring within ITE, some studies such as Mellon's (2023) take a broader view of mentoring and therefore also include mentoring beyond ITE.

Mirroring the other education sectors in Ireland, mentors in the FET sector are viewed as an important support for trainee teachers. Mellon's (2023) study focused on the mentoring stories of five FET teachers. This research found mentors in the Irish FET sector perform a wide range of functions, from co-teaching, observations, modelling practices, to checking planning. Aside from professional developmental functions, trainee teachers also report mentors support their social needs through chats in the staffroom (Mellon, 2023). Likewise, Husband's (2020) study which focused on the mentor role, found mentors support both the practical and cultural learning of trainee teachers. This interpretivist study also found, that although trainee teachers value their mentor's support, at times it seems unmanageable workloads hamper a mentor's ability to adequately support their trainee teacher (Husband, 2020).

The aforementioned observations seem particularly linked to the professional formation of trainee teachers. Within the Irish context, an essential element to highlight is the non-evaluative and voluntary aspect of the role. Therefore, although the Teaching Council of Ireland (2021) encourages mentors to perform observations, they are ungraded. Importantly, this non-evaluative role diverges from some other countries. In the UK, the mentor role is evaluative and is sometimes paid. Although the role seems to vary depending on the HEI, typically mentors carry out assessments against the UK Teacher Standards and complete a report for the HEI. An innovative study using mentor meeting recordings to stimulate interview discussion, illustrates the connection between mentor feedback and these standards (Tyrer, 2022). From the mentor's perspective, Tyrer (ibid) found they can at

times feel uncomfortable performing the assessor role, which is guided by standards and proformas, as it may misalign with their personal conception of mentoring.

This notion of a mismatch between mentoring conceptions and how mentors perform the role was explored comprehensively by Manning and Hobson (2017). Within this mixed-methods study, and similarly to Tyrer's (2022) approach, mentoring meetings were observed to investigate differences in perceptions from role enactment. Significantly, they found the evaluative function of UK mentors seem to lead to judgemental rather than developmental mentoring. Indeed, feedback seemed to be delivered via a transmission method, allowing little reflection or input from trainee teachers, and therefore potentially restricting their growth (Manning & Hobson, 2017). Perhaps unsurprisingly, based on their findings, Manning and Hobson (2017) have called for this evaluative function of the mentor to be revoked. Likewise, others too have questioned whether asymmetrical mentoring relationships compliment the philosophy of developmental relationships (Savory & Glasson, 2009; Tyrer, 2022).

In the Irish context, although mentoring relationships seem to be built upon respect and trust, Mellon (2023) identified pockets of judgemental mentoring within the FET sector, as have others in the primary and post-primary sectors (Murphy, 2019; O'Grady et al., 2018). In fact, it seems some mentors in Ireland, like in the UK, give strong advice rather than encouraging reflection (Manning & Hobson, 2017; Mellon, 2023). Indeed, Tyrer (2022) argues limited time may be the root cause for these one-sided conversations. As previously outlined, the mentor role in Ireland is voluntary and untimetabled. Therefore, observations, feedback, meetings, and all other mentoring activities are squeezed around the mentor and trainee teacher's timetables, which, as mentioned, seems to have led to inconsistency in feedback in the primary and post-primary sectors in Ireland (Hall et al., 2018; O'Sullivan & Ó

Conaill, 2022). Echoing Tyrer's (2022) findings, Mellon's (2023) study illustrated how limited time seemed to lead to quick and general conversations, that focused on the technical aspects of teaching rather than stretching trainee teachers by connecting practices to pedagogy. Certainly, it seems even apparently non-judgemental mentoring relationships are not necessarily developmental either. Re-enforcing the connection between time poor mentors, and poor mentoring, is the study conducted by Savory and Glasson (2009). This study, comprising of five researchers, across five FE settings in England, recognised the under-resourced nature of the mentor role sometimes led to minimal mentoring and as such, recommended allocating time for mentors to do the role. Furthermore, they urged for meaningful mentor education training. These findings once again seem to mirror current mentoring issues within the primary and post-primary sectors in Ireland (Farrell, 2020; Hall et al., 2018).

Like Savory and Glasson (2009), many other UK FE studies have found mentors enact their role without sufficient preparation or training (Cunningham, 2004; Husband, 2020; Manning & Hobson, 2017; Tyrer, 2022). One such study, which mirrors this finding, was a study by Ingleby and Hunt (2008). They investigated the CPD needs of ITE FE mentors in England by drawing on Ofsted inspection reports, focus group data, and questionnaires. Significantly, this study found the mentor role was underdeveloped and viewed as a bureaucratic task rather than a professional role. Importantly, they argued the ill-definition of the role meant even mentors seemed unaware of their training needs. The message from the research is clear, training is required. But, as highlighted by Ingleby and Hunt (2008), the training must be robust and meaningful if it is to have any real impact. More specifically, the aforementioned study argued it should incorporate mentoring conceptions and teaching

pedagogies. Perhaps predictably, in the absence of robust mentor education training and resourcing, mentors can experience professional isolation (Tyrer, 2022).

The research studies illustrated in this section have explored mentoring in the FET sector from multiple angles, employing a variety of approaches, to gather the perspectives of trainee teachers, mentors, and at times HEI staff and principals. While not all the findings from the UK studies are reflective, or indeed applicable to the Irish FET sector, there are important take-away points. In light of the recent introduction of graduate teacher standards within Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education (Teaching Council, 2020). It seems important to consider how the UK Teaching Standards and HEI observation proformas seem to influence mentoring approaches (Ingleby & Hunt, 2008; Tyrer, 2022). Also, when contemplating the future of the mentor role, it seems relevant to reflect on why some are calling for the mentor role in the UK to become a non-evaluative role (Manning & Hobson, 2017). As broad as these studies are, they highlight significant gaps in the literature, with some recommending further interesting research avenues including mentor motivations (Van Ginkel et al., 2016), mentor benefits (Holland, 2018), enhancing mentor professional identity (Lesham, 2014), just to name a few.

Alongside the FET literature, this review also drew on mentoring research within Ireland's primary & post-primary sectors. These studies seem to echo findings within the FET sector, and therefore they offer fruitful inferences. Indeed, the longitudinal ITE placement report commissioned by the Teaching Council of Ireland (Hall et al., 2018) gave a detailed insight into current mentoring practices in the primary and post-primary sectors. In light of the findings, it seems of value to reflect upon the lack of awareness teachers seem to have of Teaching Council documentation and the associated implications for the FET sector. Also, the report gave an insight into the mentor-placement tutors connection, an area which

seems underexplored within the FET literature, and therefore these findings can perhaps enable some comparisons within the FET sector. Interestingly, the report also supports our understanding of how the induction process, Droichead, has impacted mentors. From these findings it seems worthwhile to explore how the learnings from this process could impact FET mentors.

Based upon the review of relevant literature, it is evident that the mentor role is unclear and under-resourced. Immersion within the lifeworld of FET mentors would perhaps enable the identification of specific avenues in which to better address the desires and needs of FET mentors. The next section details the theoretical framework which underpins this research study.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is framed by Bourdieu's interconnected social concepts of habitus, field, and capital. These thinking tools are applied within this study to support my interpretations of the mentors' experiences. Betteney et al., (2018) uses Bourdieu's trio of the aforementioned theoretical tools as a lens in which to illustrate the motivations and challenges of mentors in UK primary and post-primary schools. Ingleby and Hunt (2008) use Bourdieu's concept of cultural reproduction to view the CPD needs of ITE mentors within the FE sector in the UK. Uí Choistealbha and Ní Dhuinn (2021) relate the dispositions of Irish induction mentors, in primary and post-primary schools, to Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Grummell and Murray (2015) applied Bourdieu's theories to the developments in Ireland's FET sector. As illustrated above, Bourdieu's trilogy of habitus, field, and capital, resonate with the fields of education and therefore provide a useful theoretical framework to analyse the data within this study. These concepts are briefly outlined below.

Habitus

Habitus relates to the practices which are continually produced unconsciously by agents in the field. Habitus is structured and shaped by the collection of past practices of previous generations, these structures in turn shape the present and future actions of agents within the field (Bourdieu, 1990). Habitus or practices are a mix of both individual and social histories (Bourdieu, 1977). These practices or dispositions are durable, and transposable between fields, but evolve over time (Bourdieu, 1993). Doxa are the behaviours that feel natural and have been accepted as legitimate truths by the social agents within the field (Bourdieu, 1990). They are reinforced and reproduced by the agents, helping to define and stabilise the habitus in-line with the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Nomos are field specific norms or laws, if legitimately recognised by agents within the field, they are said to be doxic. The position or capital an agent has in the field impacts habitus. A change to this position can transform the agent's habitus, equally a change in the field can impact an agent's practices (Bourdieu, 1994). These changes in habitus can either be gradual or abrupt. To understand practices, both habitus and field need to be considered. This interconnecting relationship is explained by Bourdieu (1986), in the following equation: [(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice.

Field

Bourdieu likens social spaces with fields. Within these fields, agents hold various positions and employ numerous strategies to compete and play the game. Each field has certain behaviours and rules which are recognised by the agents (Bourdieu, 1990). Fields, like habitus, are continuously evolving, therefore relations between habitus and fields are dynamic, and as such a mismatch or hysteresis can occur. This mismatch is a time lag

between changes in the field and changes to the recognised practices or nomos. Often these changes are indeterminate (Bourdieu, 1990). The borders of these fields have been identified as areas of conflict (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu viewed fields as having two poles, cultural capital, and economic capital. These two forms of capital or value can be depicted along a continuum from negative to positive. Figure 2, adapted from Grenfell (2008, p.72), illustrates the connection between both forms of capital and highlights the zones of highest and lowest capital.

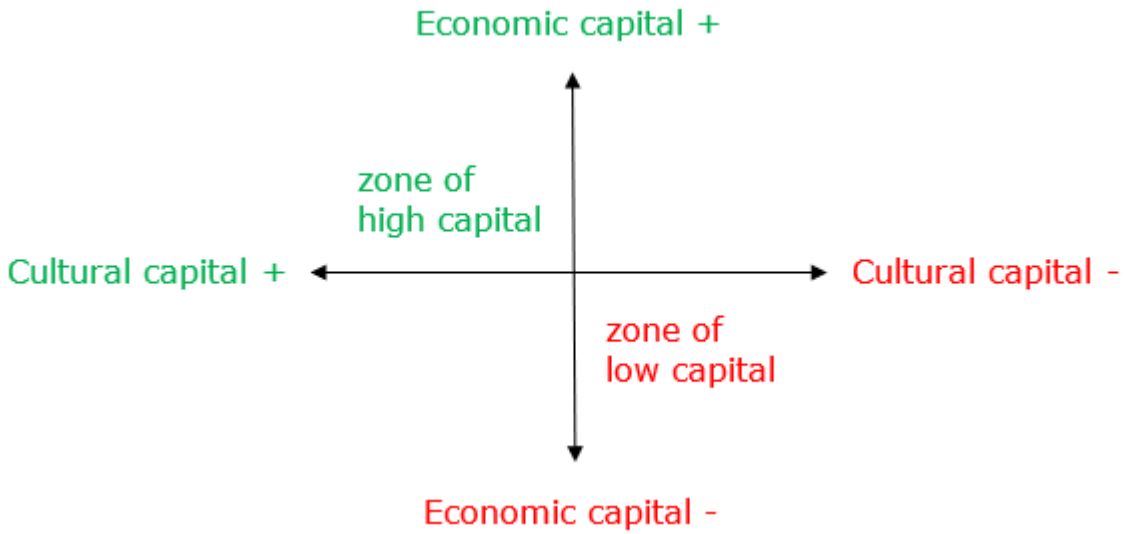

Figure 2: Diagram of a social field

Capital

As noted above, Bourdieu's theory of capital is expansive and extends beyond its economic value into symbolic forms of capital such as social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2006). Importantly, Bourdieu suggests the value of any capital depends on social recognition. Each field recognises and values various sub-types of capital differently. Bourdieu acknowledges that individuals can amass economic capital quickly. On the other hand, symbolic capital is accumulated over time, and becomes embodied within the agent (ibid).

An individual's relative social position can be calculated in relation to the volume of capital they possess and then plotted along a graph such as Figure 2. All agents in the field compete for capital, those in the zone of high capital have high corresponding levels of power and influence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Avant-garde agents do not adhere to the nomos of the field and therefore typically have low levels of capital.

Application within this study

Some question the originality of Bourdieu's theories and highlight contradictions within his work (Jenkins, 2002). Notwithstanding these criticisms, the importance of Bourdieu's contribution to sociology and research are widely acknowledged. As such, within this study Bourdieu's trio of thinking tools, are used as a lens to support the analysis and exploration of the practices and role of the mentor, and how actions and beliefs impact social reproduction and change. The findings will make visible the invisible doxa of the agents in the field and highlight field-habitus clashes.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined a review of international and Irish literature relating to mentoring within the educational context and beyond. Within the main body of the review, mentoring and the mentor role was explored using a funnel approach, starting from a general and wide overview of mentoring in ITE and induction across sectors and countries.

In a nutshell, the review found, mentoring has the potential to develop both mentor and mentee. However, mentoring has both positive and negative sides. Promisingly, positive mentoring relationships seem to be supported through mentor education. A key takeaway within the Irish context, is the policy-practice divide between how mentoring is envisioned and how it is enacted across the primary and post-primary sectors. This gap seems to stem

from a lack of role clarity, unawareness of documentation, absence of training, and an untimetabled role. Findings specific to the FET sector, also illustrate how limited time, limits mentoring. It seems that although mentors in Ireland have a non-evaluative role, a lack of training combined with a lack of time, can result in judgemental mentoring. This situation has led to the professional identity of some trainee teachers being constrained. At the same time, studies from the UK FE sector illustrate, how mentors too can experience the dark side of mentoring, due to mismatches in role perceptions, policies conflicting with personal beliefs, unmanageable workloads, and restricted mentor professional development.

This review highlights an evident gap in research concerning mentors, in Ireland, especially in the FET sector. The following chapter presents the methodological design of the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter's purpose is to describe the design and implementation of this Interpretivist Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study. Through an exploratory approach, I aimed to develop a deep insight into the lived experiences of mentors, and gain clarity on the breadth and depth of the role from the mentor's perspective. This chapter explains the research design rationale in terms of research paradigm, methodology, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, limitations, quality measures, and ethical considerations. This IPA study was guided by the following research question: *How do mentors of trainee teachers in the Irish Further Education and Training sector conceptualise and experience their role?*

3.2 Research Paradigm and Philosophical Underpinning

> A paradigm is thus a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field (Willis, 2007, p.8)

The research paradigm underpinning this IPA study is interpretivism. This paradigmatic positioning has influenced and guided all aspects of my research including the research question, methodology, data collection methods, and so on. At a fundamental level, an interpretive research approach is impacted by both its ontological and epistemological beliefs. This social research study has adopted a constructivist ontological approach and is influenced by Max Weber. Weber coined the concept of verstehen, which translates to understanding in English, meaning that in order to understand the human experience, a researcher needs to interpret the cause of the phenomena from the participant's point of view, rather than looking for external forces or truth (Farrow et al., 2020). The nature of truth is a long-standing area of debate between the natural sciences

and human and social sciences (Bryman, 2008). In line with the constructivist viewpoint, we accept the inseparability of the knowledge from the knower and instead embrace the socio-cultural context of the phenomenon being researched (Farrow et al., 2020). For that reason, this study collected qualitative data during semi-structured interviews in an attempt to understand the lifeworld of the participants. IPA's commitment to an idiographic mode of inquiry, requires the researcher to attend to the individual lifeworld of each participant. While at the same time, looking across cases for convergent and divergent patterns (Smith et al., 2009).

"Epistemology is concerned with what we can know about reality… and how we can know it" (Willis, 2007, p.10). This research embraces a relativist epistemology, and as such, recognises that the researcher's interpretations of the phenomena are subjective in nature and require a hermeneutic approach. Once again, the natural sciences and human and social sciences clash over researcher's objectivity versus subjectivity. Heidegger (1923-1999) maintained that without the phenomena there would be nothing to be interpreted, and without hermeneutics, the phenomena would not be seen (Smith et al., 2009). Within this study, my knowledge and experiences as a teacher, a mentor, and a FET placement co-ordinator, were required to draw out the stories from the participants and to meaningfully re-interpret their experiences in light of the literature. By embracing my subjectivity as a partial-insider, I have added depth and a fresh perspective on this phenomenon.

3.3 Research Strategy

Phenomenology and specifically Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as the methodological approach, as it offers a flexible and creative approach to explore and understand the meaning making process of mentors, and in doing so, answers the research question. The research design has been justified and guided by the

interconnective relationships between knowledge, epistemology, methodology, method, and data collection, as seen in Figure 3, which has been adapted from Carter and Little (2007, p.1317).

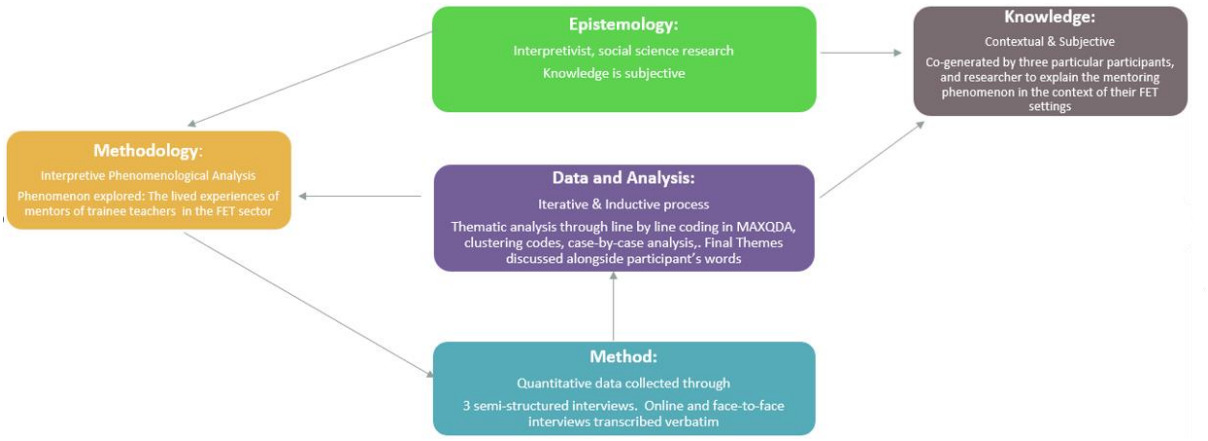

Figure 3: The simple relationship between Epistemology, Methodology, and Method

From the start of this study, I adopted an interpretivist epistemological approach, as I recognised, this study was social research, and the participant mentors would be real humans, actively interpreting and seeking meaning in their experiences (Bevan, 2014). Phenomenology was singled out, as it complemented the exploratory nature of my study, which is seeking to understand the "phenomenon" rather than explain it (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Next, I considered positionality. From the outset, I identified as a partial insider, with biases and preconceptions. These had been developed over time, through various roles, training, professional conversations, and policy documents. I considered this knowledge, although subjective, valuable. This subjective positionality guided me towards IPA, as the hermeneutic philosophy which underpins IPA resonated with me (Smith et al., 2009). Schleiermacher recognised that a researcher might add meaningful interpretations, particularly if they have "an insiders" perspective (ibid, p.36).

Another belief within hermeneutics, which justified my methodological choice, is the view that knowledge is jointly constructed between the interviewer and interviewee. The knowledge within this research was shaped by my own subjectivity as a partial-insider researcher (Chavez, 2008) and by the relationships I developed with the three mentors (Carter & Little, 2007). This acknowledgement of the mentors' contributions was important to me as I recognised the mentors in the FET sector were the experts on this phenomenon. As I delved deeper into the underpinning philosophies within IPA, I began to recognise the significance and influence of idiography. An idiographic study is committed to recognising and presenting the uniqueness within experiences and cases, rather than presenting data solely in aggregate form. Firstly, this tradition guided my choice of research data collection method. Interviews enabled me to form a unique relationship with each participant, and it gave me a chance to use clarifying prompts to dig deeper into the lifeworld of the participant (Ayres, 2008).

Secondly, this idiographic mode of inquiry has influenced the number of participants and choice of participants. The recognition and commitment to unique experiences supported my sample size of three participants, as this number would enable me to explore in detail the uniqueness within each case, whilst at the same time identifying areas of similarities and dissimilarities. As the sample size was small, I felt it was important to select three participants from three different FET settings, in order to capture diverse and unique experiences (Laverty, 2003). Thirdly, this tradition guided my data analysis process. Due to the idiographic nature of IPA, I analysed each interview on a case-by-case basis. Analysis involved line-by-line reading and re-reading to enter the lifeworld of the participant. I wrote my interpretations alongside participants' interpretations, illustrative of the double hermeneutic approach of IPA (Smith et al., 2009). From my interpretations, emergent

themes for each participant were identified and written-up. These findings were shared with my supervisor, peer debriefer, and the participants, as a means to check my interpretations. After which, convergent and divergent patterns were sought across the dataset, from which the final themes were chosen. Finally, idiography impacted upon how the findings were presented. I sought to highlight the individual and uniqueness within the experiences, while also presenting similarities and differences across cases. Participant's words were included within the findings to emphasise their importance within the knowledge-creation process, and to also illustrate the uniqueness of their experiences. Findings were developed "cautiously" from these unique and nuanced experiences (ibid, p. 29).

3.4 Identifying and Engaging Participants

A significant ethical consideration within my study started with the sampling process. The embedded nature of my role within the ITE programme introduced a potential power relationship issue. This issue was discussed at length between myself, my supervisor, and the Course Director. Together we agreed that my study would exclude mentors of our current trainee teachers. We also considered this power relationship from the trainee teacher's perspective. We wondered if they would worry that their mentor's participation/ non-participation in the study would impact their results.

In the end, the decision was made to find mentors through a snowball strategy. Within my role as Placement Co-ordinator, I worked closely and developed deep relationships with the Institute's Placement Tutors, many of whom were still teaching in the FET sector, and therefore personally knew several mentors. I contacted three colleagues by email about my research study. Within the email, I listed the inclusion/ exclusion criteria. Next, I followed up by sharing my recruitment email (Appendix ii), plain language statement

(Appendix iii), and participant consent form (Appendix iv). My recruitment email was then shared by the placement tutors with their colleagues. This snowball sampling approach is recognised as particularly suited to qualitative studies, as samples are purposive and therefore focus on transferability rather than generalisability (Bryman, 2008). This method of recruitment complimented the ethical underpinnings of the study, as this separation between me and the mentors, supported their rights to voluntarily participate (UCD, 2021).

Throughout March and April, I received responses to my recruitment email from several willing mentors. At this point, I double checked each mentor met the study's participant criteria (Appendix v). Purposive sampling, using inclusion and exclusion criterion, compliments phenomenological studies (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), as it supports the critical and careful identification of participants who have all experienced the same phenomena (Silverman, 2014). In conjunction with my supervisor, two modifications were made to the inclusion criteria as the study progressed. The first related to how recently a mentor had a trainee teacher. Originally, a five-year limit had been chosen. However, upon further discussion with the Course Director, it was decided to reduce the limit to two years. IPA studies require the collection of rich and deep experiences of the participant's lifeworld. We were concerned that experiences from five years ago might be too thin for IPA analysis. This change resulted in one mentor being excluded from the study as she confirmed she last mentored a trainee teacher more than five years ago.

Another modification to the participant criteria related to a mentor's registration status with the Teaching Council of Ireland. Originally, the study excluded mentors without full registration under Route 3 (Further Education) of the Teaching Council Regulation (2016). However, during a meeting with my peer debriefer, she raised a concern about this exclusion criteria. From her many years of experience within the sector, she personally knew several

mentors who were fully registered with the Teaching Council but under Route 2 (Post-primary). Upon further conversations with my supervisor, we agreed to remove the criteria, as we felt including these mentors would make this study a truer representation of mentoring experiences within the FET sector.

