New Places and Spaces:

First in Family Teacher’s Experiences in Initial Teacher Education

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And it seems that St. Patrick’s College is not the only place the Claffey siblings are fond of – they all have a deep love of their homeplace with all four teaching in the local area.

Speaking of their time in college, Colette recalled that it was great to get advice from her older brother about course-related material and was delighted to be in a position to pass on her own advice to her younger siblings.
Leaving Cert 2017: 13 students secure highest marks

Number of high achievers increases significantly over last year

Carl O'Brien

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAO</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Level</th>
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<td>Self as part of school community</td>
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exciting stressful

experience insightful challenging new confusing intriguing
hard surprising busy regrets journey eye-opening enlightening unforgettable work friends expectations engaging active

memorable innovative

fun enjoyable
Context and Background – Ireland, Teacher Education, Schools, Personal

Within the realm of Anglo-American influence, in relation to economy, as well as other areas, such as education. Structural inequality in education (Lynch, et al., 2012). Increasing, but varied accountability in education (Gleeson & O’Donnabhain, 2009).

Teacher education, at primary level in just three institutions, similar or perhaps not!

High quality entrants, in terms of academic and other achievements of those entering teaching.

Variable but generally high levels of teacher agency in Irish primary schools.

Increasing levels of accountability in primary schools and teacher education.

Personal and professional interest in those who are first in their families to enter teaching. Lived experiences. Joy and complexities of teacher education.
Possible Themes to Explore

Students and their lives

Students’ experiences of the university

Emerging traits

Future actions
First in Family Student Teachers in Initial Teacher Education

Students and their lives

Exploring some **phenomenological and idiosyncratic** aspects

- **Who** are these teacher candidates?
- **How** do they experience their teaching practice?
- **What** are their main difficulties and concerns?
- **Which** conditions determine the resolution of these?
- **Who** are their ‘significant others’ during this process?
- **Which** gains do they most frequently perceive as resulting from their first encounter with teaching?

Caires et al., 2012
Students’ experiences of the university environment

Impact of early experiences

Student teacher’s need **motivation to learn**, efficacy beliefs of learning, and intentional acts.

Toom, et al., 2017
First in Family Student Teachers in Initial Teacher Education

**Bachelor of Education 1 students**

- **Aine**: Dublin, local, all girls’ schools
- **Eimear**: Dublin, local, all girls’ schools
- **Lynn**: Dublin, local, all girls’ schools
- **Anne**: Dublin, mixed school
- **David**: Dublin city, Gaelscoil
- **Susan**: Wicklow, mature student
- **Sorcha**: Dublin, Gaelscoil, Irish speaker
Are there any teachers in your family?

- A second cousin who just graduated.
- A great Aunt.
- My brother married a primary school teacher.
- Secondary school teacher: Brother, one cousin, 2 uncles, 2 Aunties. Primary: One Cousin.
- My uncle, his wife and 2 of their children are primary teachers
- 2 aunts were secondary teachers, 2 other cousins primary teachers.
- My aunt is a lecturer.
- My cousin and her husband.
- One of my aunts is a primary school teacher, and another is principal of a secondary school.
- Two 1st cousins are teachers in primary schools with 15 years of experience

For the rest, no one at all...
Under 19
20-23
23-30
30 and over

Male
Female

Urban - inner city, inner suburbs
23%

Urban - outer city suburbs
17%

Urban - town or large village
10%

Rural - within a townland of a few houses
35%
What are the motivations for teaching for FiF student teachers?

What are FiF student teachers’ expectations for ITE?

What are FiF student teachers’ experiences of ITE?

What can we do with this knowledge of FiF students?
What are FiF teachers’ motivations for teaching?

**Personal drive and motivation to teach**

*Teachers played a role model for me. We looked up at the teachers in awe, everything they did,*

*I would go home and do it on my own, playing schools, etc. I would be bossing my older sister around, saying “No, no, my teacher does it this way!”.*

*I just loved teachers as people. I looked at what they were doing and thought, “I just want to do that, I just want to be you!”*. *I could picture myself in that role, and having such an influence on others.*

Lynn, BEd1 student
What are FiF teachers’ motivations for teaching?

**Personal drive and motivation to teach**

*I loved school. I loved primary school and I loved secondary school.*

*My friends sometimes said they couldn’t wait to get out of school, especially last year. Whereas I couldn’t wait to get back into school!*

Eimear, BEd1 student
What are FiF teachers’ motivations for teaching?

**Personal drive and motivation to teach**

When I started school, I started in the inner city in a DEIS school. The conditions in the school were awful, the yard was a car park. We weren’t allowed to run, because it was all stony. The teachers weren’t enthusiastic.

My brother had epilepsy and ADHD, and he was always criticized because he couldn’t colour inside the lines and he just couldn’t concentrate.

Aine, BEd1 student
What are FiF student teachers’ expectations for their ITE programmes?

**Positive disposition to challenges**

I think I was expecting more of an emphasis on curriculum content. I know you’ve already learnt that, but I expected going over it, rather than the focus being on how to teach it. But obviously that makes sense!

That’s what I expected, I thought they would be more lectures where you would be taking notes on the subject. Rather than what we do now.

Eimear, BEd1 student
What are FiF student teachers’ expectations for their ITE programmes?