Originally, I was aiming for a sample size of between 6-8 participants. However, after further reading around IPA participant numbers, I realised the number was not as significant as finding participants that could offer rich and diverse accounts of the phenomena (Laverty, 2003). So, in discussion with my supervisor and my examiners, I agreed to reduce the participant size. Instead of focusing on participant numbers, my aim was to gather enough data and thoroughly analyse it for patterns of similarities and differences (Smith et al., 2009). Although my colleagues had contacted many teachers, there was a low response rate with only six mentors volunteering to take part in my study. We assumed this reluctance to participate was linked to timetabled holidays, and the end of the FET year.

Between March and July I sent over 40 emails to these six mentors informing them about the study, gathering consent, arranging and rearranging interview times, and sharing initial findings. As mentioned earlier, one of the mentors was ruled out as she did not meet the inclusion criteria, and another participant dropped out due to a lack of time. Also, as I had not collected quantitative data before, I decided to strengthen the quality of my research by conducting a pilot interview with one of the volunteers. This further reduced the final participant number to three. At this point, it was not feasible to continue searching for participants as the study's submission deadline was approaching. Although three is a small sample size, IPA is concerned with diversity within accounts rather than participant numbers. Indeed, Smith and Osborn (2007) argue that for first-time researchers, like myself, three participants is a particularly useful sample size within an IPA study, as it is large enough for

patterns of similarities and differences to be seen, but small enough for the data analysis to be manageable. All three participants were selected purposively, as each met the study's carefully crafted criteria, and were therefore considered a relatively homogenous sample (Silverman, 2014). Alongside meeting the study's criteria, all three mentors were from different FET settings, which seemed to support the notion of diversity across cases within IPA studies (Smith et al., 2009). After concluding my interviews, I felt confident I had gathered diverse, rich, and detailed accounts of mentoring in the FET sector, which would have transferability to other contexts beyond the research (Bryman, 2008). Table 1 and Table 2 below give a brief account of the background, teaching experience and mentoring experience of each participant in the study.

Table 1: Pilot Participant's background

Pilot Participant (Pseudonym)	**Pilot Participant's background**
Charlie	Charlie has been teaching in the Further Education and Training (FET) sector for 24 years. Her background is in social work. Charlie was asked to give talks on social work issues within FET colleges, and from there she decided to retrain as a teacher in Further Education. Her teaching career started in YouthReach, but she moved to a FET college when she was offered a permanent contract. To date, Charlie has mentored three trainee teachers.

Table 2: Final Participants' backgrounds

Participant (Pseudonym)	Participant's background
Alex	Alex entered the FET sector, straight after completing University, almost 15 years ago. When Alex began teaching in the FET sector, it was not necessary to have a teaching qualification. However, he has since completed a postgraduate qualification in Initial Teacher Education for Further Education teachers. Alex has remained in the same college since starting his teaching career and has mentored three trainee teachers. Two of these teachers successfully completed their placement. However, the other trainee teacher completed the observation phase but then left the college, and maybe the course, without explanation.
Frankie	Frankie completed her Higher Diploma in Further Education in 2016. Before becoming a teacher, Frankie had worked as a trainer within the financial sector. She purposely chose to become a FET teacher, rather than a post-primary teacher, because she enjoys working with adults. Frankie's journey as a mentor began while teaching in a Community Education Centre, where she mentored up to five tutors. After settling into her current college, Frankie once again started mentoring. To date, she has been an official mentor to two trainee teachers and one new member of staff. She has also unofficially mentored several colleagues.
Joe	Joe began his teaching career in a post-primary school 25 years ago. After one year of post-primary teaching, he began teaching in the FET sector, where he has stayed ever since. Joe completed a postgraduate qualification in Initial Teacher Education for post-primary teachers. When the Teaching Council of Ireland made a teaching qualification compulsory in the FET sector, Joe's post-primary teaching qualification automatically deemed him eligible to teach in the FET sector. Joe has mentored three trainee teachers in the past five years, all of which have been assigned to him through the principal.

3.5 Data Collection

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is committed to understanding the lived experiences of a person. In line with this principle, qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, which is the most common method of data collection for IPA studies (Smith et al., 2009). The three participant interviews, plus a pilot interview, were conducted throughout March, April, and May 2023. Of the three participant interviews, one was conducted face-to-face, the other two were held online. Prior to arranging the interviews, I had discussed the pros and cons of face-to-face interviews versus online

interviews with the Course Director and a critical friend. Ultimately, I decided I would allow the participant to choose the forum they felt most comfortable with, as suggested by Smith et al., (2009). Interestingly, for the face-to-face interview, the participant asked if the staffroom was suitable or if we should find an alternative space. I recommended we look for a quiet and private space. For future interviews I will ensure to specify these requirements ahead of time.

The participants were asked in advance to set aside 90 minutes for the whole process, each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes which is in-line with IPA recommendations (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The additional time facilitated a discussion before and afterwards. In accordance with the literature, I drafted some talking points (Appendix vi). These outlined the process and explained this was a "conversation with a purpose" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 57). This discussion was two-fold. On the one hand, I wanted to build a trusting relationship (ibid). And, on the other hand, I hoped to reduce the interviewer-interviewee power imbalance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This was done by outlining my motives and briefly sharing my personal history of teaching and mentoring (Bryman, 2008).

Based on the research question and sub-questions, an interview schedule was developed. This included four biographical questions and six open-ended questions (Appendix vi), which were broad but also directive enough to focus the interviewee on a "concrete and singular experience" (Høffding & Martiny, 2016, p.551). I felt it was necessary for contextualisation purposes to ask biographical questions first, so that I could enter the lifeworld of the participant, and better understand their meaning making processes (Bevan, 2014). Although the biographical questions were quick to answer, they were kept to a minimum intentionally. My supervisor and I were keenly aware that they could confuse the

participants about the style of interview and level of description required. To counteract this, I announced when the biographical questions ended, and the open-ended questions began. At this point, I also reminded the participants to "talk at length" about their experiences (Smith et al., 2009, p.59). Prompts were used to clarify, probe, and ensure the experiences were as "detailed and nuanced as possible" (Høffding & Martiny, 2016, p.554).

As I had not collected quantitative data before this research study, I decided to conduct a pilot interview. The pilot interview was held online through MSTeams and lasted approximately 90 minutes. One hour of which was recorded and related to my research study, the other half hour was spent discussing the interview process and her impressions of the experience. This process allowed me to learn the interview schedule, test the recording and transcribing technology in MSTeams, improve my interview skills, including active listening, and it enabled me to get feedback from the participant on the process.

Following-on from my pilot interview, slight adaptations were made in relation to the terminology used within the interview schedule. In particular, the term student teacher was replaced with trainee teacher (Appendix vi). Although the term student teacher is used within the Teaching Council documentation (2013), I found this term led to unnecessary language confusion while interviewing, as the mentor referred to the learners in her classroom as students. Although each interview started similarly, they all varied as I responded to what I was hearing (Roulston, 2010). Using the interview schedule in a flexible manner is encouraged and embraced within semi-structured interviews (Bevan, 2014). This resulted in questions being asked in a different order or questions not being asked at all, as I followed the "course set by the participants" (Smith et al., 2009, p.65). Through the use of prompts such as "Tell me about that…", I could examine the nuances within each person's experiences (Bevan, 2014). I also adapted the wording of the questions to reflect the

participant's own words in order to stay as close to their lifeworld as possible (Roulston, 2010). I avoided cutting short a participant's experience, even when they seemed unrelated to the research question, as I recognised, they were the "experiential expert on the topic" (Smith et al., 2009, p.64). This approach allowed me to gain a deeper and richer insight into their lifeworld and their "concerns" (ibid, p.58), and resulted in unexpected and surprising disclosures.

Within each interview, I made brief fieldnotes to capture memorable phrases, emotions, and gestures. After the interview, I filed these notes away to bracket them off in case they clouded my thinking. Within IPA, bracketing is done to support researcher reflexivity, in-order to view the participant's lifeworld without interference from our own biases and pre-conceptions. In line with Heidegger, this is viewed as only partially possible, as our pre-knowledge cannot be erased (ibid). Each interview was carried out a few weeks apart to enable me to analyse them on a case-by-case basis, before looking for patterns across cases.

3.6 Data Analysis

Through an iterative and inductive cycle of analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2007), researchers are enabled to expose meaningful themes within cases, and to identify convergence and divergence across the entire data set. Figure 4 shows the stages followed within my data analysis process. These stages are based on the steps outlined by Smith et al., (2009). While these stages are represented in an orderly fashion, IPA is a cyclical rather than linear process (Laverty, 2003).

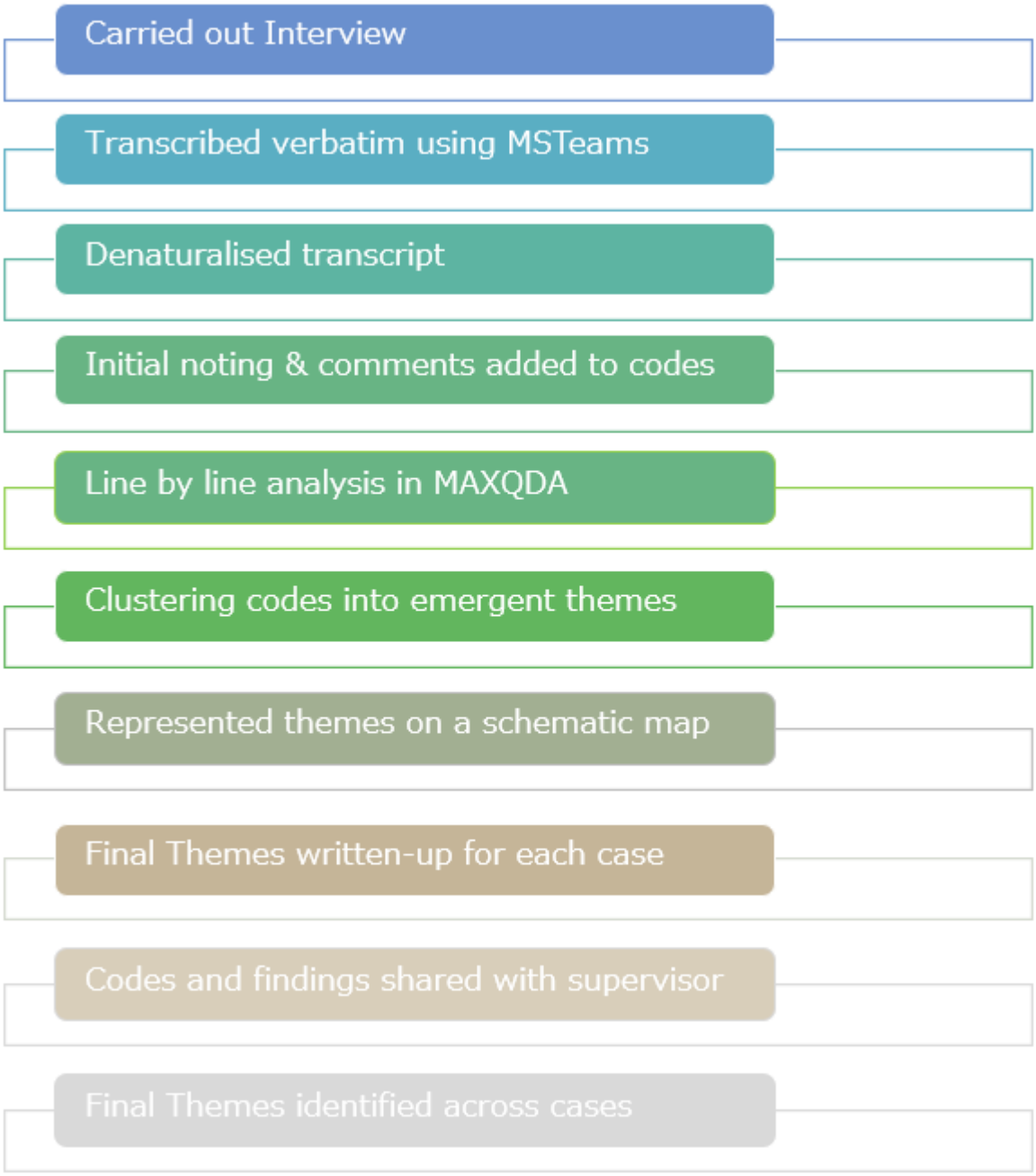

Figure 4: Data analysis stages

As mentioned above, I conducted a pilot interview and used this as an opportunity to explore and make choices with regards to data analysis. Before starting the coding process, I had a reflection period, which allowed time to make informed decisions about transcription (Oliver et al., 2005). After further reading, and in discussion with my supervisor, I made the choice to focus on the content and substance of the participant's experiences, rather than

the mechanics of how the participant spoke. This denaturalised approach would offer a "full and faithful transcription" (Cameron, 2001, p.33), while at the same time decrease confusion by the removal of involuntary vocalizations, response tokens, and pronunciation (Appendix vii). The choices and reflections I made throughout the piloting process supported a consistent approach for the final three participants (Majid, 2017).

Before I uploaded the pilot transcript into the software package and started coding, I watched numerous videos regarding coding within MAXQDA qualitative software. Creswell and Creswell (2018) advocate using computer programmes to support with coding, while others still argue the merits in immersing oneself in the data through hand coding. MAXQDA is potentially more suited to thematic analysis across cases. To counter-act this, I decided to set-up a code folder for each participant, which supported the idiographic nature of this IPA study (Smith et al., 2009). Following on, I began reading and re-reading the transcript to immerse myself within the "world of the participant" (ibid). Deep engagement with the transcript is essential within IPA, as each reading is an opportunity to develop "new insights" (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p.67). To clarify meaning, I moved forward and backward between reading the transcript, making notes, and listening to the recording (Appendix viii).

Categorising the data from the interview into coded segments, involved active engagement with each line of the transcript, to understand the meaning of each comment. The hermeneutic circle was evident, as I attempted to interpret the interpretations of my participants, through the addition of my explanatory comments (Appendix ix). This enabled me to focus on the participant's voice, while reducing the volume of detail from the notes and transcripts (Smith et al., 2009). The next stage of data analysis involved shifting my focus towards the newly re-organised data within the coded segments, rather than the interview transcript. Coded segments were initially organised chronologically within MAXQDA. Each

code was re-read and re-ordered in relation to other codes. This process continued over a number of days, until codes were clustered together into “emergent themes” (ibid, p.91). The themes were an amalgamation of the participant’s words alongside my own, evidence of the hermeneutic circle of IPA analysis (Appendix x). Next, the patterns within the themes were represented in a schematic map (Appendix xi). I chose to write-up the themes for each case within a few days of the interview. I found writing up each case one at a time allowed me to focus on the “particular” within each case, before moving to analyse the data across cases. As each theme was written up, I once again moved forward and backwards between the coded segments and the transcripts to ensure my interpretations were faithful to “what the person actually said” (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p.72). During this process, I consciously allowed my interpretations of the data to evolve, develop, and offer new insights (Smith et al., 2009, p.109). Within IPA, a researcher can use the themes from the first case to guide the data analysis process for subsequent cases. Or like in this study, the researcher can start each case from scratch, only considering the relevance and relationship of individual themes once all the cases have been written up. The approach I selected, is in line with Smith and Osborn’s (2007) recommendations for first time IPA researchers, particularly when conducting a small-scale project based on three participants.

Three superordinate themes emerged from the data analysis of the interview with Frankie. These themes, alongside their subordinate themes are represented within the schematic map in Appendix xi. Several unconnected sub-themes are highlighted in this map and were also written up. I was conscious not to dismiss even minor themes at this point, as they could become more relevant when analysing the entire data set. These included: different types of mentoring, informal interactions, informal training, no voice, and why chosen as mentor. For Frankie, it emerged that at times she felt her professional voice was

repressed while she was a temporary member of staff. Also, she had experience teaching within community education and spoke passionately about the different rewards this teaching offered. She also shared her opinion on post-primary teachers teaching within the FET sector, and briefly discussed job security within the sector. Even though these issues were important concerns for Frankie, they did not directly answer the research questions, and therefore were not included within the final themes.

For Alex, four superordinate themes emerged from the data analysis of his interview (Appendix xi). Alongside these themes, Alex discussed the recruitment practices of his principal several times. He also outlined his dislike for teaching online while the FET colleges where closed due to COVID-19. Although illuminating, the topics did not directly answer the research questions, so were not included in the final themes. Again, four superordinate themes emerged from Joe's data (Appendix xi). Several other themes were also written-up, which included: why others help unofficially, staff meetings, qualifications, general chatter around/ with trainee teachers. Joe briefly discussed the notion of trainee teachers attending staff meetings. He also spoke about engaging learners and the varied student needs within the sector. And he outlined how staff generally interact with trainee teachers within his FET college. Again, while these topics are noteworthy, they did not feature in the accounts of other mentors, and so were not included in the final four themes.

Once the final themes were identified for each participant (Appendix xi), I began looking for "connections" across the whole data set (Smith et al., 2009, p.92). My earlier schematic maps supported my thought process and helped me fit the themes together (ibid, p.96). Only themes that were present in two or more cases were selected as the final themes. At this stage, some themes were discarded, some relabelled, and others reconfigured. For instance, the theme *willingness to mentor*, is an amalgamation of Frankie's

subtheme *swings and roundabouts,* alongside Alex's superordinate theme *newness in classroom as a motivator to mentor,* and in combination with Joe's superordinate theme *mentor mindset*. The *mentor – placement tutor connection* theme emerged from the *placement tutor* subthemes identified within all the three cases. The theme *mentoring: an extension of the teacher role*, brought together Frankie's subordinate themes *egg on my face, informal interactions,* and *uncertainty within the role,* Alex's subthemes *TT6 V TT7* and *other influences,* and Joe's themes *functions within the role* and *connected through trainee teacher*. Finally, the theme *mentoring relationships and functions* stemmed from Frankie's subthemes *EA – big bad wolf* and *different types of mentoring,* together with Alex's subordinate theme *TT6 V TT7*, along with Joe's subtheme *additional functions outside role*. The themes for each participant are represented in the Appendix, alongside the final themes (Appendix xii). Originally, the findings were presented separately from the discussion within chapter 4. After writing-up the findings section for the final four themes, I began to relate the mentor's experiences to the relevant literature and Bourdieu's theoretical framework within the discussion. However, upon reflection, both my supervisor and I concluded the discussion should be embedded within each individual theme. Both of these strategies are embraced within IPA studies (Smith & Osborn, 2007). I believe, re-writing the discussion and inserting it within each theme, supported the overall cohesion of the findings and discussion chapter.

As mentioned above, alongside an IPA methodological approach, this study also applied Bourdieu's theoretical framework of habitus, field, and capital to support the data analysis and findings. At the beginning of each interview, I briefly outlined the study and explained the IPA approach to the participants. However, I decided not to reference Bourdieu's framework, or indeed the metalanguage and vocabulary associated within his

work in case it would impact the data. Although unvoiced by name, each participant's experiences contained Bourdieusian elements. During the interviews, I made brief notes, which at times, related to Bourdieu's concepts. These notes helped me keep a track of my thoughts and bracket them until the analysis stage. Before returning to my notes, I began analysing the data systematically line-by-line, focusing on the participants' voice before adding interpretations based on Bourdieu's thinking tools. During the writing up process, I once again re-considered and developed the connections between the participants' life experiences and Bourdieu's trilogy of habitus, field, and capital. Next, I began to strengthen these findings in light of the wider literature. Bourdieu's framework supported deep interpretations of the mentors' actions and practices, going beyond individual realities to expose visible and invisible social structures influencing and restricting the practices of mentors within the field of education.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Researchers conducting social research have a duty of care toward the participants and their data (Denscombe, 2017). Approval was sought and granted for this study by the National College of Ireland (NCI) Ethics Committee. Outlined below, are the many ethical considerations that were addressed throughout the study. This process was guided by the principles of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) guidelines. Participants' social risk was managed by anonymising any potentially identifiable aspects of their accounts, which included giving each of them a pseudonym. The BERA (2018) guidelines were followed with respect to data protection. All primary data was stored on a password-protected NCI student cloud storage account. The interviews were recorded over MSTeams using the record and transcribe function. The transcript was de-identified before

being stored on the NCI student cloud storage account. The original audio recordings were stored separately on this drive. Handwritten field notes were stored securely in a locked cabinet. All data shared during the data analysis and write-up stages of the study, were anonymised beforehand. This process is in line with data protection guidelines within social science research literature (Bryman, 2008).

Participants were informed in writing within the plain language statement about the data protection steps above. Throughout the study, the participant's right to confidentiality and anonymity was paramount (Thomas, 2013). All steps outlined within the plain language statement have been adhered to strictly (Appendix iii). Each participant gave their consent to participate in the study before the interview in writing. To check that "informed on-going consent" was achieved (BERA, 2018), I re-attached the participant consent form (Appendix iv) and plain language statement (Appendix iii) to the online interview invite. Before the interview started to be recorded, both documents were re-read to confirm the participant was voluntarily consenting to be involved in the study. Each participant was emailed the study's preliminary findings, at which stage, ongoing consent was sought (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In keeping with the phenomenological tradition, I showed respect and care for the wellbeing of each participant, by creating a supportive and empathic space in which the participant felt comfortable sharing their experiences (Roulston, 2010). To ensure the participants had a positive experience and felt heard, I employed basic counselling strategies including active listening, reflection, and attending strategies (Conte, 2009). Phenomenological interviewing and data analysis takes considerable time and therefore can only be justified if the findings are worthwhile (Høffding & Martiny, 2016). This research provides first-hand accounts of mentoring within ITE in the FET sector in Ireland, which is

currently an under researched area. This study, although small-scale, is high-quality and therefore helps to fill the research gap and give a voice to the mentors within the FET sector in Ireland. The findings within this study may impact and have important benefits for teachers, administrators, and policy makers. The findings may also support future research within the FET sector in Ireland and beyond (Yardley, 2000).

3.8 Validity and Quality

Lincoln and Guba (1985) established four criteria of quality in qualitative research, these are confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability. Alongside these measures of quality, I have intertwined quality guidelines developed by Yardley (2000), which were developed specifically for creative research methodologies, such as IPA. A key quality indicator within qualitative research is the transferability of the findings to another context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My use of semi-structured interviews to collect thick and rich descriptions of a participant's experiences of mentoring is in keeping with IPA's three philosophical theories: interpretivism, phenomenology, and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). The varied and individual descriptions are the results of my active participation with the three individual participants (Høffding & Martiny, 2016). Each interview was conducted in a sensitive manner to encourage the participant to share their experiences freely (Roulston, 2010). By briefly showing openness regarding my purpose and my personal history of mentoring, the power asymmetry was addressed (Kvale, 1996). Drawing on the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology, the neutral stance of a researcher was rejected. The researcher was a passionate participant within the interviews (Laverty, 2003), and probed for clarification, and is therefore present, alongside the participant, in the knowledge generation process (Høffding & Martiny, 2016). The thick description generated within this

study enables other researchers to assess its fittingness and, therefore its, transferability to another context (Guba, 1981). By outlining my positionality and illustrating an awareness of different perspectives and complex arguments within the literature, this research demonstrated transferability by showing “sensitivity to context”, which is a quality measure identified by Yardley (2000).

To support the credibility and dependability of my study, I committed to several validity checks from the outset. The first method was to identify a peer debriefer. The colleague I identified was external to my study, embedded within the FET sector, and knowledgeable about research. This enabled her to provide external checks on the inquiry process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I met my peer debriefer online and in-person on several occasions to discuss my research question, participant selection, test my insights, and initial findings. These meetings led to adaptations to the study’s design. Alongside our meetings, I also shared various documents with my peer debriefer. This transparency enabled my peer debriefer to question and examine the procedures followed (Guba, 1981). This transparent approach is highlighted by Yardley (2000) as a characteristic of good qualitative research. Having a peer debriefer supported the credibility and dependability of my findings, and also illustrated a commitment to rigour within my study (ibid).

Member checking was another measure of validity which supports the credibility of the findings within research (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking complements the interpretivist nature of this study, as we accept the reality of the participants is only known to themselves (Birt et al., 2016). Before starting the process, I discussed various member checking strategies, such as returning transcripts, member check interviews, and synthesised analysed data, with both my supervisor and Course Director

(ibid). In the end, we concluded the synthesised analysed data strategy would work best for my research study. This transparent approach is a sign of quality in research (Yardley, 2000), and compliments the phenomenological underpinnings of this study. The knowledge within this study, has been co-generated by the interviewee and interviewer (Høffding & Martiny, 2016). As such, for ethical reasons the data should be shared (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

All participants were emailed the preliminary findings in June 2023. These synthesised findings included data from all three participants, alongside my interpretations. The data was organised within five emergent themes: *open to collaborate, two-way newness in practice, mentor- HEI connection, mentor professional identity*, and *going beyond role expectations*. At that time, I had not yet finished relating the findings to the broader literature or Bourdieu's theoretical framework. Therefore, the discussion was not included. Within my email, I explained the findings were only at preliminary stages, so any feedback could be incorporated. In particular, I asked the participants to consider if they felt fairly represented through my analysis.

Two of the participants confirmed receipt of my email. Although the third did not respond, I was not surprised, as I was emailing her work account during a timetabled holiday. One participant responded by expressing his delight at being represented so coherently. The other participant, remarked upon the similarity of his experiences in relation to the accounts of the other participants. He also used this as an opportunity to offer additional information with regards to his interactions with a placement tutor. My initial interpretations suggested the mentor felt respected when the placement tutor met with him first, before going to observe the trainee teacher. However, the mentor confirmed, it was more important that the meeting offered an opportunity to discuss the trainee teacher's progress rather than the sequence of the meetings. I emailed the participant to thank him

for his clarification and I explained this explanation would be reflected within the findings. This clarification is present within the final *mentor - placement tutor connection theme*, when I discuss how mentors are keen to meet the placement tutor and are willing to share trainee teacher's process when asked. I believe making this adaptation strengthened my interpretations and the overall credibility of my study (Guba, 1981). I had originally intended to share the final dissertation with the participants before submission to confirm my interpretations once again. But unfortunately time did not allow for this step.

As outlined within the data analysis section, IPA is a creative process with no single prescribed method. However, for novice IPA researchers like me, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) have outlined a systematic data analysis process. Within this process, there is an emphasis on developing a deep understanding of the lifeworld of the participant through prolonged engagement with the participant and their data. Figure 4 illustrates the systematic approach taken to analyse the data. To support the confirmability of my study, I evidenced my practices and shared the documents with my supervisor and peer debriefer. Samples of my processes have also been included within the appendices, to further enable the reader to also conduct a confirmability audit (Guba, 1981). These steps reflect the "commitment" to quality within Yardley's guidelines (2000).

3.9 Limitations

The key limitation of this IPA study is the number of participants, also it is limited to one country and one sector of education. This study was completed as part of a Master of Arts in Educational Practice, and as such, the research study was naturally constrained with regards to time. Alongside my deadline, I was also cognisant of my FET colleagues' busy periods and holidays, further constraining interview opportunities and in turn the number of

participants. However, small participant numbers are in keeping with the IPA axial commitment to idiography. This focus enables the researcher to capture the participant's world in great detail so that similarities but also subtle differences between experiences can be explored (Smith et al., 2009). This IPA study explored the mentoring phenomenon through in-depth interviews with each participant. These "conversations with a purpose" (ibid, p.57), allowed me to enter the lifeworld of the participant, resulting in interesting and valuable insights within the mentor role in the FET sector. Although highly contextual, these accounts capture the voices of the under-researched mentors within the FET sector in Ireland and highlight key issues.

IPA studies are often conducted over time and sometimes include multiple interviews with the participants (Roulston, 2010). This prolonged engagement enables researchers to reach saturation point, which is a sign of quality (Laverty, 2003). As mentioned, this study was completed as part of a master's, and as such, the research study had submission time constraints, which did not permit multiple interviews with each participant. Spending, on average, 60 minutes with each participant generated a vast amount of data. Completeness of interpretation was achieved through rigorous and systematic data analysis (Yardley, 2000). This process illustrated the complexity and variation of the phenomenon across all three participants, while at the same time highlighting patterns across cases. Notwithstanding, subsequent interviews with each participant may have added more nuances to the findings.

A point to note within IPA studies is that participants are not necessarily representative of the population. The implication is that findings are cautious and should not be generalised to the larger population (Harré, 1979, as cited in Smith et al., 2009, p.29). However, by situating my findings within the wider mentoring literature, I have strengthened their transferability across the FET sector (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Nonetheless,

expanding the study to more participants, may generate further important insights into the role of the mentor, motivations, experiences, and concerns. The search for literature on mentoring within ITE in the FET sector in Ireland should also be highlighted as a limitation of this study. Due to the extensive gap in research, I drew upon literature within the primary and post-primary sectors in Ireland and international literature within the FET sector. This method is reflective of other mentoring studies, seeking to bridge a research gap. Finally, as a novice researcher my limited experience had a bearing on the study. Extensive reading in the area of research methodology, expert guidance from my supervisor, insights for my peer debriefer and critical friends, reflexive journaling, and member-checking, mitigated this limitation.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the interpretivist research paradigm chosen to explore the human experience of mentoring. To best understand the lifeworld of the three participants, IPA was chosen as the methodological approach. The next chapter presents the study's findings through four superordinate themes. Each theme is outlined using rich and illustrative quotes from the three participants. The themes are further enriched by viewing them in line with the wider literature, and also through the theoretical lens of Bourdieu's three thinking tools of habitus, field, and capital.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the rich and detailed lived experiences of the ITE mentors within the FET sector in Ireland. In keeping with IPA traditions, an attempt has been made to represent each participant's voice equally and as an individual, while at the same time identifying convergence and divergence across the participants' experiences. These accounts were gathered to address the research question *How do mentors of trainee teachers in the Irish Further Education and Training sector conceptualise and experience their role?* Within this broad question, five sub-questions guided the study: (1) What motivates experienced teachers to act as mentors for trainee teachers in further education? (2) How do mentors understand their role? (3) How do mentors experience their relationship with trainee teachers? (4) Does mentoring trainee teachers impact the teaching practices of mentors? (5) How do mentors make sense of their relationship with the placement tutor?

Through an iterative and inductive process, I systematically wrote the findings for each of the three participants, only as each case was written-up individually, did I begin to analyse across the data. During this process superordinate and subordinate themes were combined, divided, reorganised, and then freshly interpreted in relation to the whole data set. Indeed, themes that did not directly answer the research question, or were not present in two or more cases do not feature within the final themes. These included the professional voice of temporary staff, teaching within community education, post-primary teachers teaching within the FET sector, job security, recruitment practices, lesson structures, online teaching during COVID-19, trainee teachers' attendance at staff meetings, engaging the learners, and staff interaction with trainee teachers.

This process is represented through photographs and tables shown in Appendix xii. Finally, from this process four final themes emerged. This chapter presents the findings within each theme, including illustrative quotations from the mentors. The interview process yielded an enormous quantity of rich stories, many of which could not feature within the findings, those that do were chosen following careful consideration. These findings are then contextualized thematically in relation to the wider literature. The essence of each theme is introduced below:

Willingness to mentor

This theme outlines the mentors' motivations to share their teaching practice with trainee teachers. These motivations range from self-orientated motivations to others-orientated motivations. We also hear accounts of those that are not willing to mentor. At times, we find mentors persuade reluctant members of their network to cooperate with trainee teachers. This process results in cultural, social, and pedagogical knowledge exchange, which can either be reciprocal or a one-way exchange of knowledge.

The mentor - placement tutor connection

This theme explores the frequency and nature of the interactions between the mentor and the placement tutor. We recognise placement visits as the primary opportunity for cooperation between the pair. These can be best described as quick and casual interactions, with some developing a more collaborative connection than others. We find when mentors are asked to share their opinion on trainee teacher's progress they focus on strengths. It seems there is minimal capital flow within the dyad.

Mentoring: an extension of the teacher role

This theme explores the informal recruitment and selection process for mentors and outlines their casual start in the role. We see the mentors take on this additional workload and squeeze it into their busy timetables, seemingly resulting in short and casual interactions with the trainee teacher. The mentoring relationships seem mainly supportive and nurturing but in the absence of training, stretch and challenge is not always apparent. The voluntary nature of the role and the lack of resourcing seems to affect the role's social capital.

Mentoring relationships and functions

Through vignettes we take a close-up look at three specific mentoring relationships. These snapshots seem to exemplify the varying functions of mentors and the diverse needs of trainee teachers. From these accounts, we learn of relationships that seem to reflect respectful and collaborative partnerships. Within these stories, we see how at times the mentors experience dissonance when responding to the needs of their individual trainee teacher, and yet these relationships seem to continue beyond placement.

4.2 Theme One: Willingness to mentor

This theme explores mentors' motivations and drive to support the next generation of teachers. This role requires mentors to openly share their teaching practices with trainee teachers. Each participant confirmed their mentoring journey began in a similarly casual manner by being "asked" to "take on" a trainee teacher. Frankie's motivations to mentor stemmed from her sense of under-preparedness when she began teaching. For Frankie, mentoring is her opportunity to "alleviate" trainee teachers from suffering by sharing her "pitfalls". On the other hand, the notion of "newness" motivates both Alex and Joe to

mentor trainee teachers. Joe views this newness from a college wide perspective, while Alex views it from a more personal perspective. Alex mentioned he likes seeing “new faces”, within his college there is a surplus of staff so he “very, very rarely” has the opportunity to work with someone new.

> Having [a] trainee teacher around the place as a fresh face, which was sort of a nice thing to have...I always, sort of, jump at the chance of it.

Alex’s references to “fresh” and “new” support the notion of a young trainee teacher but also perhaps, the terms signifies contemporary teaching practices. Similarly, Joe associate’s trainee teachers with newness. He alludes to the fact the college staff were aging and so placement is viewed as a “recruitment bed”, a trainee teacher with a “good track record” could be “a potential future colleague”.

> It would be good to get someone new in with new ideas… new conversations, new ideas, someone with a different up to date approach. Even the conversations and new person in there would create a different dynamic...there’s a lot of positives for also the college...it wasn’t just that we were going to be…giving, we were also going to be on the receiving side.

Joe offers a similar commentary to Alex by repeatedly mentioning the “new ideas” of trainee teachers. It seems teaching practices may have become repetitious over the years, and he hopes the college will benefit from an injection of modern ideas and approaches from the trainee teachers. Joe also repeatedly refers to the conversations within the college, it seems he longs for another person to enter the college and change them. Joe indicates his awareness of the work associated with facilitating a trainee teacher. However, from his perspective, he can see the college would be “receiving” too. Both Alex and Joe agree that mentoring trainee teachers has impacted their personal teaching practices in terms of

technology advancement. Joe personally finds technology supports student engagement and has noticed the technology impact of trainee teachers entering into the classrooms of his staff. According to Alex, the trainee teachers keep him “up-to-speed” with new technology and “modern” teaching practices. In contrast to Joe and Alex’s experiences, Frankie finds her trainee teachers struggle to keep up to date with technology changes. Hence an element of her role is introducing trainee teachers to new technology and the associated efficiencies. According to Joe, alongside the newness trainee teachers introduce, the other “obvious benefit”, is the chance for the teacher to do the administrative “side of the job”.

> An obvious benefit is, while you can't go off down the town for your hour or two hours of economics and marketing or whatever it is. You can go back to your desk, and work on corrections, or something else that's administrative, and feel that you're being productive at that side of the job.

The mentors described opening their doors to being observed by trainee teachers, some mentioned team-teaching, while others outlined the resources they shared and made for their trainee teachers. According to Frankie and Joe, it would seem, this notion of an open mindset and collaborative practices is not shared amongst all educators within the FET sector. Frankie explains “you'll meet people who absolutely will not share the resources, forget it! [Hand raised to illustrate a stop motion]. Which is wrong! [Shaking head in disbelief]”. Frankie’s words and nonverbal body language illustrate her opposition to a privacy-in-practice culture. She also described an instance when she felt abandoned by the teacher that “never came back” and who did not even attempt to share resources. Frankie learned from this experience, now she shares “everything”, and as seen below, she is willing to make resources for her trainee teachers.

> I do think it has a little impact, because you do try to give them a little dig out...it's very hard to make the resources of the stuff you need..."I'll give you the resources, and I'll do a little show-you-how-to-do-it [video]".

Joe repeatedly mentioned having to "sell the benefits" of trainee teachers to his colleagues. He likens the process to "going around the houses begging". By seeking their permission, Joe reminds us of the voluntary nature of the role. Although Joe mentions that many of his colleagues are "keen to do it", it seems not everyone views trainee teachers as positively as Joe.

> I kind of get the vibe pretty quickly as to who's open to it, or where the door was slightly opened, or where the door was firmly closed.

Joe suggests his colleagues' reluctance to mentor may stem from a fear of giving up control and the associated repercussions for the class teacher once the trainee teacher leaves. Joe also considers whether this reluctant attitude stems from being observed by trainee teachers, an apprehension he also shares. According to Joe, most of his colleagues should feel "happy enough" being observed as they have "at least 15 to 18 years teaching under their belt". Joe's use of "enough" here underscores the fact that being observed does not typically feel natural to most people. Joe referred to "observations" as "shadowing" from time to time. When considered closely this term can have negative and even sinister connotations. He expresses how he would "certainly, for the first couple of weeks" feel "anxious" while being observed by a trainee teacher. Joe's reference to the start of the mentoring relationship seems to allude to the fact that the trainee teacher is still an unknown person, they have yet to develop a relationship, and a certain level of comfortability around one another. However, it seems for Joe, the benefits the college receives by facilitating trainee teachers outweighs the emotional toll of being observed.

> It's difficult to know why some are very much against it…but there is obviously apprehension. There's another person in the room who's looking and sizing up and evaluating what I'm doing and how I'm doing it.

In contrast to the privacy and isolated teaching practices experienced by Joe and Frankie, Alex describes a situation where a colleague left the college "her expertise sort of went out the building with her". Alex remembers reaching out to her to share resources, which she did. According to Alex "teachers rely on one another for help…that would have been a normal situation". Alex's words support the notion that in his experience, his colleagues openly share their practices and resources with one another. This open collaboration also seems to influence how Alex looks upon observations. Rather than being threatened by having another "set of eyes", he views observations as an opportunity to develop his teaching practices. Alex recognises the FET sector is different from the primary and post-primary sectors, with respect to school inspections. He goes on to explain that he has never been "inspected". Nor has he ever had an outside perspective on his practice. Similar to Joe, Alex remarked "there is never any cause for any other adult to be in the room with me". These isolated teaching practices, along with a lack of feedback, seem to be a problem for Alex.

> It's just no harm for that set of eyes to make you sort of evaluate what you're doing…because if you're continually just year after year…there's a capacity of things to get stale or…too comfortable.

In a sense this description illustrates how Alex values an outsider's perspective. It seems to encourage him to question and reflect upon his own practices, and even helps him re-engage with teaching pedagogy. Alex identifies how easily someone can become "too comfortable". He also mentioned how trainee teachers have kept him "up-to-speed" with

new technology. Collaborating with trainee teachers seems like Alex's way to prevent his teaching practice from becoming "stale".

The research reveals that the mentors in this study are willing and intentional role models, yet this willingness is not reflected in all studies (Cunningham, 2004; Lesham, 2012). In line with mentoring research, their motives can be broadly categorised into others-orientated motives, self-orientated motives, and at times both (Van Ginkel et al., 2016). Some of the mentors viewed mentoring as a chance for professional development (Clarke et al., 2014). Some see it as an opportunity to do the administrative tasks within teaching. Others viewed mentoring as their opportunity to influence and support the next generation of teachers, a need widely recognised within mentoring theories (Kram, 1983). While another mentor was motivated by recruitment needs, an other-orientated motive, which perhaps reflects the management position held by the mentor. Other studies incorporating Bourdieu as a theoretical framework relate these motives to the creation and flow of cultural capital for both the trainee teacher and mentor (Betteney et al., 2018). A common self-orientated motivation within literature relates to credibility amongst colleagues (Bowman, 2014; Young & MacPhail, 2016). However, this did not emerge in the findings, in fact Lesham's (2014) study has shown this role carries relatively low status in other jurisdictions. A role with relatively low credibility is suggestive of a role with low economic and cultural capital in Bourdieusian terms. This zone of low capital is reflected in Figure 2.

This research also illustrates how mentors motivate those around them to open their minds and classrooms by informally mentoring trainee teachers. Within the literature, this function is termed the conveners of relation (Clarke et al., 2014). These informal mentoring networks seem to support collaborative practices, two-way professional development, and networking (Hallam et al., 2012; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). In line with the theoretical

framework, mentors may be viewed as agents of change as they encourage the flow of capital. Of note, the mentors in this study do not allude to developing practices within their mentor role, as opposed to their teaching role. This finding mirrors the findings in other studies (Clarke et al., 2014). Although some of the mentors encourage their colleagues to also mentor, there is no indication the colleagues come together to share their mentoring practices. In other studies mentors seem to be aware of their isolation and search for opportunities to share their mentoring practices (Holland, 2018; Lesham, 2014; McDonough, 2018). This seems to suggest the mentors in this study have low mentor professional capital from underdeveloped mentor identities (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

The mentors' open mindset seems to be encapsulated within Clarke et al., (2014) typography *Abiders of Change*. However, the mentor's accounts also highlight a lingering resistance to open practices and change amongst some colleagues. This notion of privacy and isolated teaching practices is reflected within some Irish and international teaching literature (Holland, 2018; Kirkby et al., 2017; Teaching Council, 2015). In Bourdieusian terms, this seems to reflect the field-habitus clashes and conflict often found near the borders of fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Ingleby and Hunt (2008) propose the ill-definition of the mentor role prevents the role, and therefore its associated transgressive collaborative practices, from being accepted by the other agents in the field and thus, prevent it from becoming part of the cultural capital.

According to the Teaching Council, the mentors of trainee teachers "…learn from the process themselves…" (2021, p.1). The findings show that some mentors, but not all, associate developments in their teaching practices with mentoring trainee teachers. Some mentors found the presence of trainee teachers supported their reflection upon and renewed connection to teaching pedagogy (Aderibigbe et al., 2014; Farrell, 2020; Lesham,

2012; O'Grady et al., 2018; Richard & Walsh, 2019). While others, in-line with research, found trainee teachers impacted their practice through the introduction of new technology (Bowman, 2014; Hall et al., 2018; Mellon, 2023). Bourdieu, recognised technology innovations as a source of change within fields and consequently an example of hysteresis, a mismatch between habitus and the field (Grenfell, 2008). Mentors seem to keep up to date with these changes through their trainee teachers, thereby reducing the gap between their practices and changing technology. This two-way exchange of knowledge or capital demonstrates that both parties can act as agents of change (Farrell, 2020). This knowledge exchange is strongly associated with developmental mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2004; Manning & Hobson, 2017). However, this two-way learning was not experienced by all, which suggests some relationships could be classified as sponsorship mentoring. This style is directive, led primarily by the mentor, learning is one-way, with less emphasis on coaching and reflection (Aderibigbe et al., 2014; Clutterbuck, 2004).

4.3 Theme Two: The mentor - placement tutor connection

This theme explores the connection and interactions between the mentors and the placement tutors. All three participants met at least one placement tutor since commencing mentoring trainee teachers. Each placement tutor was associated with a different Higher Education Institute (HEI). Both Frankie and Alex are registered FET teachers under Route 3 with the Teaching Council of Ireland, Joe is registered as a post-primary teacher under Route 2. As such, Joe's understanding of placement and the placement tutor role might slightly differ from the other two participants. Interestingly, during the interviews, all three mentors reflected upon and referred to their own placement visits while training to become a teacher.

> And I had that happen for myself as well, I remember my...[PT]…coming into assess me for my H-Dip, [they] met the teacher I was shadowing.

From Frankie's words above, we see she associates the placement tutor visit with assessment. Joe mentioned the placement tutor was "out to observe and evaluate", again Alex identified the placement tutor was "observing". From these comments, we can see that all three participants understood the placement tutor's role had an evaluative function. Alex explained his trainee teacher would typically tell him when the placement tutor was "coming out". Similarly, Joe found out about an observation by being "copied" into an email. According to these accounts, placement visits seem to be the main collaborative opportunity for mentors and placement tutors. Nonetheless, mentors seem to be informed indirectly about the visits, out of courtesy, rather than in consultation or collaboration.

Alex recalls the triadic "interactions" between himself, his trainee teacher, and the placement tutor, which is different to the experiences of Joe and Frankie. He describes them as "the three of us sitting around the table". Alex suggested his role within these interactions was to represent the college "I guess I was the face of FET College X". However, his use of the words "I guess" seems to indicate he is not certain. According to Alex, these triadic chats were "just coffee", "very informal", "very supportive", "very cordial", and tended to revolve around the trainee teacher getting a job rather than placement specific conversations. He stresses the pleasant and relaxed nature of the chats between the trio with a repeated use of the word "very". Alex feeds into this supportive and cordial ambiance by confirming how "great" his trainee teacher was doing.

> I don't remember…getting the impression that part of her [PT] job was to get a sense from me how he [TT] was doing. You know, because that would have required her to ask me, maybe separately.

Alex remarked, when prompted, that the placement tutor did not specifically “ask” him for an update on the trainee teacher’s progress. It seems although these interactions are informal, Alex is guided by the placement tutor’s expectations, perhaps due to his role uncertainty in the situation. Frankie also described an equally relaxed and informal “sit-down chat” she had with one of the placement tutors. This was a chance for Frankie to confirm how “great” her trainee teacher was doing. Like Alex, it seems Frankie is reluctant to go into any specific detail about the trainee teacher’s progress.

> I did have a sit-down chat…“she's grand”... but that's it, you know you wouldn't... [say anymore]…“they're flying it, they're doing great”…that kind of a conversation.

Joe’s first experience with a placement tutor was vastly different to the encounters above. According to Joe, he knew exactly when the placement tutor was coming. But instead of meeting Joe, the placement tutor “simply went to the student teacher’s classes”. Joe went on to say that he had noted the placement tutor’s presence in the classroom as he “was passing on the corridor”. It would seem Joe was prepared and expecting to meet the placement tutor. When that did not happen, he may have gone to check the classroom. Once Joe saw for himself the placement tutor was in the right place, he left. Perhaps due to his role as Department Head, Joe typically keeps track of a “stranger coming in”. However, in this instance, Joe knew the purpose of this “stranger” was to observe the trainee teacher, a function beyond the mentor role, so Joe did not approach her.

> Me just being me, if there’s a stranger coming in…I just want to make sure all is right in that they’re in the room. I didn’t even go near the room…I don’t want to add to her [TT] stress by checking in or anything, so I left it to them.

In contrast to the first visit, Joe points out that the second placement tutor made “a point of meeting me”. Echoing the other mentor’s accounts, we see the encounter is only

"short". However, we note that within this account Joe was "asked" his opinion about the trainee teacher's progress. Previously, Alex had assumed that collaboration was not on the placement tutor's agenda. Like Alex, Frankie's chat with the placement tutor appears to discuss the placement on a general level and focus' on the positive aspects only. Similarly, Joe mentioned that although the encounter was short, the placement tutor wrote a "positive report", so we can assume Joe also focused on the trainee teacher's strengths.