**Positive disposition to challenges**

One of the most effective things I’ve been taught is about how to get the children to act, particularly in geography and history. My own experience, was to sit in the classroom and the emphasis was learning geography. Taking in information, not using my own skills to assess the information.

Lynn, BEd1 student
What are FiF student teachers’ expectations for their ITE programmes?

Positive disposition to challenges

I think in general, coming to the college I found it quite overwhelming because there were so many people compared to school. But I really enjoy it now. In terms of what I expected from the course, it has surpassed my expectations.

It is very intense, it is very full on but I can’t say that there is one module that I don’t enjoy. Even science, I never did science at school. We didn’t have it. So I didn’t do it for junior at all.

Aine, BEd1 student
What are FiF student teachers’ experiences of their ITE programmes?

**Experience – First in Family, unique**

It’s nice being the first in your family. Especially on Placement, if you’re going home and your family have never had a teacher in the house. They are more excited to hear what’s going on. If you came home your mum and dad are a teacher, it would be like a busman’s holiday! They could criticise you.

If I go home and say things to my dad, he has no experience of teaching. He will sit there and listen to me, or I can ring him every day after college, and he’ll listen to every single thing I say. He’ll absorb everything I say!

Susan, BEd1 student
**Experience – Learning**

For Aistear, in play language and learning, she explains the curriculum, not just making reference to it or saying where to find it. We would not be familiar with all those terms, it would not have been used in our house!

Susan, BEd1 student

*I did know what NCCA stood for until about a week ago!*

Eimear, BEd1 student

*Every time I hear PDST, for Maths, I think of post traumatic stress disorder. It’s the worst thing!*

David, BEd1 student
Guidance for Student Teachers on ITE Programmes in Ireland

Teaching Council (2017) Students on School Placement.
Dublin: The Teaching Council.
What are Ff student teachers’ experiences of their ITE programmes?

Experiences – assumptions made by staff

We had to write three lesson plans, as an assignment. I’ve never written a lesson plan. I said: 'Would you mind telling us how to do this?'

The lecturer showed us a template... but the template made no sense to me. I said I’m having difficulty with this, and he said, ‘I’m sure you know someone who is a teacher already?

I don’t! Well, I know somebody used to babysit for me who is a teacher, I’m can hardly ring them up and ask them to explain a lesson plan to me!

Susan, BEd1 student
What are FiF student teachers’ experiences of their ITE programmes?

Experiences – personal theories and ideas

You know what you are learning here is the newest methods, the most up to date. There could be a contrast there, if say, your aunt is a teacher. They’ve leaned, and put it into practice and so they would be more certain their ways are the best ways to do things...

...so I think it’s an advantage, not having family as teachers. If you did have family as teachers, anything you say could be criticised.

David, BEd1 student
Emerging Themes

Personality

Personality, with great motivation to teach
Positive disposition to experiences.

Learning Environment and Community

Feeling a sense of community: equal, recognised, appreciated.
Feeling new to teaching: overwhelmed, uncertainty, in need of support.

Emerging Professional Agency and Efficacy

Seek social & professional support of community.
Sense of professional agency and efficacy.
First in Family Student Teachers in Initial Teacher Education

Emerging Themes: Personality

Personality, with great motivation to teach

The FiF teachers are very motivated to teach. Some have overcome significant barriers to enter ITE. For others, only the normal ones, in their opinions.

Ghaith and Shaaban (1999) have demonstrated that teachers who have high personal efficacy are less concerned about survival and are able to bring about more effective learning thereby increasing their general teaching efficacy.

The students are enjoying their experiences. They are determined, they are resilient. When they are not, they seek help.

Those who believe they will be successful on a given task are more likely to achieve the desired goals because they allocate substantial efforts, persist in the face of setbacks and develop coping mechanisms for managing negative events.

Bandura, 1986 & 1997
Feeling a sense of community: equal, recognised, appreciated

They feel part of a community, they appreciate how they are treated in the university.

When students experience connected teaching they are supported in using both relational (own experiences) and impersonal (experts’) ways of knowing. This interrelationship between self and theory is characteristic of the more sophisticated ways of knowing. Baxter Magolda, 1993

Feeling new to teaching: overwhelmed, uncertainty, in need of support.

Students can feel overwhelmed, they need support, and to be told it’s there for them, to be told it’s fine to ask the silly questions!

Teachers are knowledge workers who need to be self-regulated, life-long learners able to critically reflect on their actions and teaching. Brownlee, 2004
Seek social & professional support of community
They seek out, and value the support they are given.

Good mentors accept others without making judgments.
Rogers, 1958

Setting aside personal beliefs and values. The good mentor teacher recognizes the power of accepting the beginning teacher as a developing person and professional.
Rowley, 1999

Sense of professional agency and efficacy
These students seem determined to do the ‘right thing’, drawing on all their experiences, including ITE. Research suggests they will.

High sense of efficacy exhibit greater enthusiasm in teaching

Building the teaching efficacy of pre-service teachers could be an important part of teacher education programs
Ng et al, 2008


I’m oblivious to what I’m doing wrong, but I’m loving life because I am able to be that oblivious! I do a lot of acting and drama, but I also work on a deli. So when I’m working, I’m thinking that would be a great lesson plan! I’m doing little songs, and thinking that would really bring out the concept of rhythm right there. So I’m a bit different, but I like having my own perspective.

Eimear, BEd1 student