> It was a short encounter… I could have been rushing to class... possibly for five minutes. He [PT] just explained who he was and what he was doing… asked how she [TT] was getting on…thanked us…went to the student teacher, came back afterwards and was quite happy…asked for just general comments on how she was getting on.

Alex spoke about a struggling trainee teacher of his, and how he would have welcomed support from the HEI. He did not recall meeting the placement tutor. However, he wonders, if he had the chance would he have given feedback that suggested she was struggling. The mere idea of giving negative feedback makes Alex feel "uncomfortable". He wonders if his comments would "influence" the trainee teacher's "mark".

> I would have appreciated the opportunity…if there was some sort of formal channel and not even a formal channel, just some channel…with these situations you never want to feel like you're negatively impacting this student's [TT's] chances or whatever, but if there was some sort of informal way of getting a sense of whether I could be helping in a different way.

All three mentors seem to associate assessment with the placement tutor role, not the mentor role. However interestingly, Alex and Frankie provide positive feedback which could possibly impact the trainee teacher's grade.

This research highlights how collaboration within the mentor – placement tutor dyad seems to revolve around placement visits, a visit which is typically arranged between the trainee teacher and the placement tutor rather than amongst the triad. The mentors' accounts illustrate a wide variation between the visits. In one instance, we reported a two-party conversation between the mentor and the placement tutor, we also learned of a triadic conversation, and we saw an interaction between the trainee teacher and the placement tutor only, resulting in a missed opportunity for cooperation between the mentor and placement tutor. The broader research highlights minimum interaction and collaboration within the mentor - placement tutor dyad (Farrell, 2021; McDonough, 2018; O'Grady et al., 2018), with some suggesting interactions are "hit and miss" due to the busy timetables of the mentors (Hall et al., 2019, p.97). However, in the instance of the missed meeting above, it seems more closely aligned to collaboration issues rather than timetabling issues. This missed meeting does not seem to encompass the "spirit" of partnership as outlined in the placement guidelines (Teaching Council, 2013; 2021). In Bourdieusian terms, perhaps this missed meeting reflects the hierarchical grading power of the placement tutor, who is working under the doxic assumption that collaboration with the mentor is unnecessary.

Interestingly, this study found the interactions within the dyad seem to be casual, friendly, and short, which is reflective of other research (Hall et al., 2019). The mentors frequently refer to their full timetable alongside the mentor role and suggest the interactions with the placement tutor are short due to this time pressure. Other research proposes the brevity may result from mentors lacking a professional shared language with placement tutors (Farrell, 2020). Research has recognised how the interactions between teachers and placement tutors have changed and developed in recent years within the

primary and secondary sectors, so much so, that mentors now report feeling disrespected when placement tutors do not ask them about a trainee teacher's progress (Hall et al., 2018). McDonough (2018) found some mentors desire further opportunities to engage with HEI staff, however this did not surface within this study.

This research found mentors seem unsure of their role during placement visits and therefore let the placement tutor lead the interaction. However, mentors seem to have a clear, albeit limited understanding of the placement tutor role, potentially stemming from their own experiences as a trainee teacher. Similar to the findings of Hall et al., (2018), they universally perceive the placement tutor role as observer and assessor, this nomos seems to form a boundary line between the two roles. On one side there is the evaluative placement tutor role or coach, while on the other side is the non-evaluative mentor role, which seems to encompass the counsellor, networker and guide functions identified by Clutterbuck (2004). At times during these interactions, we see mentors are willing to cross the boundary line by giving feedback to the placement tutor (Hall et al., 2019). Importantly, and in line with other research, these boundaries only seem to be crossed when asked (Hall et al., 2018). We also note this feedback seems to be mainly general and confirmatory (Clarke et al., 2014). It seems mentors are keen to engage with placement tutors but do not wish to contribute to the grading process (Hall et al., 2019). The mentors in this study even express a fear of feedback in case it negatively influences the grade of the trainee teacher. This fear seems to prevent the mentors from truly collaborating with the placement tutors. This leniency effect is noted within other research (Clarke et al., 2014), and raises the question of how useful these guarded interactions really are.

Research suggests this discomfort may reference a power shift as mentors engage with a process that once was the sole responsibility of the placement tutor (Clarke et al.,

2014; Kennedy, 2005). As mentioned previously, HEIs have sole responsibility for grading, with mentors in Ireland having a non-evaluative role (Teaching Council, 2013; 2021). This dissonance is perhaps an example of what Bourdieu termed hysteresis, a time lag between placement tutor's grading in isolation and the transgressive collaborative practices between the mentor and the placement tutor. It seems these practices are not yet recognised as the nomos within the field, perhaps in time they will become legitimate, but as yet, they are not universally accepted.

4.4 Theme Three: Mentoring: an extension of the teacher role

This theme explores how the mentor role is perhaps uncertain, unknown, undervalued, and unseen by many within the FET sector. Even though all three mentors met the study's inclusion criteria, they all expressed a slight apprehension and questioned the validity of their experiences, it seems perhaps none identified with the mentor role. In an email prior to the interview, Alex wrote, "I only hope I have 60 minutes' worth of information for you about the mentoring process!". This seems to illustrate his uncertainty about the process, the role, and seems to undervalue his own mentoring experiences.

Before being asked to mentor, Alex confesses he was not fully aware of the role or even trainee teachers in his college. He suggests that perhaps this lack of awareness was a fault of his memory or there were very few trainee teachers until recent years and his memory accurately reflected the "reality of the Further Education sector". When asked about his expectations of the role, Alex compared it with his teaching role, "guiding someone…imparting something". Frankie also admits that she was unclear about the role of the mentor "I don't even know what the role is". According to Joe, his start to mentoring "came about very casually", he explained how he received a trainee teacher's CV by email from his principal, "and I said…why not". Again, similarly to Alex and Frankie, Joe pointed

out he knew “very little” about the process, his account below illustrates this role uncertainty.

> But there was no support as in what to expect, what was going to happen…we knew very little that bar he was coming in… how we were going to accommodate him, was all down to us, and the logistics around it.

Instead of being critical about the lack of support and training Joe received from the various HEIs. He seems to accept that figuring out how to “accommodate” trainee teachers fell within his role. Frankie mentioned “there is no training of any description”. Her use of the word “any” seems to emphasise her point. This lack of training observed by Frankie within the FET sector was in sharp contrast to the banking sector, where she had previously worked. She maintains, the management’s attitude of “just make it work”, would not be accepted in the private sector. In the absence of training, or even a “process”, Frankie draws on her past experiences. According to Frankie “I’ve just lived through it”. Alex’s experience paints a similar picture to Joe’s and Frankie’s. Alex was “left...to my own devices” regarding the “day-to-day” mentor role. He confirmed he learned the role in an uncertain and unstructured manner, “through practice and through actually performing the role”. However, in contrast to the others, Alex’s principal “clearly laid out” the fundamental elements of placement before he began mentoring.

> It was very much the individual [TT] ...came along looking for hours, and [explained] this is what they required and that was it. HEI2 never got in touch with me directly. Nor did HEI3, for a different student teacher. So it was very much, taking the student from face value.

In the extract above, Joe outlines how trainee teachers are typically his primary source of placement information, without any direct communication from HEIs. Similarly,

Alex gets the “nuts and bolts” about the placement from his trainee teachers. However, Frankie wants to know the remits and expectations of the role “hand me a process... so I know I’ve covered everything, that the expectation of me being a mentor [is met]”. In contrast, according to Alex, he did not require support to perform the role or consider that it was “something necessarily that required a whole lot of…background reading”. Alex mentioned that he did not want to be “too dismissive” of the role. He alluded to the fact that the mentor role is an additional role to his full-time teaching role, as did Joe and Frankie. Alex explained this limited his capacity to consider the expanse of the role.

> But this was just the reality of the situation…you have your full-time job of your own, you don’t necessarily put as much thought into everything that you should.

Frankie describes how much of her professional learning, since becoming a Further Education teacher, was through informal channels “it’s all over coffee table”. This informal and casual learning culture, alongside the untimetabled nature of the role, seems to influence how Frankie performs the role, “I don’t say I have an official check-in, let’s put it that way”. Joe also described his interactions with the trainee teachers as “very, very casual”. He mentions these encounters are typically a “conversation on a corridor” or a “how you getting on” in the staffroom, as either himself or the trainee teacher would be “firing away after a couple of minutes”. Similarly, Frankie also uses chance meetings in the “hallway” or informal chats in the staffroom. Alongside these unplanned meetings, Frankie also seems happy to arrange brief and informal out-of-hours interactions when asked by the trainee teacher.

> You know, if it’s a case they’ve to hang on for an hour for me, or I have to hang on for an hour for them, that’s fine...“I'll go down, have a cup of tea, and I'll see you down in the staffroom”.

Again, the casual and informal nature of the relationships are echoed in Alex's account. According to Alex he allows the trainee teachers to "lead" and "guide" the relationship. Similarly, Joe and Frankie also seem to let their trainee teachers control the direction of the relationship and will arrange meetings if asked. Alex felt his role was to "facilitate" the trainee teachers and assumed they would let him know what they "needed". Alex discussed the "sit down" he has with trainee teachers at the end of each observation or team-teaching class. He explained the debriefs were a chance to reflect and discuss "what they [TTs] got out of it...if something could have been done differently, or whether a different class might have been more helpful to them". He was keen to point out, they were not meetings, they were "informal" and "organic" chats, that only lasted "5 minutes". Similar, to the other two participants, Alex seemed almost compelled to emphasise their unplanned and undocumented nature.

> I don't want to overstate the level of planning or whatever that was involved in this as a structure. It just felt like an organic way to go about the relationship…rather than just finishing the class and walking out the room.

Although Alex's interactions with his trainee teachers are casual and informal, they seem to have a clear purpose, they relate to the trainee teacher's learning, and they are not left to chance. Like the other participants, Alex also alluded to the fact that mentoring was additional to his full-time teaching. However, the brevity of the interactions seems to relate closer to the individual trainee teacher's needs and expectations rather than timetabling constraints. Alex recalls a difference in these "conversations" between two trainee teachers. Typically, they were "shorter" with Trainee Teacher 6 (TT6), whereas Trainee Teacher 7 (TT7), identified, discussed, and related the teaching techniques back to his course work.

TT7 seemed to understand Alex's expectation of him within these conversations. However, it would seem TT6 was unwilling or unable to contribute to the discussion in the same way.

> I just do have memories of it being a little bit more just sort of free form and her [TT6] just being…those meetings at the end tended to be shorter and…she would just say "yeah that's fine" and move to the next class.

This research found FET teachers are casually asked to mentor rather than being formally interviewed. Underlying this informal selection process, seems to be the doxic assumption that good teachers make good mentors. However, many studies recognise the opposite to be true, and instead recommend mentor education to prepare for the role (Chamber et al., 2012; Hall et al., 2018; Hobson et al., 2009; Lesham, 2014; McDonough, 2018). The mentors seem at times uncertain about the role, and yet, in line with other research, not all our mentors considered training a necessity for this role (Ingleby & Hunt, 2008; Lesham, 2014). This attitude seems to assume mentoring is a task that is intuitive to experienced teachers. Lesham (2014) found mentoring was viewed as an extension of teaching, which seems in line with Ingleby and Hunt's (2008) finding, that mentoring may not be viewed by all as a distinct and separate professional role.

Although this role is outlined by the Teaching Council within the Guidelines on School Placement (2013; 2021), none of the mentors in this study showed an awareness of these guidelines. Similar to other studies, it seems the mentors in this study often develop their practices in isolation (Holland, 2018; Lesham, 2014; Tyrer, 2022). However, interestingly, the mentoring training associated with the induction process, Droichead, seems to prevent some Irish primary and post-primary mentors from experiencing this isolation (Hall et al., 2018). In the absence of training, the FET mentors seem to construct the role through on-the-job learning, an understanding of the placement tutor's role,

through their individual relationship with trainee teachers, and in line with Tyrer's (2022) research, some base it on their past personal experiences of ITE. However, these isolated practices can lead to mentors reproducing cultures that are misaligned with current policy, and potentially even result in the suppression of the professional identity of trainee teachers (Lesham, 2012; Murphy, 2019; O'Grady et al., 2018). This situation has led some researchers to call for more clarity around the role (Cunningham, 2004; Farrell, 2020; Hall et al., 2019; Ingleby & Hunt, 2008; Mellon, 2023; O'Grady et al., 2018).

In line with other research, the mentors report being mainly reactive, allowing the trainee teacher to set the tone and the direction of the relationship (Farrell, 2020; Hall et al., 2018; O'Grady et al., 2018). This reactive style of mentoring is akin to what Clutterbuck (2004) describes as a non-directive relationship, a style that is particularly effective in terms of personal development. The findings illustrate that mentoring within the FET sector is strongly associated with the nurturing behaviours of a counsellor or confidante, rather than stretching behaviours of a coach or assessor (Clutterbuck 2004; Cothran et al., 2008; Kennedy, 2005). In line with other studies, when proactively sought, our mentors do give casual, friendly, undocumented, and non-evaluative feedback (Bird & Hudson, 2015; Hall et al., 2018). International research has found mentors who perform an evaluative function often face tensions due to their dual role of colleague and judge (Betteney et al., 2018; McDonough, 2018). According to Klasen and Clutterbuck (2002), this evaluative function conflicts with the philosophical underpinnings of a developmental relationship.

Some suggest the casual and friendly feedback, stems from timetabling issues (Cothran et al., 2008; Harrison et al., 2005; Lesham, 2014; Savory & Glasson, 2009; Tyrer, 2022; Young & MacPhail, 2016). Others suggest mentors may perceive their role differently to how trainee teachers view it, and therefore perhaps do not see these functions as the

norm within their role (Ingleby & Hunt, 2008; Mellon, 2023; Young & MacPhail, 2016). As a result, these casual and friendly relationships are closely aligned with transmission rather than a transformative professional developmental model, resulting in a lack of challenge (Clarke et al., 2014; Kennedy, 2005; Mellon, 2023). In Bourdieusian terms, perhaps the Irish FET mentors are working under the doxic assumption that the non-evaluative function of the mentor is to provide informal, unwritten, and supportive feedback. The notion of being critical of the trainee teacher's practice may be perceived as the role of the placement tutor only. Its absence may represent the time lag before critical feedback is viewed as legitimate practices within the role.

4.5 Theme Four: Mentoring relationships and functions

This theme explores current mentoring practices in the FET sector through three vignettes. The hope is that these exemplars will give a deep insight into the unique and individual side of mentoring relationships in FET. The stories illustrate how the mentors respond to the specific needs of their trainee teacher, which at times seems to push the mentors beyond how they conceptualise the role.

Vignette 1: Frankie & Pat (trainee teacher)

Frankie described a mentoring relationship in which she supported Pat to prepare for the external authenticator (EA). Although, in this instance Pat was a newly qualified teacher, the mentoring experience seems instrumental in how Frankie now mentors her trainee teachers. Frankie explained how Pat had just started in her FET college and had been given eight modules to teach. She too had a similar start to teaching in the college and likened his road ahead with "firefighting". From personal experience, she knew he would be in survival mode for the entire year without any "breathing space". Frankie described a

"horrific" incident at the end of the term, when she realised he "hadn't kept up to date with the paper [work]… so we were literally sorting paper". According to Frankie, she spent days helping Joe "get his end of year folders together". And without support, "he would have sank".

> The administration of it all was horrific for him and, and me [she raised a hand to her head as if reliving the pain of the situation], because between the two of us, ahh, [it took] hours, absolute hours.

Frankie's words seem to illustrate the welcomed collaboration "between the two", which seems to reflect an invited space of participation (Clarke et al., 2014). Here we see Frankie responding to Pat's needs by shouldering his burden and literally becoming an extra pair of hands to sort through paper for days. These functions seem to encompass a *guide* as identified by Clutterbuck (2004). And perhaps more specifically, elements of the *Purveyors of Context* (Clarke et al., 2014), in which mentors induct a mentee into their specific teaching context. Frankie's words and nonverbal actions seem to convey the emotional toll she experienced over the course of these days with Pat. Frankie felt sympathy for Pat, but equally, she also felt sympathy for herself. She pointed out that she had her "work" done at this stage of the term, and therefore, she was doing this in her spare time. This negative experience seems to reflect the unmanageable workloads of mentors reported in other studies (Hobson et al., 2009).

> If I'm 100% honest, I found it horrific trying to help…get his end of year folders together, it was horrific. It was horrific, because I had my own work, which I'd done.

Frankie's motivation to support Pat, even at personal cost, seems to stem from her own "learning curve" with regards to this process. According to Frankie, "everything seems to be geared towards what we call the EA", but even still "nobody's ever had that

conversation…or explained…how it worked". The EA role seems to wield an enormous amount of power and therefore symbolic capital in Frankie's view. She learned about the quality assurance (QA) process and EA role over time, and by witnessing the consequences for colleagues who made "errors". In Bourdieusian terms, Frankie now knows the rules of the game, even if she does not fully agree with them "the learning is there, the stuff was assessed, but it needs to be in this lovely little package to be handed to an EA". She now has the cultural capital to induct trainee teachers into the habitus of the teaching field, so the EA cannot "pull your work apart". Interestingly, while none of the other mentors in the study refer to the QA process, international research within the FET sector also reflects mentoring which is heavily orientated around the process (Tyrer, 2022).

Although this experience seems to have left an emotional mark on Frankie, it does not seem to have negatively impacted upon her relationship with Pat. From our conversation, it seems the QA process does not fully align with Frankie's personal belief systems. As such, perhaps she associates this "horrific" experience with the QA process, rather than Pat. In fact, she remarked "he's lovely and he's still here and he's doing fantastic". It seems, although the mentoring relationship officially ended, Frankie and Pat seem to have entered a new phase in their relationship. From her account, Frankie seems to be keeping up to date with Pat's progress and is proud of his success, a finding mirrored in other studies (Hobson et al., 2009; Kram, 1983).

Vignette 2: Joe & Michelle (trainee teacher)

Joe also gave a detailed account of the mentoring relationship he had with Michelle, like Pat, she too was struggling. Joe described how Michelle had experienced "challenges" during placement. Apparently, her first observation with the placement tutor "didn't go well". According to Joe, "he felt obliged" to help her, and "asked" if she would share the

placement tutor's report. He explained, "I didn't feel like I had to", and he pointed out that interpreting placement tutor's reports was not a function he typically performed for trainee teachers. However, he appreciated the effort Michelle had "invested" in the college, and in return, he wanted to ensure her success by giving her "friendly advice". In Bourdieusian terms, this advice can be viewed as a form of capital. Over Joe's 25 years of teaching, he has amassed vast quantities of pedagogic, social, and cultural capital which he shares with Michelle, and recognises the capital she in turn contributes to the college.

> I felt obliged to do it in the sense, she had invested time in our college, and I wanted to make sure she was going to get the best from her own course, and benefit from the programme…I felt obliged that I should try and give her a hand if I could.

Joe offers Michelle support by asking her to reflect, question and expand her practices in-line with the recommendations of the placement tutor. This function seems similar to S*upporters of Reflection* (Clarke et al., 2014), where the mentee is stretched and challenged, like the coaching function recognised by Clutterbuck (2004), or indeed the *reflective practitioner* (Maynard & Furlong, 2014). Echoing Frankie and Pat's vignette, we see that Joe "asked" Michelle to share the report. This seems to indicate genuine and invited participation (Clarke et al., 2014).

> I was trying to sell her the advantages of moving to a different style and at the same time not trying to annoy her, by saying your style is wrong…I didn't want to be undermining her style either.

Initially Michelle "argued" and challenged Joe. He describes how he recognised the professional identity she had developed over years of lecturing in third level institutes but asked her to "take on board" the placement tutor's feedback. Joe seems to place great importance on the placement tutor report. To him, it seems to symbolise the hierarchical

power of the placement tutor in the field, he knows this is “what goes back” to the HEI. From his experience, he assumes Michelle is in “jeopardy” of getting a “lower grade” if she fails to respond to the report by reproducing the accepted practices within the field. Joe suspected she did not automatically accept the feedback, so he persisted and “asked her a couple of times” if she had implemented it. Again, he felt “obliged” to warn Michelle to “practice, practice, practice” in advance of the placement tutor’s visit.

While performing this function, Joe seems to experience dissonance. Some have found these negative experiences may stem from power struggles when mentees fail to articulate the nomos of the field (Betteney et al., 2018). Although Joe has not chosen to be the assessor, by relaying and reenforcing the placement tutor’s judgements, he experiences tensions when Michelle resists the habitus of the field. Joe seems to value her autonomy and professional identity. Yet, at the same time, he understands the rules of the game. Joe seems to realise this resistance to reproduce legitimised shared practices may be reflected in her grade. At the same time, this dissonance may also stem from Joe performing a function in which he does not associate with the role. Or indeed, one that does not align with his personal belief system. According to Lesham (2012), mentors may have preconceived assumptions and expectations of the role. It seems in this instance, Michelle’s needs may have stretched Joe beyond his conceptualization of the mentor role.

Joe followed up by saying Michelle’s second visit went “far better” and that her placement tutor was “happy with her levels of interaction and her approach”. Like Frankie, Joe seems proud of his mentee’s success. Joe confirmed Michelle is still working in the college, which is perhaps unsurprising given the college’s view on placement “we are testing the waters with a person and if they work out well, we can certainly give them hours going forward”. Again, Joe’s words seem to reflect the reciprocal flow of capital, whereby a trainee

teacher is inducted into the habitus, and if they successfully reflect the accepted nomos, the college will recognise their embodied capital with employment.

Vignette 3: Alex & Mike (trainee teacher)

Alex outlined a particularly unique mentoring relationship where Mike was completing an ITE programme. However, at the same time, Mike was also working as a teacher in the college, as he was already a qualified post-primary teacher. Alex described the situation as “unenviable”, as Mike had been given a module without any resources. Although, this module did not relate to the ITE programme, Alex found himself “trying to help” by reaching out to an ex-colleague for resources to support Mike. Alongside resources, Alex confirmed he tried to “guide him” through the module he was teaching.

> It really was an unenviable situation for a student teacher. I was trying to help as best I could, and I was getting resources from the other teacher…there is a little bit of crossover with mathematics that I was able to help him with.

From Alex’s account, it seems he felt a lot of empathy for Mike, “there was also this other stuff going on in the background that he was sort of saddled with”. Alex recognised that although Mike was a qualified post-primary teacher, he did not have a “background delivering further education modules”. Alex remembered his first year in the FET sector as “extremely overwhelming” while he got to grips with teaching and the sector, “new phraseology, new technology, new awarding bodies, new, new everything”. By mentoring, Alex shares the social and cultural capital he has accumulated over the past 14 years in the field of teaching, so he can shield his mentee from experiencing the same overwhelming start.

> He was a little bit unsure of himself, understandably. A lot of our relationship was me trying to guide him through those classes, that I wasn't actually there to observe.

Alex seems to answer Mike's needs by guiding him through the year with practical advice and by reaching out to his network for support. These functions seem to be reflected within a coach (Clutterbuck, 2004) or indeed *Advocates of the Practical* (Clarke et al., 2014) in which the mentees learn the day-to-day routine from the mentor. However, alongside a practical induction, we see Alex performing a networking function (Clutterbuck, 2004; Tyrer, 2022), which seems to be mirrored in *Conveners of Relation* identified by Clarke et al., (2014). Again, these interactions seem to signal a welcomed form of cooperation or invited space as identified by Clarke et al., (2014). And can be viewed in terms of capital flow from Alex, and Alex's network, to Mike.

Alex mentioned he grew "quite close" in a professional capacity with Mike. In line with Clutterbuck's (2004) research, it seems their relationship is now primarily based on friendship within this new phase. According to Alex, they recently had a telephone call to discuss a job application. From this conversation, Alex outlined how he put Mike in contact with another colleague to discuss employment contracts. It seems Alex continues to support Mike's career by once again giving him access to his network, a function identified by Kram (1983) within the redefinition phase. Alex mentioned his mentoring relationships have each evolved differently with varying levels of closeness, which he puts down to personalities. He described another mentoring relationship as having "less warmth". He confirmed he sporadically bumps into his former mentee and will "always say hello". This variance in terms of contact and support seems to reflect the unique nature within individual mentoring relationships. Mike seems comfortable reaching out to Alex with regards to career advice, whereas it seems the other mentee does not. Other studies have also found that successful mentoring relationships were due in part to the personal relationship which developed between the pair (Savory & Glasson, 2009).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the unique and individual experiences of mentors in Ireland's FET sector, gathered through semi-structured interviews. The data from each interview was analysed and synthesised in a cyclical process to expose four major themes. For authenticity, the individual voice of each mentor was represented through carefully selected extracts. The four themes included: willingness to mentor, the mentor - placement tutor connection, mentoring: an extension of the teacher role, and finally, mentoring relationships and functions. To illuminate areas of convergence and divergence, these rich and detailed stories were discussed alongside the broader research and Bourdieu's trio of thinking tools: habitus, field, and capital.

The theme Willingness to mentor found, mentors are willing and want to mentor trainee teachers. Their motivations range from self-orientated motivations to develop teaching practices, to others-orientated motivations to support the next generation of teachers. According to the placement guidelines, mentors should allow trainee teachers to observe them, they should share planning, student attainment, and setting procedures (Teaching Council, 2021). Mentors seem to embrace this open mindset, even though occasionally they feel discomfort. However, according to our mentors, although they choose to do this role, others do not. The mentors in this study seem opposed to the isolated practices of some of their colleagues. By outlining the associated benefits of mentoring, they seem to sway members of their network to embrace the role and its associated open practices. The second finding within this theme was that mentoring is often associated with a two-way exchange of knowledge. However, reciprocal learning seems to depend upon how the mentor conceptualises mentoring. Research has found developmental mentoring supports learning for both the mentor and mentee (Clutterbuck, 2004; Manning & Hobson,

2017). Notably mentors that have received mentor education seem more likely to adopt a developmental mentoring approach (Hobson et al., 2009).

The mentor - placement tutor connection theme seems to highlight an absence of a genuine partnership between the mentor and placement tutor. According to the placement guidelines there should be “regular professional dialogue” between the HEI and the trainee teacher’s setting (Teaching Council, 2021, p.22). And yet we find placement visits seem to be the primary opportunity for these professional conversations. These visits seem to be arranged between the placement tutor and trainee teacher only, with the mentor being informed of the dates indirectly and perhaps without consideration of the mentor’s timetable. This lack of professional courtesy seems to lead to missed opportunities for collaboration within the dyad and does not seem to reflect the inclusive and open communication within the ITE “partnership approach” as outlined by the Teaching Council (2021, p.16). Another finding within the theme was the absence of meaningful dialogue within the dyad. As outlined, placement visits seem to have minimal professional dialogue regarding trainee teacher’s progress, an issue which seems to stem partially from mentor’s role uncertainty. The mentors reluctancy to transparently discuss trainee teacher’s progress is evident and seems to highlight an absence of true collaboration. The placement guidelines suggest mentors should support the recommendation of the placement tutor (2021, p.15), a task that seems to be more challenging in the absence of sufficient professional dialogue.

Theme three, mentoring: an extension of the teacher role, found that mentoring seems to be accepted as a task within the teacher role, rather than being considered a professional role in its own right. A lack of training seems to convey the message that mentoring is intrinsically embodied within teachers. Even though research has found mentors are pivotal to the professional development of trainee teachers (Hall et al., 2019),

its ill-definition seems to devalue its social capital and status. This seems to have led to a situation where even the mentors undervalue their own experiences and do not seem to identify as a mentor. Another major finding was a general lack of challenge within mentoring relationships. It seems that although mentors are willing to perform the role, they are not always able (Chambers et al., 2012; Farrell, 2020; Hall et al., 2018; Husband, 2020). Mentors carry out this role in addition to their own teaching commitments, resulting in the role being minimised to fit around busy timetables. The resulting short and unplanned interactions, reflected within this study and the wider literature, seem at odds with the "critical dialogue" and the "reflection" elements envisioned within the 2021 Teaching Council placement guidelines (Manning & Hobson, 2017; O'Sullivan & Ó Conaill, 2022; Tyrer, 2022).

The final theme explored mentoring relationships and functions through vignettes, these stories illustrated the variety of functions and nuanced work of the mentors. These stories from the field seem to agree with Lesham's (2012) findings in that mentoring is context specific and highly personal. These snapshots illustrate high variability within the role (Cunningham, 2004; Manning & Hobson, 2017; Mellon, 2023; Savory & Glasson, 2009; Tyrer, 2022). However, in line with other studies, the findings also suggest this variation arises from trainee teacher's individual needs, the trainee teacher's expectations of the mentor role, and the unique relationship within the dyad (Farrell, 2020; Tyrer, 2022; Young & MacPhail, 2016). These relationships seem to reflect genuine collaborations (Clarke et al., 2014). But also perhaps suggest that at times trainee teachers are constrained in order to reproduce practices rather than innovate (Lesham, 2012). A second finding within this theme was that mentoring relationships seem to evolve and last beyond placement (Bowman, 2014). It seems when relationships continue beyond the formal mentoring

programme, they are more equal in nature and often based on friendship (Clutterbuck, 2004). In line with other literature, it seems the mentors track their trainee teacher's progress beyond placement, they seem to derive satisfaction from their trainee teacher's success and may even continue to sponsor the career of their trainee teacher (Hobson et al., 2009; Kram, 1983).

The following chapter will conclude the findings and discussion of this study, with implications and recommendations outlined.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This fifth and final chapter provides an overall conclusion to this research. This study took an IPA approach to capture the rich lived experiences of mentors within ITE in the Irish FET sector. Chapter Four gave a voice to the under-researched mentors within the FET sector in Ireland. The findings, which are based on the experiences of three FET mentors, were presented and discussed within four broad themes: willingness to mentor, the mentor - placement tutor connection, mentoring: an extension of the teaching role, and mentoring relationships and functions. Based on these findings, conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations are provided.

5.2 Addressing the Research Questions

From the outset, this study aimed to address the research question: *How do mentors of trainee teachers in the Irish Further Education and Training sector conceptualise and experience their role?* Within this broad research question, five sub-questions were identified. These questions are presented below with a brief note on how the findings addressed each question.

Research Question 1: What motivates experienced teachers to act as mentors for trainee teachers in further education?

The research reveals mentors' motivations range from developing their own practices, supporting the next generation of teachers, facilitating administrative duties, and recruiting new staff. These motivations can be classified as either others-orientated motivations or self-orientated motivations (Van Ginkel et al., 2016). In Bourdieusian terms

these motives can be viewed in line with the flow of capital. The self-orientated motivations clearly suggest a reciprocal flow of capital between the mentor and mentee. Bourdieu argues there is no such thing as a disinterested act, which suggests mentors unknowingly accumulate capital even if their motivations are others-orientated. Interestingly, mentors discuss motivating other colleagues to mentor. However, some colleagues seem reluctant, choosing instead to keep their practices private (Kirkby et al., 2017; Teaching Council, 2015). This resistance to mentoring seems to suggest these practices are not yet viewed as legitimate within the field, perhaps due to the ill-definition of the mentor role (Ingleby & Hunt, 2008).

Research Question 2: How do mentors understand their role?

This research found that teachers are asked to mentor without a role description, training, or knowledge of placement guidelines. The mentors' stories reflect how they are left alone to work out the role for themselves, which they do by reflecting on their own experiences on placement and the visits they have from the placement tutor. Significantly, trainee teachers seem to be an important source of information about placement. This informal induction process seems to be built upon the doxic assumption that good teachers make good mentors. Instead of mentoring being viewed as a professional role in its own right, its low capital value has led to a situation where some see it as an extension of the teaching role (Lesham, 2014). This has resulted in mentors having a limited understanding of the role, resulting in a wide variation (Cunningham, 2004; Farrell, 2020; Hall et al., 2019; Mellon, 2023; O'Grady et al., 2018), and at times a one-way learning process (Clarke et al., 2014), as mentors are left to develop their mentoring practices in isolation (Tyrer, 2022).

Research Question 3: How do mentors experience their relationship with trainee teachers?

Our mentors describe their relationships with their trainee teachers as casual, informal, and positive (Cunningham, 2004; Hallam et al., 2012; Mellon, 2023). The mentors' stories illustrate nurturing, non-directive relationships, in which the mentors are guided by the needs of the trainee teacher (Clutterbuck, 2004; Farrell, 2020; Hall et al., 2018). The relationships seem highly unique and differ in terms of closeness. Notably, the mentors perform evaluative functions but only if requested by the trainee teacher, feedback is presented as friendly advice, a situation which can lead to trainee teachers being underchallenged (Clarke et al., 2014; Kennedy, 2005; Lesham, 2012). In Bourdieusian terms, it could be suggested the mentors work under the doxic assumption that their role is closer aligned to guide and counsellor, rather than coach (Clutterbuck, 2004). In time, the transgressive practices of a coach may become accepted as nomos within the role. We also see our mentors reproduce shared practices which may not align with their personal beliefs (Orland-Barak & Klein, 2005). These cultures can constrain trainee teachers (Betteney et al., 2018), and reduce innovative practices (Hobson et al., 2009; Lesham, 2012).

Research Question 4: Does mentoring trainee teachers impact the teaching practices of mentors?

Our mentors' stories illustrate how trainee teachers support the mentors to reconnect with teaching pedagogies (Aderibigbe et al., 2014), and also introduce them to new technology (Bowman, 2014; Farrell, 2020). This learning from the mentee to the mentor is suggestive of developmental mentoring. In Bourdieusian terms, this knowledge exchange keeps mentors' teaching practices up to date thus preventing mentors from experiencing hysteresis between their practices and the legitimised modern practices within

the field. However, not all the mentors report learning from their mentees, indicating some mentoring approaches may be closer aligned to sponsorship mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2004; Manning & Hobson, 2017). Interestingly, none of the mentors alluded to developments within their mentoring practices, a lack of training alongside the untimetabled nature of the role seems to prevent teachers from viewing mentoring as a separate and distinct role from teaching (Lesham, 2014).

Research Question 5: How do mentors make sense of their relationship with the placement tutor?

This research illustrates how the mentor - placement tutor relationship is quite often mediated through the trainee teacher. Indeed, in many cases it seems the placement visits are arranged without consultation with the mentor. These visits are the primary opportunity for mentors and placement tutors to connect. The mentors describe the meetings as casual, friendly, and short. Their stories show how they take the lead from the placement tutors and collaborate when asked (Hall et al., 2018). But the mentors seem reluctant to offer anything other than positive feedback (Clarke et al., 2014), in case they negatively impact the grade of the trainee teacher. This reluctancy may stem from the doxic assumption that placement tutor's grade in isolation. Collaborative grading practices therefore may be viewed as transgressive, and not yet accepted as nomos within the field. In Bourdieusian terms, the grading power of the placement tutor has high symbolic capital, in contrast to the non-evaluative role of the mentor.

5.3 Implications for Policy and Practice

As with most educational and social science research, there are implications for policy and practice. This study firstly highlights the important work mentors do in supporting

the professional formation of trainee teachers, but also as change makers that encourage open and collaborative practices across their network of colleagues. However, this study has found that not all mentors associate the process with self-development in terms of their teaching practices or indeed their mentoring practices. To counter-act this one-way flow of knowledge, mentors should receive mentor education training. An area of focus within the training should be developmental versus instrumental mentoring conceptions (Manning & Hobson, 2017), as mentors with a developmental mentoring conception tend to view themselves as a learner in the mentoring process (Van Ginkel et al., 2016). This training, would in turn, reduce the number of mentors developing their practices in isolation (Tyrer, 2022), and may potentially lead to the development of mentoring communities of practices, which some have found to develop the professional identity of mentors (Holland, 2018). In line with other research, mentor education training should explore the tensions within mentoring relationships, and coping strategies to minimise the negative side of mentoring for mentors (McDonough, 2018).

Alongside exploring mentoring conceptions, and tensions within mentoring relationships, another worthy element highlighted within other research, is sharing of contextualised stories from the field (Lesham, 2014), enabling mentors to learn with, and from one another (Holland, 2018). Another worthwhile component within mentor education could be an overview of current teaching pedagogies typically taught within ITE programmes (Ingleby & Hunt, 2008). This re-engagement with the literature would support a common shared language across mentors, trainee teachers, and placement tutors. An interesting avenue to explore, in relation to the professionalisation of the role, is the development of accredited mentor education programmes such as those developed by The Ministry of Education in Israel (Lesham, 2014). Cunningham (2004) is also an advocate for

accredited mentoring programmes, which may possibly raise the symbolic capital and therefore the status of the role (Ingleby & Hunt, 2008). Alternatively, Farrell (2020) has previously suggested extending the formal mentoring induction process, Droichead, to include ITE in Ireland. A report commissioned by the Teaching Council to review Droichead, found its success seems to be linked to the state funding for training, release time, and resourcing (Uí Choistealbha & Ní Dhuinn, 2021).

This study also illustrates the limited interactions between the mentor and the placement tutor. Although these encounters seem positive, they seem to be lacking in genuine professional dialogue. These issues seem to stem from the ill-defined mentor role, asymmetrical partnerships and a disconnect from the HEI. A remedy to this situation might be in the form of partnership sessions, which aim to develop democratic school-university learning communities (Farrell, 2020). These sessions would comprise of mentors, placement tutors, lecturing staff, principals and perhaps even the trainee teachers. The sessions could outline the roles of each partner, consider how roles have changed, explore future collaboration opportunities, and in line with other research, discuss the aims of the ITE programmes (Ingleby & Hunt, 2008; Lucas et al., 2012). Alongside partnership sessions, it seems important to enhance collaboration opportunities within placement visits. In particular, the triadic conversation explored within the findings seems to be a useful route to expand upon, as some have found communities of practices develop from these interactions (Mauri et al., 2019).

This study also shows how the mentor role is untimetabled and additional to a teacher's timetabled hours. This situation seems to have led to mentoring relationships that are casual, and positive, but may lack challenge for the trainee teacher. This additional workload may cause mentors to experience the negative side of mentoring (Hobson et al.,

2009; Husband, 2020). In line with other research, before selecting mentors, a principal should consider who is both willing and able (Hallam et al., 2012). An ability to perform the role includes skills, personal disposition, but having the time to perform the role should also be considered (Savory & Glasson, 2009; Tyrer, 2022).

As alluded to previously, there are a limited number of studies exploring this role within the Irish context. This study therefore contributes to the wider research, as a platform for mentors to make this role visible to the readers through first-hand accounts of current mentoring practices in the FET sector in Ireland. In the apparent absence of opportunities for mentors in FET to openly share their mentoring practices, this study would be of interest to current and future mentors, to gain a clearer picture of attitudes, behaviours, functions, needs, motivations, and relationships, linked by research, with mentoring experiences from across the globe. Mentors seeking to build upon this research, could investigate how mentoring relationships evolve and impact both the mentee and mentor beyond placement.

5.4 Implications for my Personal Practice

This research has brought about a critical reflection of my current practices as an educator, teacher, and mentor. This study pushed me to question my assumptions of mentoring, which I developed while teaching in the primary sector in the UK. During this process, I began to recognise I enacted the role of mentor in line with the expectations of the HEI, which in turn, were strongly influenced by the standards-led culture of performativity in the UK. Much of my training related to observing and grading trainee teachers in line with the UK Teachers' Standards (Department of Education, 2012), which focus mainly on pupil attainment and progress rather than teacher professional identity and voice.

In contrast to my FET colleagues, I did not develop my mentoring practices in isolation. Instead, I was inducted into this role by experienced colleagues who lived in a culture of fear of the school inspectorate Ofsted. The combination of this research, my experiences of teaching in Ireland, working for an ITE provider, together with engaging with international mentoring literature, has help me gain a wider perspective on my past mentor role enactment in the UK. Although I identify with the developmental mentoring conception, I now see my enactment may have been closer aligned with the instructional mentoring conception or even judgemental mentoring (Manning & Hobson, 2017). Although, I prided myself on encouraging critical reflection, risk-taking, and adopting a learner approach. My teaching, and my mentoring enactment, was driven by the HEIs observation pro-forma paperwork, the UK teachers' standards, and the ever-looming presence of Ofsted. Therefore, I focused much of my efforts on improving a teacher's performance through observations, similar to the mentors in Tyrer's (2022) study.

The stories of my FET colleagues were like a breath of fresh air, their nurturing relationships and friendly advice, cautiously given to support rather than oppress professional development. And yet my research has shown that not all these mentoring approaches, can be described as developmental mentoring either. A gap between mentor conceptualisation and enactment has been identified in other studies (Manning & Hobson, 2017; Orland-Barack & Klein, 2005; Tyrer, 2022). Similar to my recommendations, Orland-Barack and Klein (2005) propose the exploration of developmental and instrumental mentoring conceptualisation in order for mentors to expose conflicts, potentially leading to closer alignment of beliefs and practices. This research has expanded my personal definition of mentoring and has encouraged me to question and reflect upon my own practices. I hope this research will support my FET colleagues to do likewise.

5.5 Conclusion

This research study aimed to address the following research question: *How do mentors of trainee teachers in the Irish Further Education and Training sector conceptualise and experience their role?* A range of methodologies were considered, however IPA was chosen as it offered a flexible and creative approach to explore and understand the experiences of the mentors. During semi-structured interviews, the three participants were asked to share their experiences of mentoring in ITE in the FET sector in Ireland. The data from each interview was analysed thematically on a case-by-case basis before the data was analysed across cases. Through this cyclical process four final themes emerged which were discussed and contextualized within the broader mentoring literature, and through the application of Bourdieu's theoretical framework of habitus, field, and capital. Bourdieu's thinking tools supported additional theorising of the mentor role from a multitude of angles including, embodied professional capital and status, conflict and dissonance, the flow of cultural, social, and pedagogic capital, transgressive versus legitimised practices of agents, the reproduction of shared practices, hysteresis in the field, and symbolic and hierarchical power.

The findings answered the five sub-research questions. This study contributes to the current research on mentoring in ITE and highlights the gap in the literature within the FET sector in Ireland. The insights from these findings and their associated implications are valuable to the FET sector, to ITE providers and to the Teaching Council of Ireland, as they impact the professional development of mentors, the professional formation of trainee teachers, mentor resourcing and selection, and the development of democratic ITE partnerships.

To finish on a personal note, I truly hope this study and its recommendations increase the number of developmental mentoring relationships within the FET sector, so that many more teachers can reap the full rewards mentoring has to offer.

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Appendix

Appendix i: Role of the mentor/ co-operating teacher

Role of the Mentor/ Co-operating teacher as outlined in the Placement Handbook

Role of the Mentor/Co-operating Teacher

A Mentor/Co-operating teacher is an experienced teacher who works in the placement setting. They support and guide the student teacher through the phases while they are completing the placement and act as a point of contact between NCI and the setting. It is up to the Mentor/Co-operating teacher how they gradually facilitate the student teacher to assume the responsibilities of class management.

The Mentor/Co-operating teacher plays a significant role in the formation of the student teacher. The importance of the relationship between the Mentor/Co-operating teacher and the student teacher cannot be overemphasised. The student teacher will depend on the Mentor/Co-operating teacher to gradually introduce them to the professional practices of teaching in a college or organisational setting. Student teachers must remain under the auspices of their Mentor/Co-operating teacher throughout the Placement, in particular, during the Provisional Teaching Phase.

Mentor/Co-operating teachers will guide student teachers in carrying out tasks such as planning strategies for improvement, integrating ideas from theory, managing classroom activities, and designing assessments to provide feedback to pupils and learners. The Mentor/Co-operating teacher should support and guide the student teacher to document class plans and engage in co-teaching practices. The Mentor/Co-operating teacher should agree LTA Designs are realistic and achievable for the student teacher, before they commence the Provisional Teaching Phase.

It is important to emphasise that if the Mentor/Co-operating teacher is concerned in any way about the behaviour and/or well-being of the student teacher, the Mentor/Co-operating teacher should contact the Placement Tutor or Programme Director. Further information on contact details can be found on page 4 of this booklet.

For further clarification on the role of the Mentor/ Co-operating teacher please see the Teaching Council's Guidelines for School Placement.

Appendix ii: Recruitment email

Participants were recruited for this research study using a snowball strategy. I asked three of my colleagues, who had a variety of connections within FET Colleges, to share my recruitment email with teacher they knew who had recent trainee teacher mentoring experience.

Dear Colleague,

My name is Deirdre, and I am currently completing a research masters with the National College of Ireland.

What is the research about?
My research project is focused on the experiences of mentor teachers in the Further Education and Training sector.

What is involved?
I am looking to interview mentor teachers to capture their experiences within this role. The study will comprise of an interview, which can take place at a date, time and location that suits you. Your identity will remain anonymous throughout the research.

Want to find out more?
I would be grateful if you would consider participating in my research project. To register your interest and to receive more information please email: X22160281@student.ncirl.ie

Thank you in advance,
Deirdre Tinnelly

Researcher's contact details: X22160281@student.ncirl.ie
Supervisor's contact details yvonne.emmett@ncirl.ie

Appendix iii: Plain language statement

This form was emailed to each participant prior to the interview and then read aloud to each participant to confirm continued and ongoing consent.

2. Plain Language Statement – Information Sheet
Introduction to the Research Study
The working title for this Research Study is *Mentoring Journeys in the Further Education and Training Sector.* It is a dissertation being undertaken by Deirdre Tinnelly, a student completing a Master of Arts in Educational Practice, in the National College of Ireland.

Details of what involvement in the Research Study will require
Involvement in the Research Study will entail an interview with you, where we can explore your experiences of mentoring student teachers. Only one researcher will conduct this interview and it will take approximately 60mins. It will take place either in-person or online depending on your wishes. Brief notes and an audio recording of the interview will be made. The questions will be open-ended, allowing you to elaborate on your journey to date.

Potential risks to participants from involvement in the Research Study
It is not envisaged that you will encounter any risk arising from involvement in the Research Study greater than that encountered in everyday life.

Benefits (direct or indirect) to participants from involvement in the Research Study
You may benefit directly from the opportunity to reflect on your learning journey. The study aims to advance knowledge and understanding of the experience of mentors in the Further Education and Training sector, hence further education institutes and other providers may benefit from the insights here. **Key findings from this study will be communicated to you by email.**

Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations. Every effort will be made to respect your anonymity. The data collected will be analysed by the researcher. The research's supervisor and peer debriefer will be shown samples of anonymised data. Participants will be identified by a fake name (e.g., Alex, Charlie, Frankie) on audio recordings and written transcripts. Similarly emailed explanations will be identified using these fake names. Any identifying information that may be disclosed in the explanations, or during the audio recordings will be de-identified in the written transcription. Interview recordings will be separately stored from transcripts using a secure password-protected NCI secure cloud account. Transcripts will be stored on a college-supported password-protected folder in Google Drive. All data is collected and stored in compliance with GDPR regulations.

Advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period
It is planned that the data collected interviews will be securely stored for no more than five years and securely destroyed, in accordance with NCI policy.

Statement that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary
Involvement in the Research Study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from it at any point without any penalty.

Any other relevant information
All participants in the study will be mature adults. If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:
National College of Ireland Research Ethics Committee EthicsSubCommittee@ncirl.ie

Appendix iv: Participant consent form

This form was emailed to each participant prior to the interview, each signed form was saved on the researcher's password protected NCI Student account.

1. Participant Consent Form
Researcher: Deirdre Tinnelly
Supervisor: Yvonne Emmett
College: National College of Ireland
Course: Master of Arts in Educational Practice

Title of study
The study in which you are being invited to participate has the working title: *Mentoring Learning Journeys in the Further Education and Training Sector*.

Purpose of study
The study aims to advance the knowledge and understanding of mentoring experiences in the Further Education and Training sector in Ireland.

Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

As stated in the Plain Language Statement, participants i.e., mentors are asked to take part in an interview, in which the researchers will request to take notes and make an auto recording.

Voluntary Participation
Your involvement in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the Research Study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

Confidentiality of data
Every effort will be made to respect your anonymity. The data collected will be analysed by the researchers alone. Participants' actual names will be protected, and fake names will be used if direct references are required. Interview recordings and transcripts will be held by the researchers and stored on the NCI cloud accessible only to the researchers.

Participant
- Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement? **Yes/ No**
- Do you understand the information provided? **Yes/ No**
- Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? **Yes/ No**
- Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? **Yes/ No**
- Do you agree to have your interview audio recorded? **Yes/ No**
- Do you agree to having anonymised quotations from your interview being used in the study report? **Yes/ No**

Signature
I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.
Participant's Signature:
Name in Block Capitals:
Date:

Appendix v: Participant criteria

The study's inclusion/ exclusion criteria were approved by NCI's Ethics Committee in January 2023. As the research study progressed, two modifications were made to the criteria after discussion with my supervisor. The first adaptation related to how recently a mentor had a trainee teacher – this was reduced to two years. The second adaptation was to remove the exclusion criteria regarding a mentor's registration status with the Teaching Council. This study aimed to explore genuine mentoring practices within the FET sector, regardless of the qualification status of the mentor.

Final Inclusion criteria:

- Participants must be practicing FET teachers
- Participants must be currently mentoring FET trainee teachers on an Initial Teacher Education programme or have prior experience of mentoring pre-service FE teachers on an ITE programme (within the last 2 years).

Final Exclusion criteria:

- Participants should not have retired/ be on career break
- Participants should not be teaching predominantly in another sector (primary/ post-primary)
- Participants should not have unofficial mentoring experience/ peer mentoring experience only
- Participants should not be currently mentoring trainee teachers undertaking the Initial Teacher Education programme at the institute connected to the researcher's role.

Appendix vi: Interview schedule

The pre-interview points were developed to explain the interview process, outline my expectations, and reduce any tension.

Pre-interview points to mention before starting the interview:

- Thank for your time.
- I'm interested to hear what you have to say about the topic.
- There are no right or wrong answers – I'm interested in your experiences.
- Although this is called an interview – I want you to think of it as actually a conversation
- Take your time, this is a conversation, you can take as much time as you like to think before responding.
- There might be some silence to facilitate your thinking & recalling
- We can take a break if you'd like.
- Please give as much detail as possible.
- This will be mostly a one-sided conversation.
- I'll say very little, but I'll be listening, nodding my head, and taking a few notes as you speak.
- If we experience an issue with the internet, I might ask you to repeat yourself.
- Some of my questions may seem repetitive, it's so I can understand your experiences as accurately as possible.
- Please ask me to rephrase anything you're not entirely sure about
- Your account will be anonymised so please feel free to share as much as you are comfortable doing.
- Are you in a private space that you feel you won't be overheard?
- Check they consent to being interviewed and it being recorded.
- Check they understood and Plain Language Statement &consent form.
- ***So now I'll start the recording if you're ready. A box should pop-up in your screen to indicate the recording has begun.***

This interview schedule was modified slightly after the pilot interview – the term student teacher was replaced by trainee teacher, to avoid language confusion.

Biographical questions:

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What colleges/ FET settings have you taught in?
3. How many trainee teachers have you mentored? Which settings?
4. For what length on average did you mentor each ?

Open-ended questions:

1. To begin with, I'm interested in exploring how you got started as a mentor of trainee teachers and what motivates you to do it. Can you talk to me about this?

- Prompts: Hopes/ expectations/ supports

2. I'm also interested in exploring your understanding of the mentor role, and what has influenced/shaped your understanding of it. Can you talk to me about this?

- Prompts: Anything/ Anyone/ Formal/ Informal

3. Now, I'm interested in exploring how you came to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to be an effective mentor. Can you talk to me about this?

- Prompts: training/ colleagues/ handbooks/ HEI/ Policies (internal/ external)

4. Now, I'd like to understand more about your actual experiences of mentoring trainee teachers. Can you talk to me about some of the experiences you have had [maybe beginning with the most recent example]?

- Prompts: Relationships/ Significant/ memorable/ challenging events

5. I'm also interested in understanding more about the nature of any relationships that you have with staff from the students' HEI, e.g. placement supervisors? Can you talk to me about some of your experiences here?

- Prompts: relationship/ communicate/ different HEI's

6. Finally, I'm interested in exploring the impact that mentoring has had on you as a teacher. Can you talk to me about this?

- Prompts: reflection/ engagement/ alterations

Generic Prompts/ Clarifying questions:

1. Can you tell me more about that?
2. Tell me what you were thinking/ feeling?
3. How did that make you feel?

Appendix vii: Transcripts from the interviews

The entire transcripts have not been included in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants. A pseudonym has been used in order to avoid identification.

A sample of the pilot interview (Charlie)

14 0:2:12.20 --> 0:2:25.360
Charlie
Yeah, in in the youthreach sector, the the difference is the people that are there, uh, they're only resource teachers. So basically it works out because I would have been a qualified teacher and.
You get paid less because you're only resource, you don't need any qualification to work.
In and outside the further education or secondary or primary. So uh, that's one of the things that the unions fighting for the minute then.

15 0:2:43.840 --> 0:2:55.410
Charlie
And if I did four or five years there, it didn't (.) because I was working as a teacher for two hours. If I had taken a full time job, I'd have to go back to grade one. So that was a big uh jumped down, so when the full time job came up in College 1, I took it.

16 0:3:8.520 --> 0:3:15.10
Deirdre Tinnelly
And OK. And can you recall how many student teachers you've had?

17 0:3:16.830 --> 0:3:19.960
Charlie
Uh, I was doing the Level 5 [programme] first.

18 0:3:20.900 --> 0:3:26.660
Charlie
And I didn't see that many, but at the present then I've had three.
From HEI 1.

19 0:3:33.380 --> 0:3:39.130
Deirdre Tinnelly
OK. And on average, then how long do you know if the if the placements actually lasted?

20 0:3:40.990 --> 0:3:56.740
Charlie
And I don't know because they would have come in to the childcare, so they would have been in with me and in the level 5 and the level 6. So I would have no idea. I know they had to have a certain amount of hours.
Working, but that wasn't in my remit. I was just asked. Did I mind them coming into my class?

21 0:4:5.250 --> 0:4:20.960
Charlie
And doing a couple of classes or whatever and then the person that's in charge of that area, the QA would have dealt with dealing with HEI 1 to bring in the the trainee teacher. So I wouldn't have a clue, I suppose about 150 hours, is it?

22 Teaching hours or something. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So I I wouldn't have a clue. I would just have them in if I had a class for an hour, I would just have them in for that now and again when I was asked. So I wouldn't have a clue. So I'm just guessing.

A sample of the interview with Frankie

27 0:20:54.280 --> 0:21:9.460
Deirdre Tinnelly
How were you approached to become a mentor?

28 0:21:9.250 --> 0:21:38.670
Frankie
Well, in the community and it was because then I was asked what I do additional hours into quality assurance. So it was, I was being paid. Now when I say it was being paid, 20 quid an hour, it was like, this is just not worth doing, you know but, it gave me, the reason that I was happy to take on the role, it gave me an insight and understanding to the quality assurance and, A the purpose behind it and, B and the pitfalls, whatever way you, why you're being asked to do something versus not. So again, it was great experience coming from a Level 3 and 4 and be honest ,it's a much, it takes away the nerves, the Level 3 and 4 quality assurance because it was all, a collection of work, there was no real, so it was as I said it was a great learning experience doing that that there.

29 When I was here the lovely FET Colleague 2, stung me into, no she just asked me would I do it [mentor role], but again, I think it's maybe, I suppose, when you're only fresh in yourself maybe that's why I thought maybe I was asked to do it. I don't know because again, I would have only been fresh in, maybe a year, two years. And will you mentor such and such coming in, that maybe they see that, you know, you're kind of see the pitfalls. Does that make sense or see the things, that maybe, these are the stuff I need to tell you, because this is how I learned the hard way.

30 If that makes, not the hard way, I didn't have a mentor when I came in, as such. Now don't get me wrong, we did get training. The you know, look, these are the briefs and this is you got a little bit of a one-on-one, we got a a bit of training there for a day. It was actually FET Colleague 2 who did it, a bit of training. But everybody, just like that, everybody's teaching, they don't have the time. And again, I suppose you have that fear when you come in. I did, because I'm not permanent. I don't want to be seen to be asked loads of questions that I don't know what's going on, I don't want to be seen to look like a bit of a fool, you know what I mean? You want to be, you were trying to, you know, put your best foot forward, I'm a professional, I know what I'm doing, when you're literally cringing underneath, I haven't a breeze what's going on. So I and, I'll even put that down to, I only discovered in the last two years and I'm here five years, I only discovered, and I keep saying, and again because the laugh I can't be a little bit vocal about some of the stuff because I'm permanent now I'm starting to get a little bit vocal to management going I think what we're doing here is absolutely pointless, this is where the gaping hole is, and what I mean by that is ,when you're coming home and you're handed, here's the module descriptor, and particularly for the guy that was taken over for me, I gave him all the module descriptors that I was teaching, here you go, there they are. So what I didn't realize is he's reliant on me effectively because he doesn't know any better, nor did I, that actually you should be checking yearly on the QQI website to make sure that's the most up-to-date module descriptor. And it's my responsibility as a teacher. And nobody's ever had that conversation with me. Or explained to me that's how it worked. That's huge and that's why I kept saying for quality assurance, that's huge. Yet we're doing internal verification and you'll get me to check dates. Nonsense. The right thing we're delivering, versus was the date right on the page that you said it was going to be issued on?

A sample of the interview with Alex

22 Deirdre

23 So you were approached both kind of times, but were you motivated to do it? Like when you had seen the trainees coming in before? Was it something that you ever thought about it before?

24 0:5:43.590 --> 0:5:53.30
Alex
I don't have much of a memory of prior to my first one. I don't have much of a memory of student teachers being around the place. I'm not sure if that was just a reality of the further education sector, and not at that time or whether they were prominent, whether they were as prominent as they know, seem to have become.
Again, maybe that's a failing of my own memory, but I don't remember it being something that was prominent in my head one way or the other like. Is there something I would like to do or not? No. I would always like to, you know.

25 0:6:18.650 --> 0:6:40.540
Alex
I just like seeing new faces around the place. It's. Yeah. Again, I know your background isn't further education. One of the major problems with the education sector at the moment is the staff are old, there's very few new faces ever around the place. We have a sort of surplus of teachers and we very, very rarely get to work. Employ someone new.

26 0:6:41.200 --> 0:6:51.670
Alex
Even, yeah, even just last year having Trainee Teacher 7 around the place as a fresh face, which was sort of a nice thing to have. And yeah, from that point of view below, and I always sort of jump at the chance of it coming up really.

27 0:6:59.250 --> 0:7:9.60
Deirdre
Just as you say, new faces, was there anything else you were expecting around mentoring?

28 0:7:16.600 --> 0:7:19.590
Alex
My expectation around the role of mentorship?
I guess I would have similar to similar to your thoughts when you become a teacher in a way. Is that like? Sort of like the idea of. Guiding someone more of imparting something if that's not too grandiose about it like it's.

29 0:7:43.880 --> 0:7:45.330
Alex
Yeah, it's just something that I've always felt like I have a flair for or whatever and then I'm good at that sort of way in the profession in the 1st place I guess. So from that point of view.

A sample of the interview with Joe

24 0:6:13.120 --> 0:6:21.10
Deirdre Tinnelly
And so like I said, I'm interested in exploring how you got into mentoring. Can you recall, when you started to mentor or how this and how it happened?

25 0:6:27.740 --> 0:6:44.570
Joe
It came about very casually, but to be honest, and so I'd say what happened, certainly about three years ago, if not four, was a CV and an inquiry was made by a person who was starting in HEI2. The qualification there and in education, and he was looking for teaching hours to have to gain teaching practice.

26 0:6:55.140 --> 0:6:58.340
Joe
So that was my first engagement with the process.
So we were able to allow him shadow some of my subjects and also then he shadowed other teachers as well to get the number of hours he required.
because as a staff we would be all quite, let's just say, of the average age of about 45 to 50 because a lot of us were recruited at the same time when the PLC/ FE sector exploded quite largely. So that was just really, I suppose, an open door to allowed person in. So I kind of felt it would be good to get someone new in with new ideas, new, even new conversations, new ideas, someone with a different up to date approach.
Even the conversations and new person in there would create a different dynamic.
So I kind of said there's a lot of positives for also the college to take on the student teacher.
So it wasn't just that we were going to be, you know, giving. We were also going to be on the receiving side.

27 0:8:6.260 --> 0:8:8.10
Deirdre Tinnelly
And do you mind me asking then, was it you personally that received the CV, or did it come through the principal? Or how did that happen?

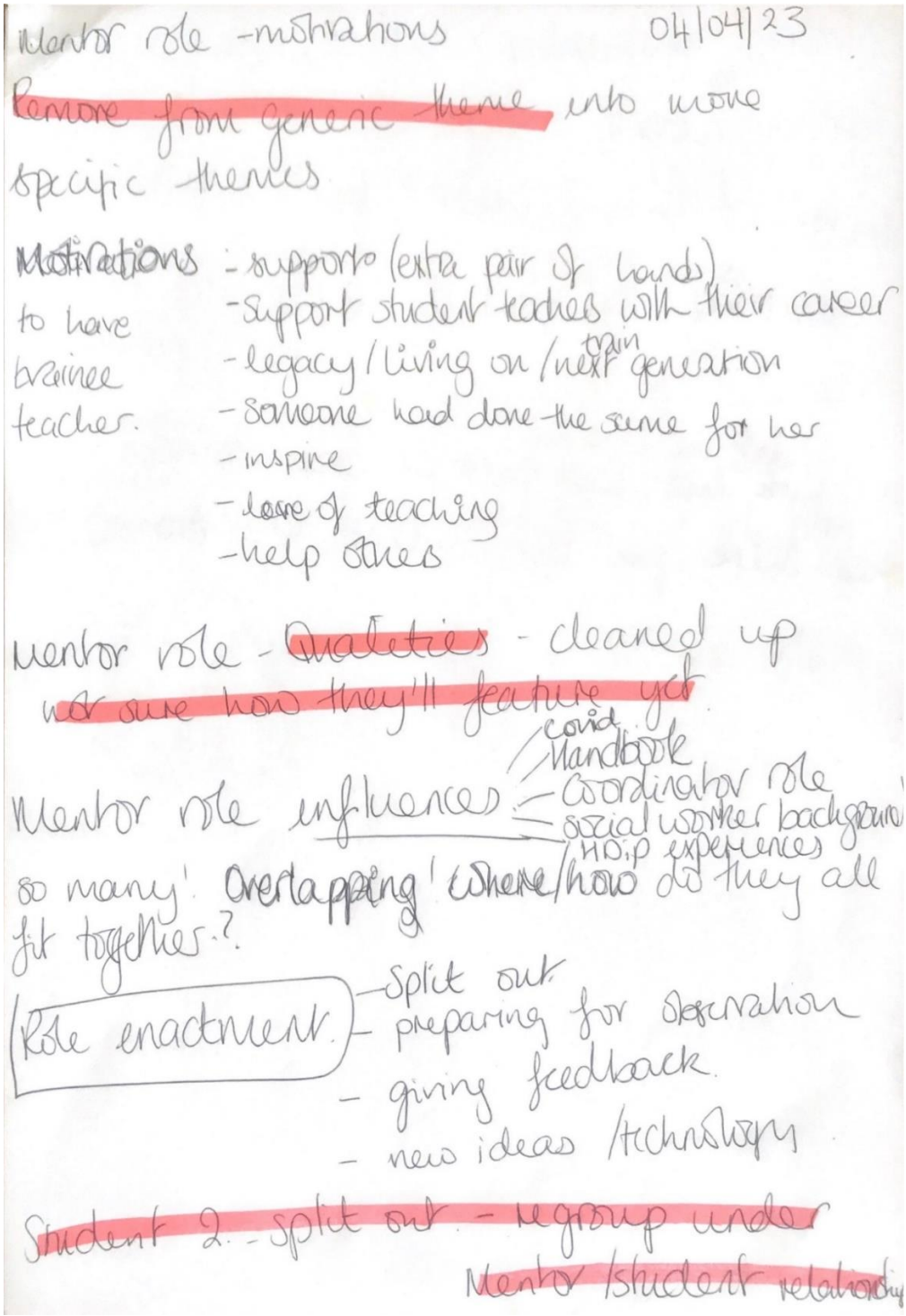
28 0:8:13.190 --> 0:8:16.760
Joe
It came to the principal, he forwarded it on to me at the time.
And I said just why not, you know, the individual at that stage was local to Town 3.
And then we've just kind of felt this would be an ideal opportunity to somebody in and to facilitate them on their journey through education and into teaching as a career. And he kind of fitted in with his CV. Into what subjects and modules we had,
It all just seem to look well and work well, so it kind of went from there really.

29 0:8:49.990 --> 0:9:0.270
Deirdre Tinnelly
And so it sounds like, the CV was just sent on to you from the principal. It sounds like you had a choice whether you wanted to take the student or not?

30 0:9:7.570 --> 0:9:8.360
Joe
Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the choice was left with me, I suppose. Really. And I could have ignored it. Alright, I could have just said no. But you know, I kind of felt you got for the reasons of a person could benefit the organization and also bring a new dynamic into the college, bring new experiences, new knowledge, new ideas, which is really important.

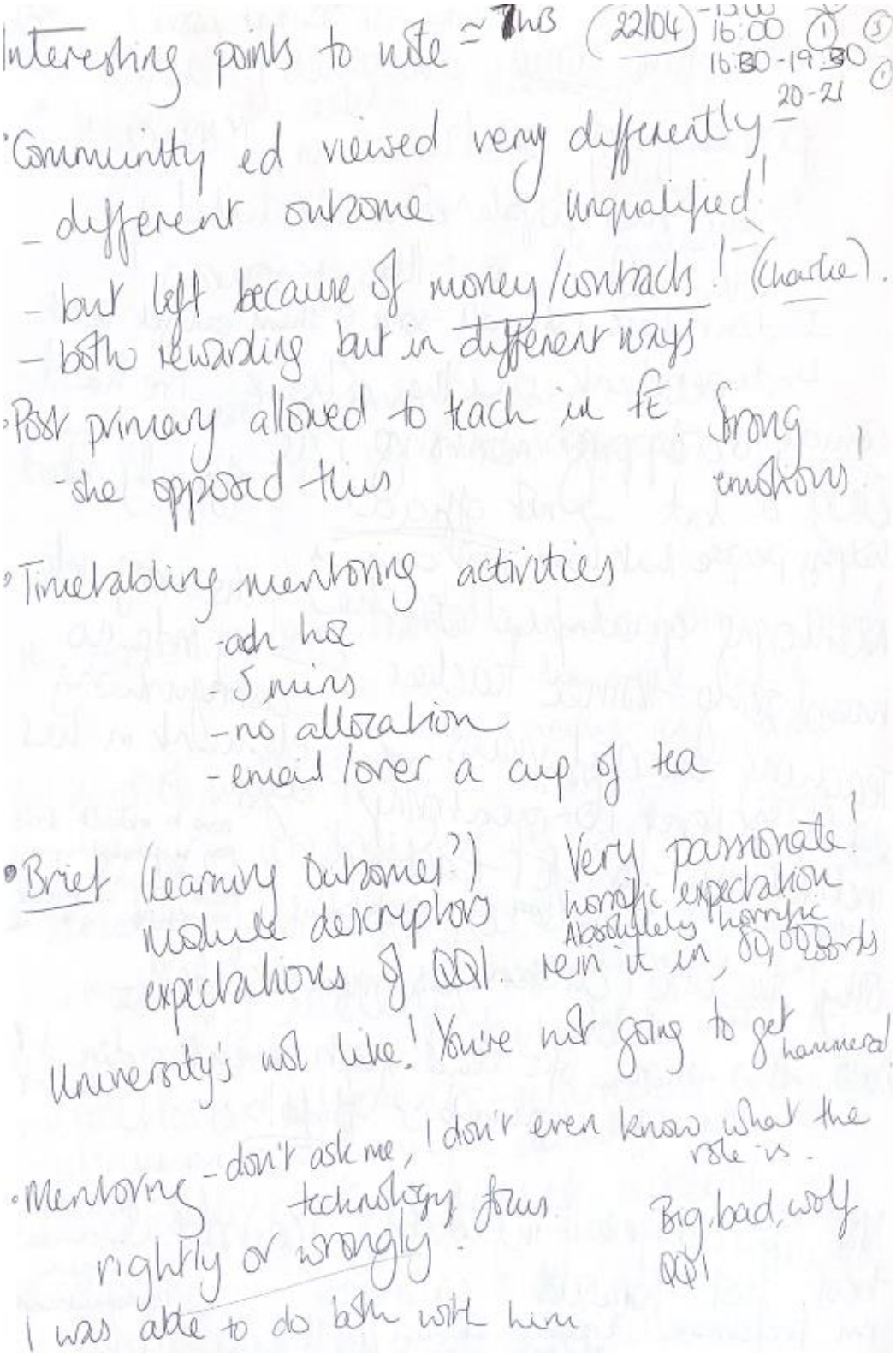
Appendix viii: Process notes

Handwritten notes showing the process of synthesising ideas, patterns, and codes for the pilot interview.



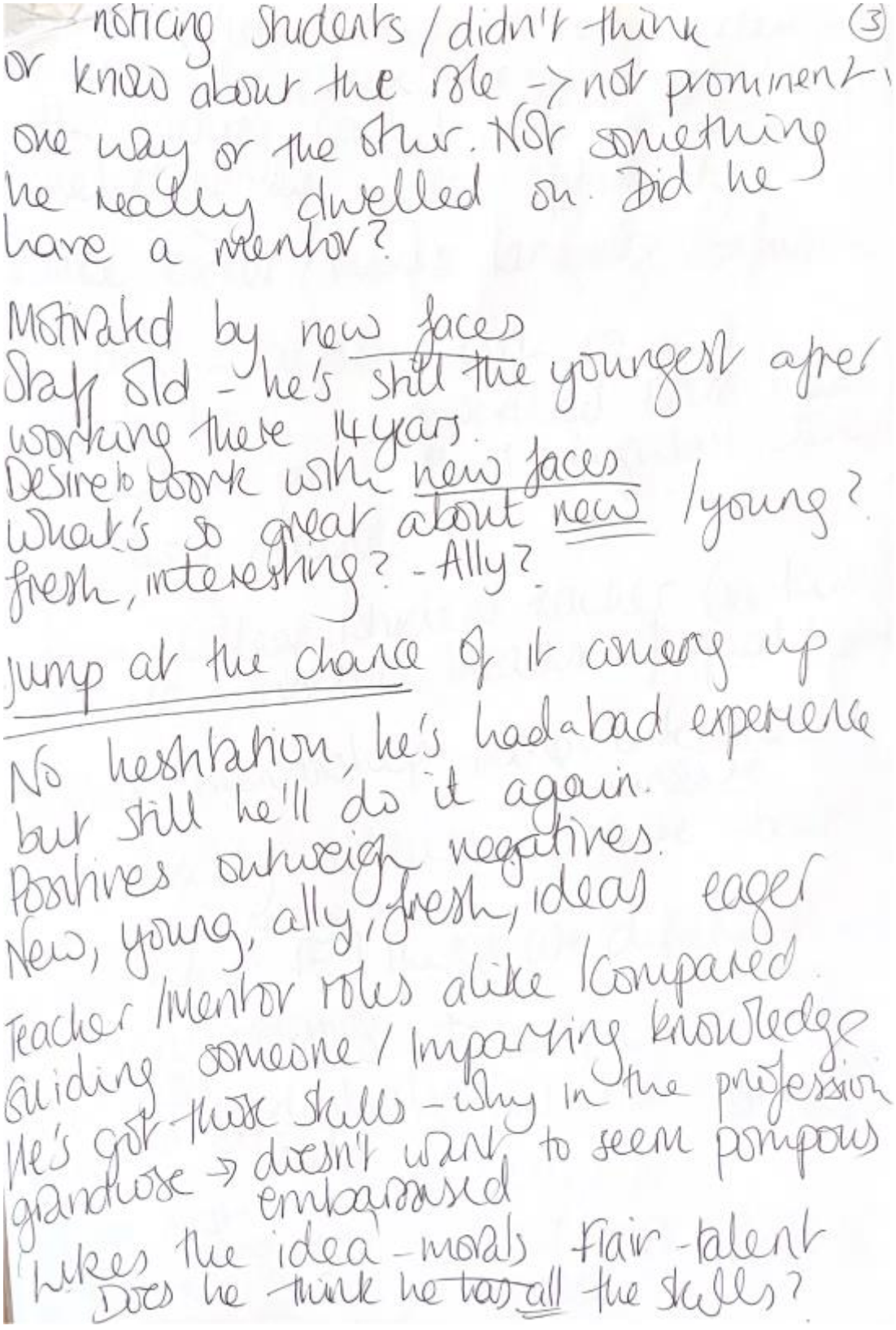
A sample of Frankie's process notes.

These reflective notes were written while listening back to the interview. They incorporate Frankie's words alongside some of my initial interpretations. The notes also purposefully highlight her emotions. The points about timetabling mentoring activities are found within theme *mentoring: an extension of the teacher role*.



A sample of Alex's process notes

Within these reflections, Alex's words are written alongside some of my initial interpretations. The notes briefly explore Alex's knowledge of the role and his motivations to mentor. These points are reflected in *willingness to mentor*.


noticing students / didn't think ③
or knew about the role -> not prominent
one way or the other. Not something
he really dwelled on. Did he
have a mentor?

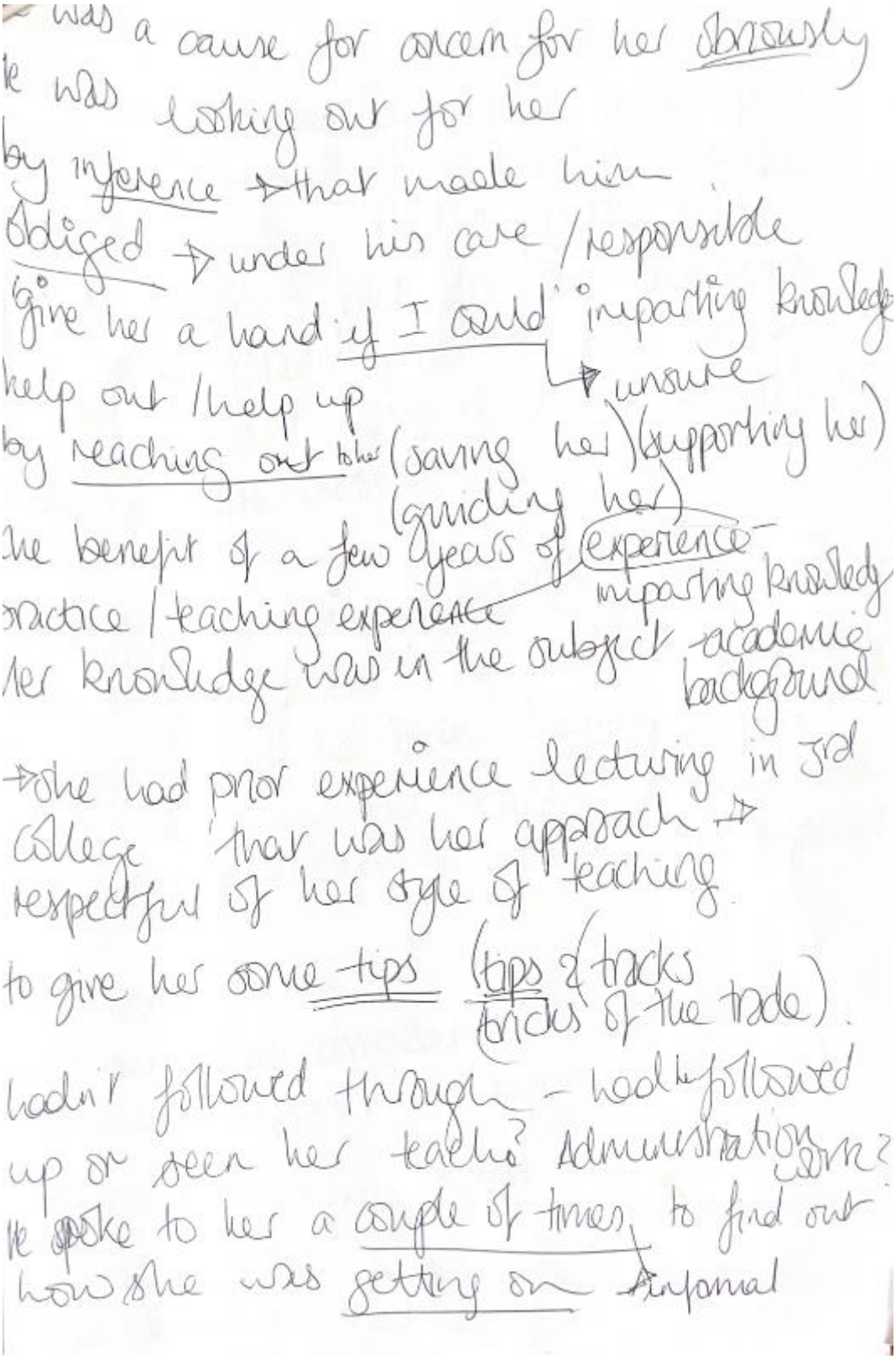
Motivated by new faces
Staff old - he's still the youngest after
working there 14 years.
Desire to work with new faces
What's so great about new / young?
fresh, interesting? - Ally?

jump at the chance of it coming up

No hesitation, he's had a bad experience
but still he'll do it again.
Positives outweigh negatives.
New, young, ally, fresh, ideas eager
Teacher / Mentor roles alike / compared
Guiding someone / imparting knowledge
He's got those skills - why in the profession
grandiose -> doesn't want to seem pompous
embarrassed
likes the idea - morals flair - talent
Does he think he has all the skills?

A sample of Joe's process notes

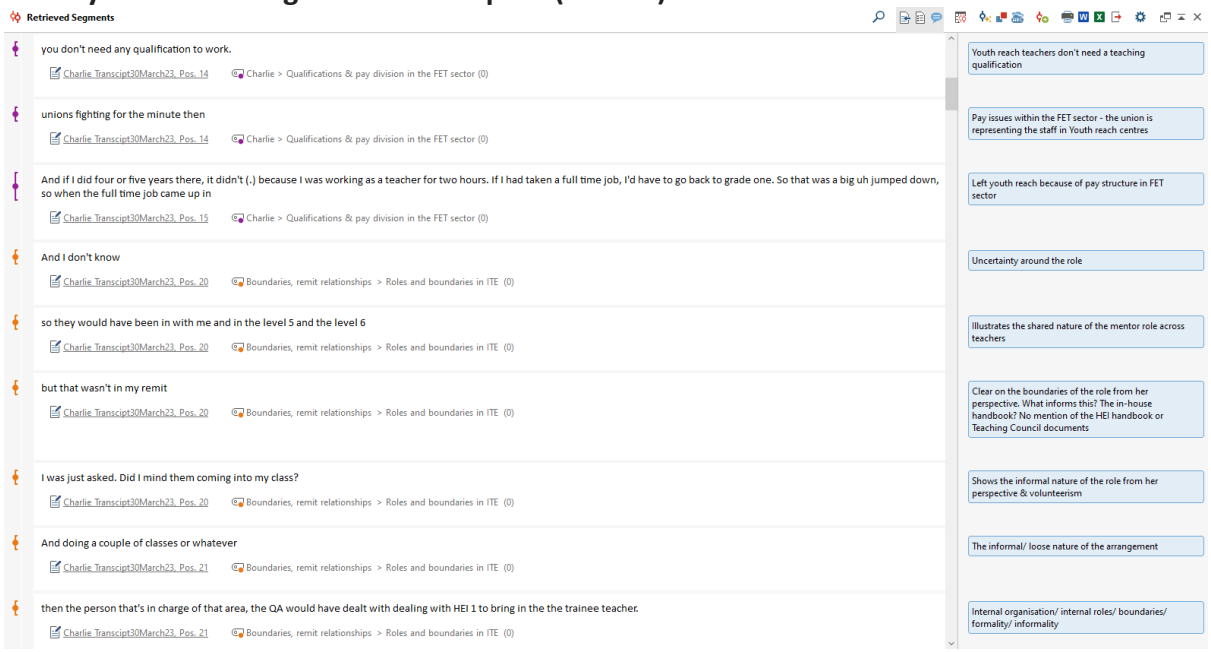
These notes reflect upon Joe's relationship with his trainee teacher, Michelle. This relationship is explored in detail within the theme *mentoring relationships and functions*.



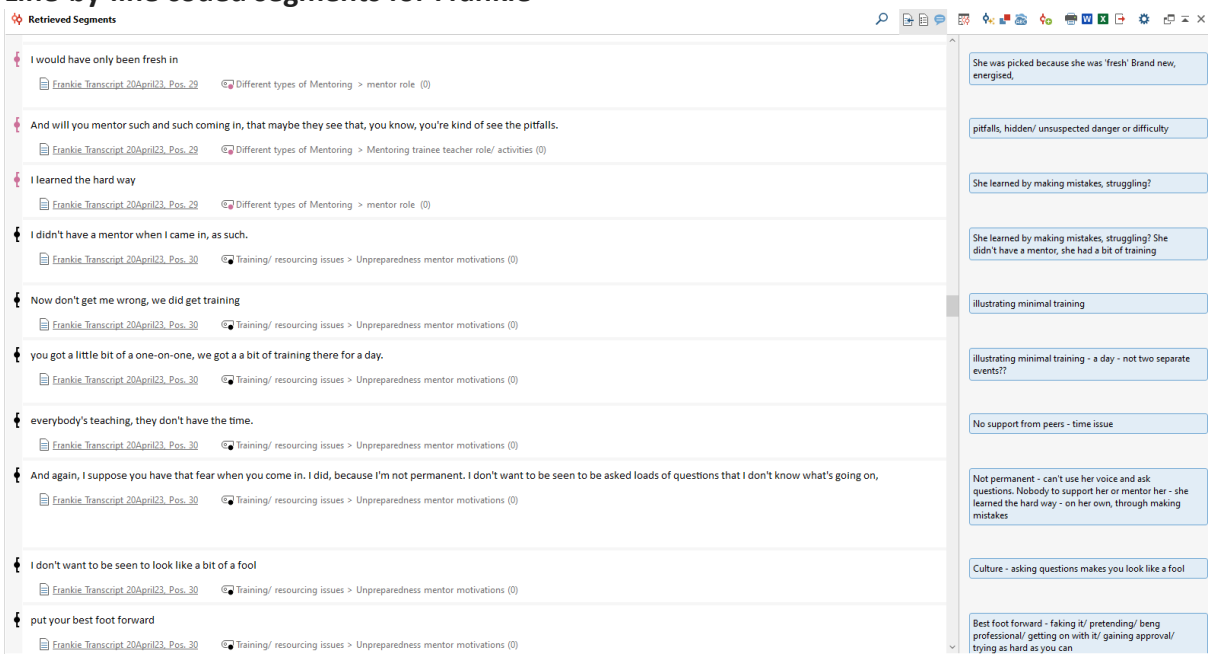
Appendix ix: Line-by-line coded segments within MAXQDA

Line-by-line coded segments for interviews displayed in time sequence within MAXQDA. Participant's words are displayed in the main window, along with the emergent theme. Researcher's interpretations are displays in the column on the righthand side.

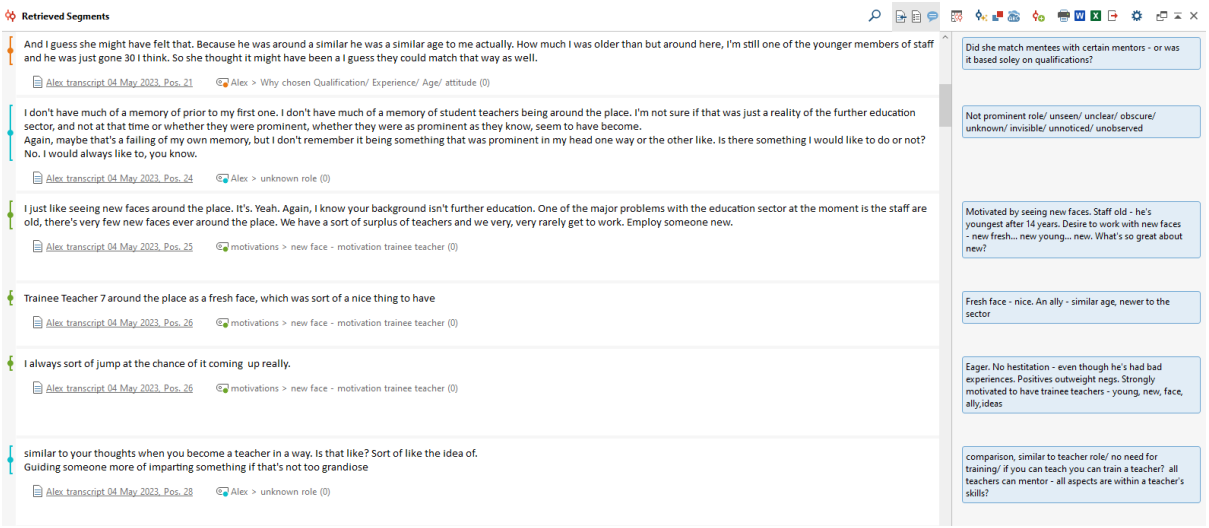
Line-by-line coded segments for the pilot (Charlie)



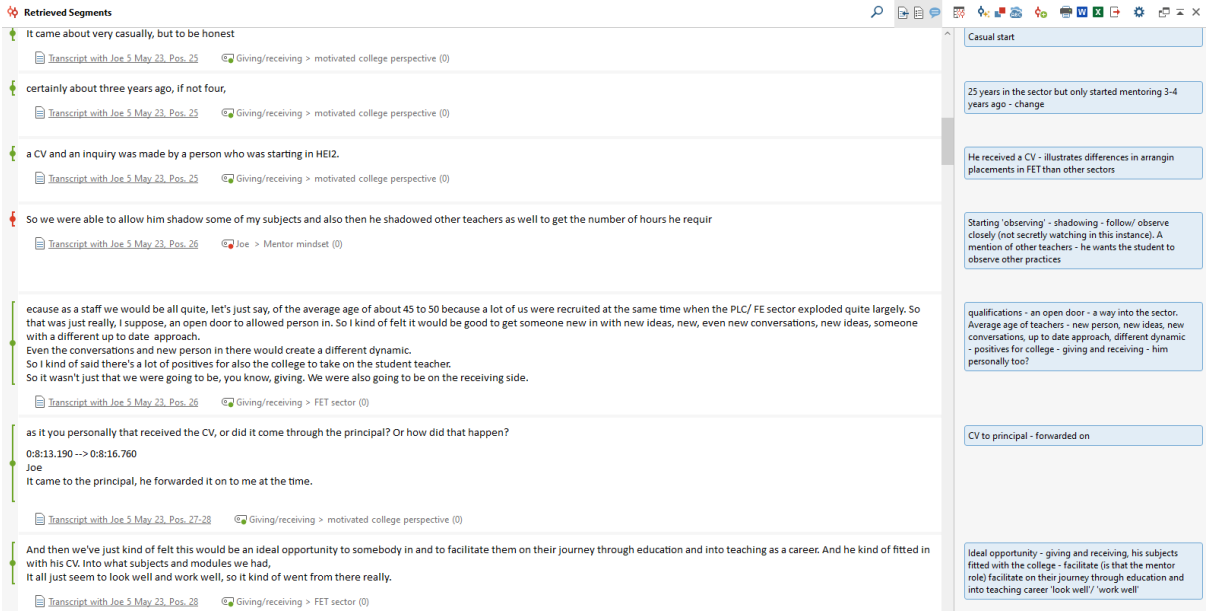
Line-by-line coded segments for Frankie



Line-by-line coded segments for Alex



Line-by-line coded segments for Joe



Appendix x: Grouped coded segments within MAXQDA

Coded sections grouped by theme in MAXQDA. Researcher's interpretations are shown in the comment column, alongside the participant's words which are shown in the preview column. These were shared with my supervisor and peer debriefer.

Group coded segments for the pilot (Charlie)

Code	Comment	Preview
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	Shows the informal nature of the role from her perspective & volunteerism	I was just asked. Did I mind them coming into my class?
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	The informal/ loose nature of the arrangement	And doing a couple of classes or whatever
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	Internal organisation/ internal roles/ boundaries/ formality/ informality	then the person that's in charge of that area, the QA would hav
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	'now and again' informal nature. Not in her remit 'wouldn't have a clue' 'just guessing' - Course details/ placement details not important to mentor fulfil the role?	So I I wouldn't have a clue. I would just have them in if I ha
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	COVID impact on the nature of relationships between mentor and supervisor (Placement Tutor - language confusion)	No, I didn't meet their their supervisors because a lot of it w
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	Informality of placement arrangement from from mentor's perspective 'couple of classes'.	the girl that's in charge, would just have said to me, Charlie,
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	Volunteerism	would you mind? And I said no, that's not a problem. And then t
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	Informal 'or whatever' 'a few notes'	And then I was told, she'll be in your class on Monday, or what
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	Voluntary role. 'an extra pair of hands' illustrates a motivation for teachers to have a trainee teacher	No, it's it's very, very voluntary. And now as I said I don't k
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	Student [teacher] handbook, specific to FET College 1 - a source of knowledge about placements/ trainee teachers	we have a student handbook that's changed every year.
Charlie > Boundaries, r...	handbook updated every year by certain teachers - what do they refer to when updating?	Yeah, we have a student handbook em and we have, well (.) the t

Group coded segments for Frankie

Code	Comment	Preview
Frankie > Training/ res...	The 'actual staff' aren't trained in the technology, the 'students' are an after though	but there's not enough focus on the changes in technology to tr
Frankie > Training/ res...	Her past experiences inform how she mentors - overwhelming	it's overwhelming as a new teacher coming in
Frankie > Training/ res...	Lack of time/ control/ support/ on your own. Haven't training for the module & you get no resources or support, without proper thought or preparation/ no thinking,	that's on the hoof. You're already, the classes are about to st
Frankie > Training/ res...	Culture/ practices/ community of practice, Privacy in practice - they won't share, seems like she's tried and she's had push backs hence. She shares - everything I have - doesn't want them to have the experiences she had	Now you do meet lovely people, who will share resources, you'll
Frankie > Training/ res...	The teacher didn't give her resources - [share/ support/ help] On her own	and I said nah. Now this teacher went out on sick and took ever
Frankie > Training/ res...	Starting from 'scratch' she had nothing. Only just ahead of the students	from scratch, as well as, and I'm not being smart, learning the
Frankie > Training/ res...	Module - not related to degree, no training, people don't always share resources, spending hours looking at videos online	But yeah, so as I said, you're given modules like excel.
Frankie > Training/ res...	Illustrates how you need to know both the subject and technology - pitfalls - just one steps ahead of the students	These kind of things, or you could be given bookkeeping and th
Frankie > Training/ res...	She learned by making mistakes, struggling? She didn't have a mentor, she had a bit of training	I didn't have a mentor when I came in, as such.
Frankie > Training/ res...	illustrating minimal training	Now don't get me wrong, we did get training
Frankie > Training/ res...	illustrating minimal training - a day - not two separate events??	you got a little bit of a one-on-one, we got a a bit of trainin
Frankie > Training/ res...	No support from peers - time issue	everybody's teaching, they don't have the time.
Frankie > Training/ res...	Not permanent - can't use her voice and ask questions. Nobody to support her or mentor her - she learned the hard way - on her own, through making mistakes	And again, I suppose you have that fear when you come in. I did
Frankie > Training/ res...	Culture - asking questions makes you look like a fool	I don't want to be seen to look like a bit of a fool
Frankie > Training/ res...	Best foot forward - faking it/ pretending/ beng professional/ getting on with it/ gaining approval/ trying as hard as you can	put your best foot forward
Frankie > Training/ res...	A professional should know it all?	I'm a professional

Group coded segments for Alex

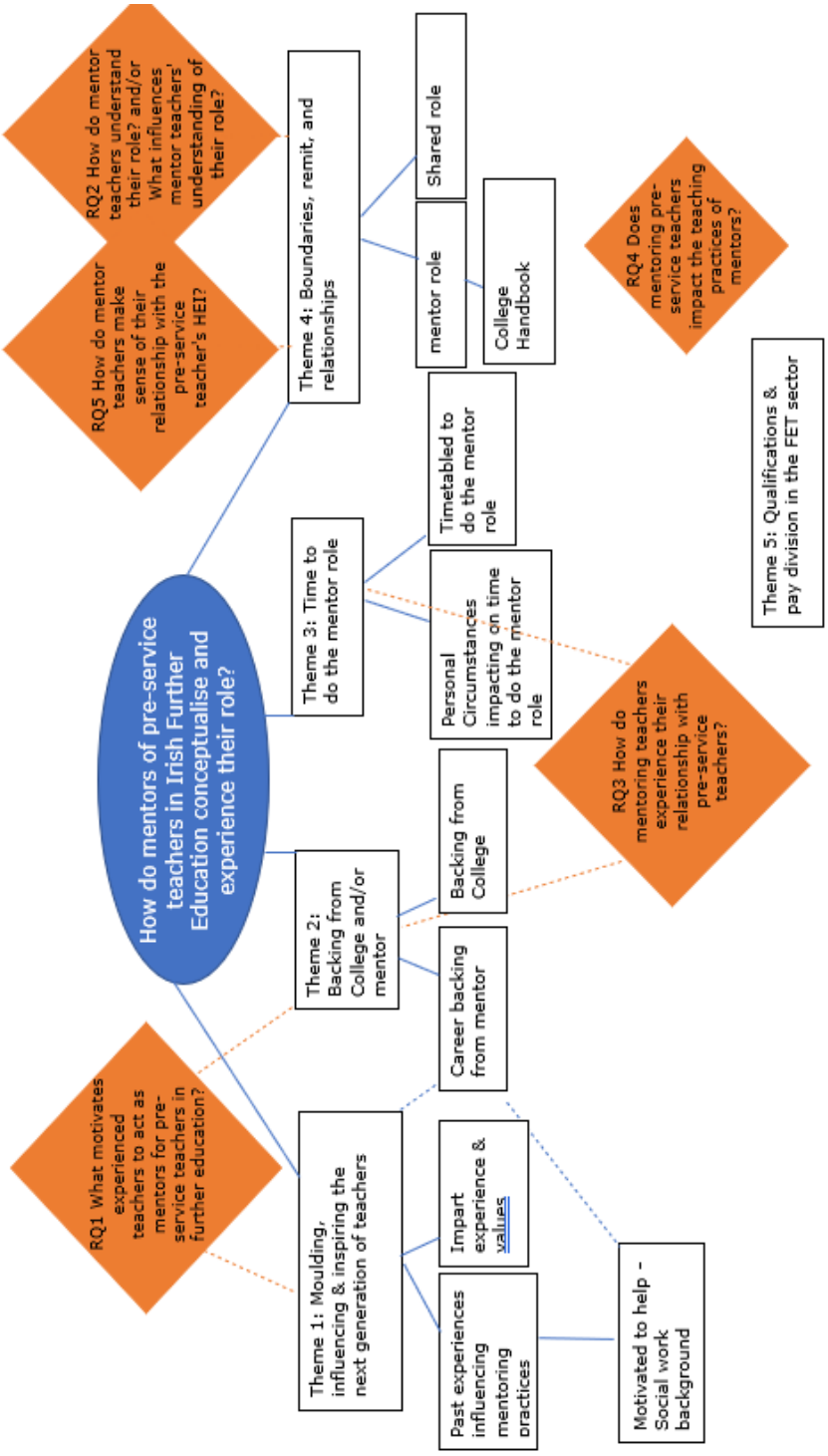
Code	Comment	Preview
Alex > unknown role	Not prominent role/ unseen/ unclear/ obscure/ unknown/ invisible/ unnoticed/ unobserved	I don't have much of a memory of prior to my first one. I don't
Alex > unknown role	comparison, similar to teacher role/ no need for training/ if you can teach you can train a teacher? all teachers can mentor - all aspects are within a teacher's skills?	similar to your thoughts when you become a teacher in a way. Is
Alex > unknown role	Left - alone. Own devices - no control/ no help. Who left him Principal and college? nor did I feel like much support (was needed) I guess - it had been clearly laid out. role similar to teacher role. Value of role? No prominent in his mind	there wasn't really much and no, it's just sort of left me to m
Alex > unknown role	Directive/ non-directive. student lead. did this happen organically? Needed from him/ them guiding. Can/ should all students lead? Guide? are there instances where he leads/ guides? Who is in control? Fully formed? Learners? Can you challenge them	I let the student just sort of lead it. Whatever they felt like
Alex > unknown role	Observation/ Team teaching. debrief/ reflections	and just generally. If there was an observed class or a team te
Alex > unknown role	Facilitator role/ impression cam from where? Principal meetings? HEI? When his colleague had mentored? Fully formed? Learners	I was under the impression that they knew what they needed to g
Alex > unknown role	informed by Principal - no idea how she knew how placement opperated	it was really clearly laid out about the timings and all the re
Alex > unknown role	Meeting - too formal a term- uncomfortable/ coversation - nothing written - stressing informality of situation/ just a converstion/ casual/ at the end of class - informal/ not timetables/ scheduled/ informal/ impromptu	meetings after the classes did those kind of meetings go on thr
Alex > unknown role	Overstate - inflate - the 'meetings' were conversatation that happened out of courtesy/ colleagial - instead of someone walking out of the room - rude - catch-up - organic - not planned - natural - was he told to do them?	I don't want to overstate the level of planning or whatever tha
Alex > unknown role	unsure of himself - personal relationship (part of our relationship) - not typical/ not part of the other. Guiding - other classes/ colleagial support. grew quite close. Saddled with -heavy burdon -help him -out of standand relationship 'in addition to'	Umm. And that would also have been like conversations around li
Alex > unknown role	no background reading mentioned - reading mentioned again - he also says he doesn't want to dismiss the role - but he does	Not in a particularly structured way, or yeah, like. Or just so

Group coded segments for Joe

Code	Comment	Preview
Joe > Giving/receiving...	Between 3-5 student teachers - reflecting informality of the relationship	And to a larger or smaller extent, uh personally, I've had inte
Joe > Giving/receiving...	He's the head of the department so overseeing 5 but had 3 personally	I suppose interactions with three, but there's been about 5.
Joe > Giving/receiving...	How teachers become mentors - student teacher approaches principal, teacher happy to take them	they approached the principal first and then another member of
Joe > Giving/receiving...	Some student teachers contacting personal connections - they want to work speically with them. His student teachers came from the principal - general inquiry, not naming him specifically	Whereas the ones I had interactions with, I think they came jus
Joe > Giving/receiving...	Casual start	It came about very casually, but to be honest
Joe > Giving/receiving...	25 years in the sector but only started mentoring 3-4 years ago - change	certainly about three years ago, if not four,
Joe > Giving/receiving...	He received a CV - illustrates differences in arrangin placements in FET than other sectors	a CV and an inquiry was made by a person who was starting in HE
Joe > Giving/receiving...	qualifications - an open door - a way into the sector. Average age of teachers - new person, new ideas, new conversations, up to date approach, different dynamic - positives for college - giving and receiving - him personally too?	ecause as a staff we would be all quite, let's just say, of the
Joe > Giving/receiving...	CV to principal - forwarded on	as it you personally that received the CV, or did it come throu
Joe > Giving/receiving...	Ideal opportunity - giving and receiving, his subjects fitted with the college - facilitate (is that the mentor role) facilitate on their journey through education and into teaching career 'look well'/ 'work well'	And then we've just kind of felt this would be an ideal opportu
Joe > Giving/receiving...	Voluntary/ Choice/ Ignored it/ no/ choice left to me/benefit the org - he's head of dept more oversight seeing from college perspective rather than personal perspective? New dyamic/ New experiences/ New ideas (again!) really important V old/longing 4 new?	ou had a choice whether you wanted to take the student or not?
Joe > Giving/receiving...	FET - dynamic - courses longevity/ giving them hours/ not a permanent member/ hours can be taken away if course only lasts 2 years/ they need people to do these hrs/ sick leave/ cover/good track record/proven themselves in the past/	And what we find also as well is because PLC is quite dynamic.
Joe > Giving/receiving...	No supoort starting to do the role - opposite to me/ him - the student teacher - did they have supports in place? Did he expect supports in place?	nd when you got started, then was there any supports in place?

Appendix xi: Emergent themes case-by-case

Emergent themes from the pilot interview (Charlie) The five emergent themes from the pilot interview were represented on schematically in relation to the research question and sub-questions. Theme 5 Qualifications & pay division in the FET sector, was not chosen as a final theme. Although this theme was an important concern for Charlie it did not directly answer the research questions.



Emergent themes for Frankie

Three superordinate themes emerged from the data analysis of the interview with Frankie. These themes, alongside their subordinate themes are represented within the schematic map below. A number of other unconnected sub-themes were also written-up as they were a concern for Frankie. These included: different types of mentoring, informal interactions, informal training, no voice, why chosen as mentor.

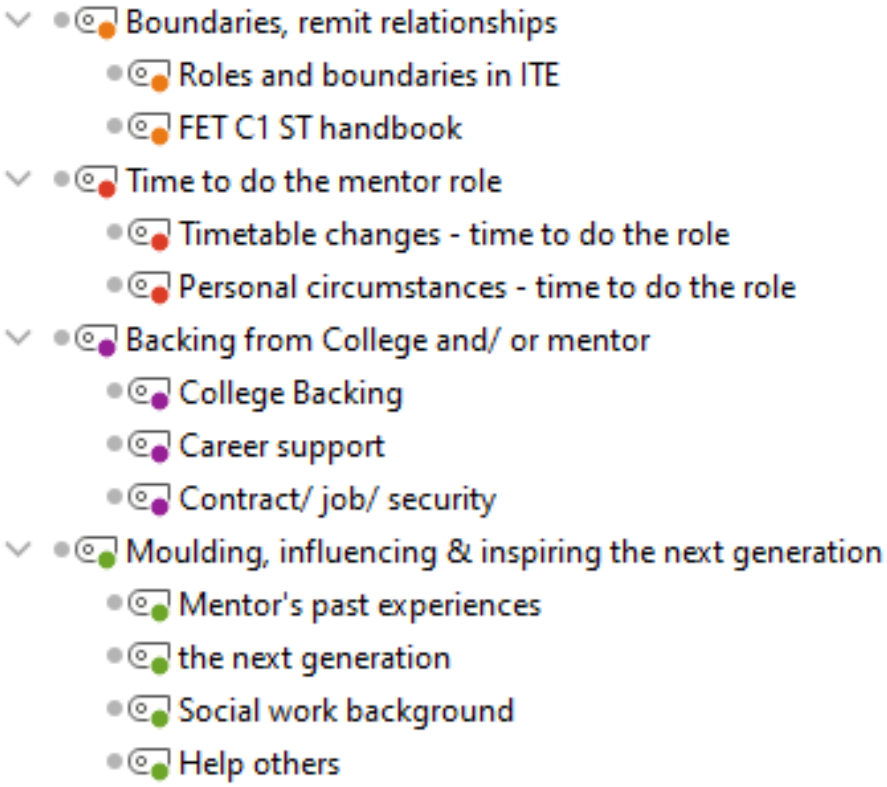
Emergent themes for Alex

Four superordinate themes emerged from the data analysis of the interview with Alex. These themes, alongside their subordinate themes are represented within the schematic map below.

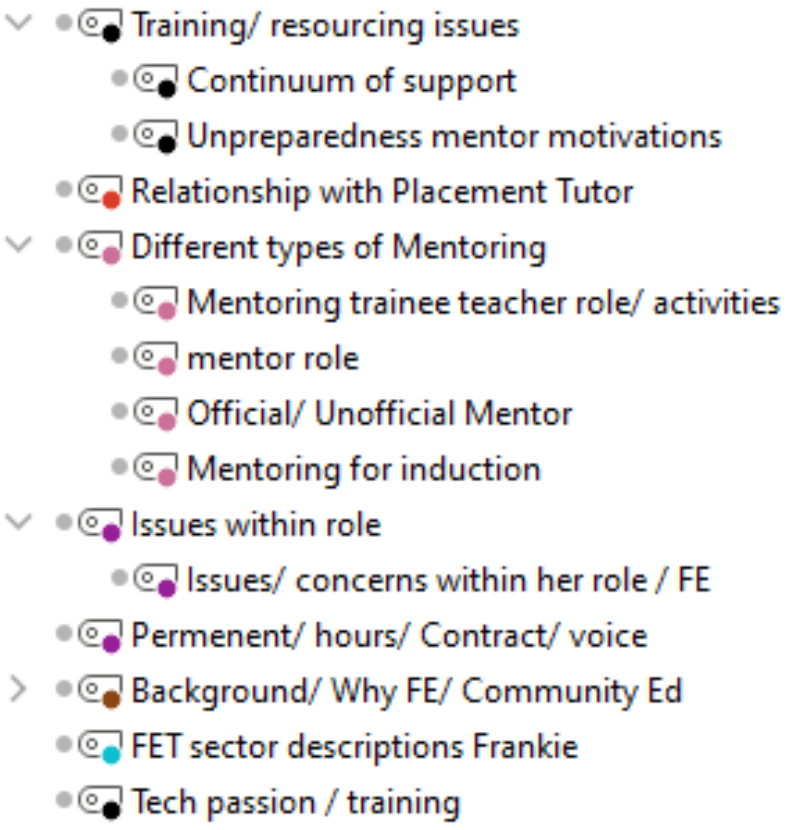
Emergent themes for Joe

Four superordinate themes emerged from the data analysis of the interview with Joe. These themes, alongside their subordinate themes are represented within the schematic map below. Several other unconnected sub-themes were also written-up. These included: why others help unofficially, staff meetings, qualifications, general chatter around/ with trainee teachers.

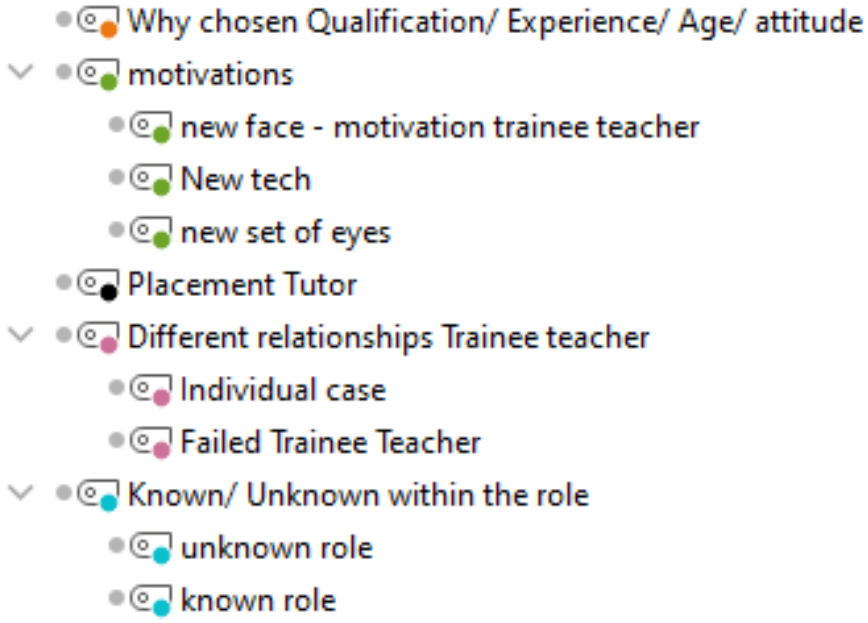
Code organisation within MAXQDA for Charlie:



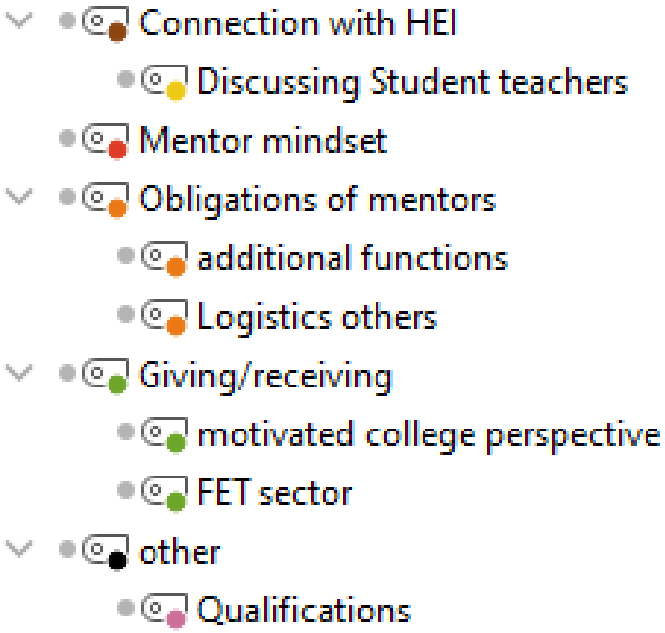
Code organisation within MAXQDA for Frankie:



Code organisation within MAXQDA for Alex:

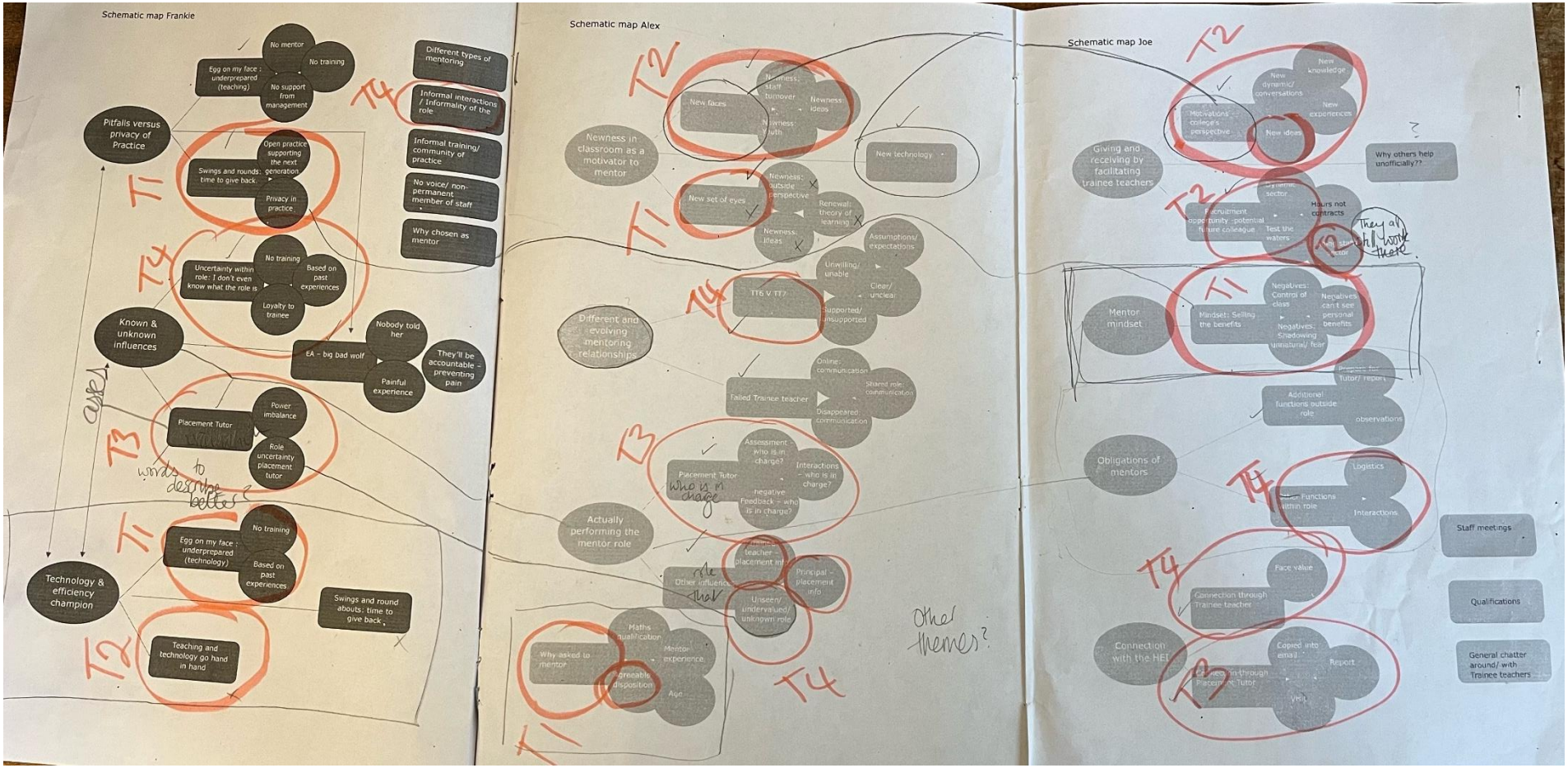


Code organisation within MAXQDA for Joe:

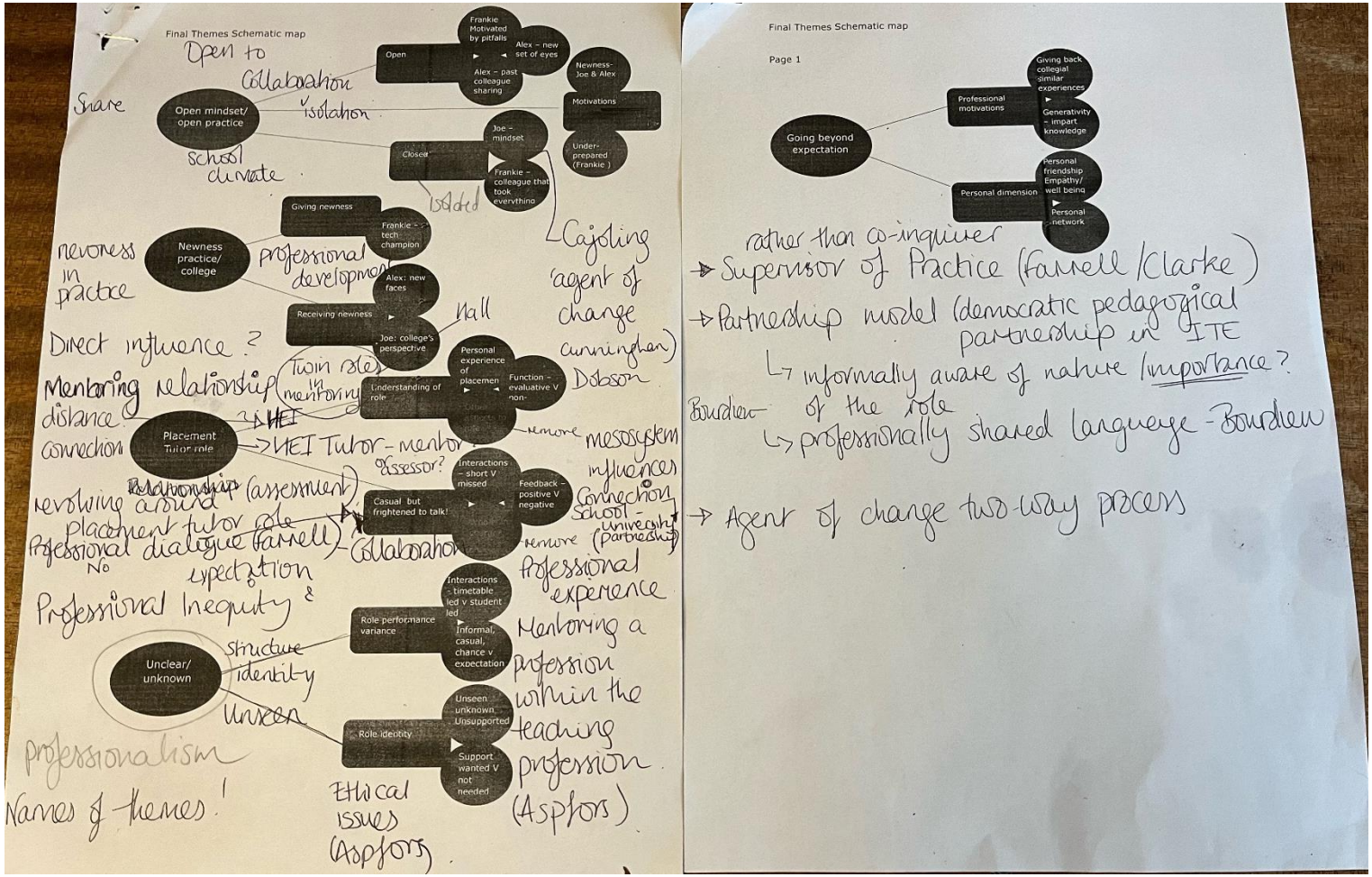


Appendix xii: Identifying final themes across all three participants

Combining, dividing, and reorganising themes across the whole data set



Combining, dividing, and reorganising themes across the whole data set



Participants' individual sub-ordinate themes

	Frankie	Alex	Joe
Theme 1	Pitfalls versus privacy of practice	Newness in classroom	Giving & receiving by facilitating TT
Sub theme	Egg on my face: underprepared (teaching)	New faces	Motivations – college's perspective
Sub theme	Swings and round abouts: time to give back (teaching)	New sets of eyes	Recruitment opportunity – potential future colleague
Sub theme	-	New technology	-
Theme 2	Known and unknown influences	Different & evolving Mentoring relationships	Mentor mindset
Sub theme	Uncertainty within role: I don't even know what the r	TT6 V TT7	Mindset: selling the benefits
Sub theme	EA – big bad wolf	Failed Trainee Teacher	-
Sub theme	Placement Tutor – Assess	-	-
Theme 3	Technology & efficiency champion	Actually performing the Mentor role	Obligations of mentors
Sub theme	Egg on my face: underprepared (Technology)	Placement Tutor: who is in charge	Additional functions outside role
Sub theme	Swings and round abouts: time to give back (tech)	Other roles that influence	Other functions within role
Sub theme	Teaching & Technology go hand in hand		
Theme 4	-	Why asked to mentor	Connection with the HEI
Sub theme		Qualifications/ experience/ agreeable disposition/ Age	Connection through trainee teacher
Sub theme			Connection through Placement Tutor
Other	Other	Other	Other
Other	Different types of mentoring		Staff meetings
Other	Informal interactions / Informality of the role		Qualifications

Final super-ordinate themes. Each theme was checked across all participants – to check for recurrent themes. Only themes that were present in two or more cases were selected as the final themes.

Super- ordinate themes	Frankie	Alex	Joe	Present in over half the sample?
Willingness to mentor	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
The mentor – placement tutor connection	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mentoring: an extension of the teacher role	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mentoring relationships and functions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes