An Exploration of student perspectives of quality teaching at multi-level education environments

Breda Molony O'Brien, B.Comm. MBS, H.Dip Ed.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work

Name: _____ _____

Breda Molony O'Brien, B.Comm, MBS, H.Dip Ed.

Date: _____

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mum.

Abstract

It is important that teachers are open to look at evidence of how their teaching impacts on students classroom engagement and therefore are better able to meet the educational needs of students. The education sector is nationally and globally recognised as being committed to advancing teaching into a profession of the highest calibre teachers. Institutions and their teaching staff have an obligation to provide the necessary conditions, opportunities and expectations for engagement to prevail. Key among effective teaching practices is teacher-student interaction or the degree to which the teacher is able to engage the students. Calls are made for coherence across the education sectors as to the importance of transition between post-primary (PP) and higher education (HE) and the implementation of quality teaching initiatives that are equally effective between the levels.

The phenomenographic method and incumbent techniques of focus groups and one-to-one semi-structured interviews at both PP and HE levels yield valuable insights into how quality teaching can be achieved across the education levels. The benefits of letting students have a voice are evident from the current study and the literature. It appears that educational stakeholders must share a fundamental commitment to improving outcomes for students and there is an emerging recognition that, to make a difference, change must be meaningfully situated and sustained in the classroom.

The Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework devised from this study's findings outlines how successful transition of students between education levels can happen, with the quality teaching initiatives recommended being equally effective across education levels. Active listening by the teacher and the student is a precursor to dual interaction modelling dialogue. Collaboration and reflection between the teacher and student leads to dual engagement where students and teachers become co-constructors of knowledge at the classroom level. Students can transition with ease between PP and HE because similar constructs exist at both levels. The outcomes of this research study propose to establish stronger links between quality teaching initiatives at PP and HE, suggest an approach for putting these initiatives into practice and provide proposals for improvements in policy to make these changes happen.

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Index of Abbreviations

ACER   Australian Council for Educational Research

ALTC   Australian Learning and Teaching Council

AUSSE   Australian Survey of Student Engagement

CAO   Central Applications Office

DES   Department of Education and Skills

EER   Educational Effectiveness Research

FGR   Focus Group Respondent

HE   Higher Education

IoT   Institute of Technology

IPA   Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IR   Interviewee Respondent

IUA   Irish Universities Association

JC   Junior Certificate

LC   Leaving Certificate

LCA   Leaving Certificate Applied

LCVP   Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PP	Post-Primary
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
SEC	State Examinations Commission
TCI	Teaching Council of Ireland
TESAG	Tuning Education Subject Area Group

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Glossary of terms

Competency is the ability, sufficient skill or knowledge that a person has (Oxford Dictionary, 1994).

Conceptions are specific meanings attached to phenomena which then mediate our response to situations involving those phenomena (Pratt, 1992:204).

Education has been described as an intensive human interaction, an interpersonal relationship, a lifelong journey more about the process than the product as every young person is a developing individual with complex needs that change all the time (O Toole, 2013:5).

Interaction can be described as two simultaneous actions occurring when the teacher is imparting information in the form of content and the student is preparing themselves to receive that information (Fernstermacher, 1986).

Pedagogy relating particularly to teaching and instruction (van Uden *et al.*, 2013).

Quality teaching as including standards of teaching, knowledge and competence underpinned by the ethical values of respect, care, integrity and trust, reflective practice and evaluation of their own professional work (TCI , 2012:5-8).

Student engagement for the student as being active involvement and commitment and concentrated attention, in contrast to superficial participation, apathy and lack of interest (Newmann, 1992:46).

Student experience is primarily the nature of the engagement of students with learning and teaching (Harvey, 2004).

Students role is to take in, process, understand and reproduce vital information that they have learned (Fernstermacher, 1986).

Student perception can be defined as the feelings, attitudes, and impressions that students have regarding the teaching process (Shulman, 1986).

Teaching role is to define, impart, explain, repeat, assess, correct and give feedback (Fernstermacher, 1986).

Traits can be defined as a characteristic feature or quality that distinguishes a person, (Oxford Dictionary, 1994).

Transitions are large, complex transformations that significantly change a student's life, self-concept and learning (Hussey & Smith, 2010:156)

Never become so much of an expert that you stop gaining expertise. View life as a continuous learning experience.

Denis Waitley

Chapter One:
Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The need for high quality teachers remains a central concern in many countries (Commission of the European Communities, 2007, cited in Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014:117; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Previous research studies have addressed cognitive student outcomes in the form of learning (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013) and have indicated that student outcomes in the form of academic achievement vary according to their teachers (Luyten, 1994; Thomas *et al.*, 1997; Day *et al.*, 2007) but less is known about the effect teachers have on students in the form of engagement (Smyth & McCoy, 2011).

Previous research proposes that the primary assets of an educational system are 'bright, kind, creative, encouraging, energetic, ambitious teachers (O'Toole, 2013:8) and that real change to education needs to occur at a micro-level inside the classroom (Hopkins & Levin, 2000; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Tinto, 2012). Higher education (HE) institutes and universities have invested significant resources to try and improve completion rates but this has not made a significant impact (Bryson & Hand 2007; Tinto, 2012), while a rigid teaching, rote learning, environment has been identified at post-primary level (PP) (Smyth *et al.*, 2011; Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2013).

The current study seeks to explore student perceptions of the effect teaching has on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at PP to HE level.

The quality of teaching is critical to student engagement at both PP and HE. Teachers and students interact on a daily basis and the traits and instructional activities displayed by the teacher can have a considerable impact on student engagement. This chapter introduces the reader to the rationale and background to this research study and locates it within the literature. The contextual setting of the current study is outlined. It details the research objectives, the chosen methodology and the thesis layout. The proposed contribution of the current study will also be outlined.

1.1 Background to the study

There can be no art to teaching all things to all men'

(Marton, 1992:253).

Recent literature acknowledges that 'much must change, our students deserve no less' (Tinto, 2012:8), meaning that it is therefore necessary to explore 'what needs to change with the process of interaction that can potentially prevent students from learning' (Haggis, 2006:535) and/or engaging (Young & Shaw, 1999; Komarraju, 2013). It is recognised that one of the best resources to understanding teaching are the students themselves, as they spend a great deal of time in class with teachers that are both good and bad (Perry, 2003; Tam *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, there is general consensus from the literature that students evaluations are a valid indicator of quality teaching (Cohen, 1981; Feldman, 1989; Marsh &

Bailey, 1993; Martens *et al.*, 2004; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007; McCoy *et al.*, 2014). Teacher-student interaction, understanding each other's role in the classroom, teaching traits and instructional activities adopted by the teacher, which enhance students engagement all contribute to considerable progress in easing the transition for students as they move between multi-level educational environments (Lawrence, 2003; Trotter & Roberts, 2006).

To date, current literature does not adequately explore student perceptions of quality teaching in the classroom at PP to HE environment. Calls are made for coherence across the education sectors as to the importance of transition for students between PP and HE (DES, 2013; McManus, 2013).

It is widely accepted that the quality of teaching is critical to student engagement, and there is a strong move towards student engagement and quality teaching initiatives to be put in place in Ireland (Brown, 2010; Hunt, 2010; Smyth & McCoy, 2011) and internationally (Cappon, 2006, cited in Delaney *et al.*, 2010:1; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2005; 2009b). Many high performing countries such as Japan, Singapore, Australia and Finland share a commitment to professionalised teaching and have advanced teaching into a profession of high-knowledge workers and share a commitment to professionalised teaching, providing opportunities for the best teachers to emerge and finding ways to help teachers that struggle (Chen *et al.*, 2012; Schleicher, 2013).

Notably, continuous professional development is inherent in teacher quality (Schleicher, 2011) and it is this approach that can help to enhance teacher effectiveness at both PP and HE level.

The Irish programme for Government (Government of Ireland, 2011) prioritises the recruitment, training and support of the highest calibre teachers (O' Shea, 2013; Drudy, 2013). This is underpinned by the strategic plan of many PP schools and HE universities, which is to provide instructional excellence to students in a positive learning environment (WIT, 2010; Jordan & O'Donnell, 2013). Reform is to the forefront of these policy documents and the mandate to reform teaching and learning is predominant.

Antoniou (2013:25) identified that a void of existing approaches for modelling education effectiveness is a possible reason for the process not contributing significantly to the improvement of teaching practice. The current research study seeks to explore student outcomes in the form of engagement inside the classroom (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Tinto, 2012) at PP to HE levels. Having identified this literature gap, the current study sets as its core objective the establishment of a quality teaching initiatives framework that addresses the present education divide between PP and HE environments. What is key, is that the quality teaching initiatives recommended are equally effective across different education levels (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013)

1.2 Contextual setting of this research study

This research is conducted in the PP (Post-primary) and HE (Higher Education) sector in the Republic of Ireland. Therefore it is useful to consider the structure of the Irish educational system.

1.2.1 Post-Primary

In Ireland PP education consists of five or six years, comprising three years of junior cycle and either two or three years of senior cycle. The system is primarily comprised of voluntary secondary schools (58 per cent), vocational (25 per cent), community and comprehensive schools (17 per cent and private (8 per cent), (DES, 2004; Darmody & Smyth, 2013).

There are two cycles; a three year junior cycle for 12-15 year olds culminating in a Junior Certificate state examination (JC), and a two to three year senior cycle for 15-18 year olds culminating in the traditional Leaving Certificate (LC) state examination taken by 67 per cent of students in 2013 (DES, 2013). Depending on schools, students may opt to do a transition year programme at the start of the senior cycle programme. This offers the students the opportunity to develop on a personal, social and educational level (McCoy *et al.*, 2014) as they experience many and varied modules and work experience programmes, engaging with education and learning.

Students may also opt to take the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), taken by 28 per cent of students. This is broadly similar to the LC programme but focuses on three key modules of enterprise

education, preparation for work and work experience and is accepted as a basis for entry to HE. The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), taken by 5 per cent of students, prepares participants for the world of work and does not qualify for entry to HE. Student performance in the LC examination is the basis for entry into HE. The allocation of undergraduate places to school leavers is based on a points system and is operated by the Central Applications Office (CAO).

The government White paper on education (1995:50) '*Charting our Education Future*' states that the aims of the senior cycle are:

> to encourage and facilitate students to continue in full time education during the post-compulsory period by providing a stimulating range of programmes suited to their abilities, aptitudes and interests. The objectives are to develop each students potential to the full and equip them for work or future education

In 2013, there were 103,219 students in the senior cycle programme in PP education (DES, 2013); of that, 52,767 students (26,620 male and 26,147 female) sat the traditional LC state examination (DES, 2013). The results' a student achieves in the LC influences their career path into adult life and access to HE (Smyth & McCoy, 2009). The current study will collect data at PP using focus groups in four PP schools; two all-boys school, one all-girls school and one co-educational school.

1.2.2 Higher education

In Ireland, HE traditionally was only available to upper classes. However, in the second half of the 20th century, the government recognised the need to increase participation. HE comprises the university sector, Institutes of technology (IoT), colleges of further education and private colleges (DES, 2004). Full time enrolments grew from approx. 20,000 in the period 1965/1966 to 163,068 in 2011/2012 (DES, 2012). These rapidly growing numbers reflect increasing retention rates at PP level, demographic trends and higher transfer rates into HE level education (DES, 2004). The investment in HE in Ireland in the last thirty years has allowed Ireland to realise one of the highest levels of HE attainment amongst OECD countries (OECD, 2005).

HE institutions offer programmes at degree, masters and doctoral level. Many institutions have introduced semesterisation and modularisation, allowing greater flexibility for students (DES, 2004). The Minister for Education and Science, who is a member of the Government and responsible to Dáil Éireann (the Irish Parliament), has specific responsibility for education policy issues ranging from pre-school education, through primary level, PP level, HE level, adult and further education.

The Irish Universities Act, 1908 is responsible for establishing business faculties (Clarke, 2001, cited in Byrne & Flood, 2003:198). As the economy developed, the status of business education encouraged third level institutions to develop their business faculties (White, 2001 cited by Byrne

& Flood, 2003:202). Today, there are almost thirty HE institutions offering accounting and business courses.

This research is conducted in three HE environments. One is an IoT, which is a university-level institution with over 10,000 students. The other two research sites are two of the largest and most prominent universities in Ireland, with over 30,000 students in each. A combination of focus groups and semi-structured interviews are used to collect the data at HE.

1.2.3 Context: Content and curriculum

The current research study seeks the experiences of students in both the HE and PP classroom and supports the importance of content as a determinant of teaching processes. However, it is outside the remit of this study to examine the detail of content in teaching accounting. A brief outline of content is provided so that the reader can gain an appreciation of the classroom and what the teacher is teaching. PP level adopts the same curriculum, while HE can deliver modules at different stages of the course. A sample is provided here from one HE institution (Section 1.2.3.2).

1.2.3.1 PP/ HE Accounting content

Smith (1983:491) summarises that the 'teacher interacts with the student in and through the content and the student interacts with the teacher in the same way'.

Accounting, as a senior cycle subject at PP level is split into both higher and ordinary levels. There has been a continuous decline in the number of students choosing LC Accounting (Byrne & Willis, 1997); DES, 2012), dropping by 654 students in a three year period from 2010 to 2012. Overall, the number of students taking accounting as a percentage of student numbers doing LC is relatively small (6,443 out of 52,589).

Despite the minority numbers choosing accounting, the NCCA (1995:56) emphasises that 'accounting has a very positive role to play in the general education of senior students and has a direct relevance to the present and future life of every young person, in that: it develops problem-solving and computational skills and an awareness and recognition of the consequences of error. It develops the powers of concentration and fosters critical thinking, logical organisation and orderly presentation'.

The accounting syllabus is divided into eleven main sections (NCCA, 1995): Conceptual framework, Regulatory framework, Accounting records and double entry, Sole trader, Company accounts, Specialised accounts, Incomplete records, Cash flow statements, Interpretation of accounts, Management Accounting, Information Technology in accounting.

1.2.3.2 HE Accounting modules

The Accounting module for first year HE students at a particular university in this study is Financial Accounting. This is a year-long module unlike

other semesterised modules where students take two separate modules of accounting in each half-year (semester). This initiative was taken in response to a high attrition rate among first year accounting students. The module is examinable by continuous assessment and final exam. The purpose of the module is to develop knowledge and understanding of the techniques used, to prepare and analyse year-end financial statements for companies and to introduce students to the regulatory framework. The content of the module consists of books of original entry and ledgers, basic financial accounts including adjustments, conceptual framework of accounting, preparation of financial accounts for limited company, preparation of cash flows, interpretation of accounts using key ratios, regulatory framework, bank reconciliation statements, identify and correct errors in accounting entries and inventory valuation.

Year 2, semester 3 and 4 offers Cost Accounting and Management Accounting Techniques respectively. These are examinable by 2 hour written examinations at the end of each semester. The Cost Accounting module provides students with an understanding of all elements of the product cost in order to establish unit cost of output and the cost methods available to each type of business structure. The content of the module consists of introduction to cost accounting, materials, labour, overheads absorption, activity based costing and process costing.

The Management Accounting Techniques module is taken in semester 4. The module familiarises students with cost techniques used to help managers make decisions. The content comprises cost volume profit

analysis, decision making, standard costing (variance analysis), budgeting (cash and functional) and developments in management accounting.

1.3 Justification of the current study

Although considerable research has been conducted on effective teaching, research that contrasts effective teaching traits and teaching instructional activities adopting a phenomenographic-based study of student perceptions at PP to HE level does not exist in Ireland or abroad, based on the researcher's review of the literature. In the literature to date, HE and PP contexts have been addressed separately. Much of the relevant literature on effective teaching has adopted quantifiable techniques measuring teacher effectiveness and student achievement in the form of learning (Dunkin & Barnes, 1986; Stronge *et al.*, 2011). More recently it has been acknowledged that in order to make a difference to educational effectiveness at a policy level that research needs to address the finer details of interactions at a classroom level (Hopkins *et al.*, 2011; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000) and working at how to improve these factors (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014).Therefore research that explores other outcomes in the form of interactions/engagement at a classroom level (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014) apart from student academic achievement is advocated (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Research that offers rich descriptions of a qualitative nature on the role of interactions between teacher and student leading to student engagement from a students perspective (Trowler, 2010) is perhaps what

can make the difference to practitioner uptake (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014). This study aspires to address this call.

Additionally, many authors have looked qualitatively at various elements of what makes an effective teacher; from teaching processes (Kaur, 2008, 2009; Smyth & McCoy, 2011; McManus, 2013) to teaching traits (Brioch, 1988; Stones, 1992; Schulte *et al.*, 2008; Delaney *et al.*, 2010), to classroom management (Emmer *et al.*, 2003; Stronge *et al.*, 2011) and to student influences on teaching. This research acknowledges teacher effectiveness literature and the many contributions that it has made to educational improvements. However this research in line with advice from other researchers (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008) takes theoretical underpinnings from the literature and attempts to model educational effectiveness in a way that is easy to understand and put into practice (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013). The relatively limited focus of the current study allows for an in-depth description and analysis of student perceptions of quality teaching at both PP and HE levels.

Students perceptions on teacher instruction has long been accepted as a valuable contribution to research literature (Cohen, 1981; Marsh, 1987; Feldman, 1989; Marsh & Bailey, 1993; Centra, 1994; Martens *et al.*, 2004). By comparing perceptions of effective teaching in the PP and HE settings, the current study ultimately seeks to identify effective teaching initiatives in each domain, thereby bridging the gap between PP and HE, as experienced by accounting students in the Republic of Ireland.

Despite the progress made on teacher effectiveness studies, calls are made for research that 'unpacks and understands what exactly teachers do that promotes student outcomes' (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013:143).

1.4 Research objective and thesis aims

The current study's **research objective** is 'To explore student perceptions of the effect of teaching on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at post-primary to higher education level. It will therefore address the following **research questions:**

1. How do students conceptualise the role of interaction for classroom engagement?

2. What are student perceptions of their teachers traits and teaching strategies at both post-primary and higher education levels?

3. What are students experiences of their classroom environment at post-primary to higher education?

1.4.1 Thesis aims

Arising from the above, this gives rise to the following thesis aims.

1. To undertake a comprehensive review of the pertinent literature regarding effective teaching at both PP and HE.

2. To investigate specifically the factors that affect student engagement in this environment as advocated by the literature.

3. To derive a framework that seeks to explain the relationships between teacher classroom behaviour and student classroom behaviour in the context of influencing factors determined from the literature and how these factors shape such relationships.

4. To refine the framework devised from the literature to account for this research study's outcomes and offer a novel way of explaining the dynamics of the teacher-input student-outcome process.

1.5 Justification of the methodology adopted

This research study seeks to explore how students experience a given phenomenon not to study a phenomenon itself (Marton, 1986; Booth, 1997) and to find the variation in the way students are experiencing that phenomenon (Walker, 1998). The object of the research is not the individual or the phenomena but the identification of the qualitatively different ways in which individuals perceive this phenomena (Lucas, 1998, cited in Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:300). In this study, the phenomena is quality teaching. It is therefore considered appropriate to adopt a phenomenographic approach in the current study, as it does not attempt to 'gather data which would allow it to attribute cause, neither is it interested in why students may possess certain conceptions of a phenomena', (Lucas, 1998 cited in Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:295).

The researcher intended the process to be open and transparent and to go beyond imposing a tight methodological logic in order to enter the life-

world of the student (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). Data was collected using the phenomenographic interview technique using both focus groups in PP and a mixture of focus groups and single interviews at HE. Participants were video-recorded and were given complete freedom to talk and dialogue was encouraged as much as possible. This is characterised as being both open and deep (Booth, 1997). Participants were encouraged to reflect on their answers (Orgill, 2002, cited in Ornek, 2008:1) and probing occurred where the researcher wanted to make clear their experience. The use of a similar set of open-ended questions across all interviews and focus groups limited the researcher's intrusion into the process. In addition, the decision to use video-recording allowed the researcher to re-assess if she was influencing the interview process in any way.

1.6 Thesis outline

The current study will be structured as follows: **Chapter One** has provided an overview of the study and contextual setting of this study.

Chapter Two: 'Engaging students in formal education environments', provides a review of the literature on the importance of education, understanding the concept of teaching and its importance to education practice. In addition, understanding the concept of student engagement with regards to interaction at a classroom level is explored. The chapter then explores the inputs-process variables of the teaching paradigm and describes relationship building in teaching using the act of teaching model proposed in

the literature. The teaching traits of quality teachers are identified along with the teaching approaches of those same teachers at both HE and PP levels.

Chapter Three: 'The outputs of quality teaching and its impact on student engagement', explores the outputs of the teacher-student transaction process of Chapter two. The challenges faced for both students and education stakeholders are identified as students make the transition from PP to HE. A quality teaching initiatives framework is proposed by adapting previous models in the literature, conceptualising students perceptions of the effect teaching has on student outcomes in the form of engagement.

Chapter Four: 'Methodology', details the chosen methodology for this study. This will involve a review of the philosophical underpinnings of the chosen methodology as well as the researcher's stance. The process of how this research method is conducted is of key consideration in determining the validity of this research method, therefore a full description of the applied process is presented. Students at HE were interviewed using a combination of focus group interviews and individual interviews while focus groups were used at PP. A total of 15 participants were interviewed at HE and 20 at PP level, in total there were 35 participants in this study. The primary data collection is described in detail as well as the coding and analysis of this data. The chapter concludes by discussing this study's research legitimacy, validity, credibility, objectivity and reliability.

Chapter Five: 'Findings', presents the research findings relating to the objective of this study. In an attempt to set aside the researcher's preconceptions, the researcher has allowed the raw data texts to speak for themselves and the meaning of texts to emerge independently into themes and sub-themes.

Chapter Six: 'Discussion', provides an analysis and interpretation of the findings of the study in the overall context of the relevant literature, emphasising the similarities and differences between both while delving into the nuances of students experiences in the current study. Themes emerging from this study's exploration of the research questions are identified which concludes with the proposal of a Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and recommendations, outlines the main contributions of this study in light of the limitations of pursuing research of this nature. The chapter presents a proposed framework for the adoption of quality teaching initiatives for both teachers themselves and educational stakeholders, summarising the salient conclusions of this research. In addition, recommendations for future research are highlighted. A reflexive analysis of the role of the researcher is also provided.

1.7 Proposed contribution of this study and dissemination of the findings

The contributions of this study are discussed in Chapter Seven (Section 7.3). A brief overview of some of the key contributions is provided at this point. Quality enhancement in education is much to the forefront (Hunt, 2010) therefore pedagogic research of this nature can contribute to raising the standards of teaching as a professional activity (Stierer & Antoniou, 2004). The findings of this study could 'inform both current teachers professional development and future teachers aspirations which in turn could lead to an improvement in teaching' (Chen *et al.*, 2012:945).

Research that explores student perceptions of the effect teaching has on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at PP to HE in the Republic of Ireland and abroad does not exist to the best of the researcher's knowledge. This study's findings should display realities of quality teaching and practices from students perspectives at PP and HE levels. Calls have been made for research of this nature; inside the classroom (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Tinto, 2012), student engagement (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013) and easing the transition between multi-level education environments (DES, 2013; McManus, 2013). The current study has sought to address these calls for research at a micro-level inside the classroom environment at both PP and HE level, using students perceptions as a valid indicator of how quality teaching can be achieved at both levels. The resultant Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework from this study's research outcomes is fortified by building on earlier

research (specifically Clark & Peterson, 1986; Kember, 1997; Martin *et al.*, 2000); models of the art of teaching, the framework of teaching conceptions and teacher thought processes. Thus, this research contributes to the body of existing knowledge concerning teacher classroom behaviour, student classroom behaviour and transition between education levels (Harris, 2008; Postareff & Lindblom Ylanne, 2008; Gibney *et al.*, 2011; Smyth & McCoy, 2011; McCoy *et al.*, 2014).

On a practical level, this study offers a number of implications for practice relating to quality teaching initiatives that may encourage teachers to reflect on their own teaching traits and instructional activities. In essence, this research exposes the reader to innovative ways of approaching changes to the education system or offers teachers fresh ways of identifying, understanding and leveraging students experiences and advice in the education classroom setting. Professional development programmes built on these findings could facilitate teachers and their willingness to adopt new approaches (Sakofs *et al.*, 1995).

It may also provide a platform for international comparisons and/or disparities of quality teaching initiatives to be identified and improved upon. Thus, this study provides both practical and theoretical outputs in the context of multi-level education classroom practice.

This study's legitimacy is empowered by the adopted research approach, design and enactment. The presentation of this study's research outcomes at the Western Business Management conference proceedings Paris, 2014 has

allowed the researcher to reflect with other academics at an international level. In addition, the importance of the pilot study and the presentation of a conference paper at the Irish Academy of Management proceedings 2012 allowed the researcher to develop and hone in on a sound empirical foundation as a prelude to this larger research project.

1.8 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview and context for the current study. The background to this study and the context in which the data was collected were introduced and a justification for this research study was highlighted. The research question and overall thesis objectives were outlined as well as an overview of the methodological approach adopted in this study. The thesis structure was presented and the proposed contributions that this study hopes to achieve are identified. This study supports the importance of content as a determinant of teaching processes and outlines briefly the aim of accounting content modules to be studied in PP and HE classroom settings. The following Chapters Two and Three provide a review and critique of the relevant literature on quality teaching that places this study in context.

Chapter Two:
Engaging students in formal education environments

2.0 Introduction

Good teachers make a profound difference to the performance of students and are highly respected in the strongest economy countries (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; OECD, 2005; 2009b; Cappon, 2006, cited in Delaney *et al.*, 2010:1; Chen *et al.*, 2012). The purpose of this chapter is to stress the importance of education and the quality of the teacher-student relationship in building a robust system for education in which young people can flourish and grow. Existing teaching paradigms are explored. This chapter then explores the inputs-process variables of the teaching paradigm and describes relationship building in teaching using the act of teaching model proposed in the literature. The teaching processes of quality teachers are identified along with the teaching traits of those same teachers at both PP and HE levels. The chapter closes with a summary of the effects of teaching inputs and processes on student behaviour in the form of engagement.

2.1 Defining education and teaching

Education has been described as 'an intensive human interaction, an interpersonal relationship', a 'lifelong journey' more about the process than the product as 'every young person is a developing individual with complex needs that change all the time' (O Toole, 2013:5). A universal approach cannot apply and it has to be 'done by people who are themselves highly educated and highly motivated, it is hard to do well' (O Toole, 2013:5).

Education is about broadening horizons (Bradbeer *et al.*, 2004) particularly at HE level where students embark on a voyage of personal discovery through learning. Kuh *et al.* (2006) place teachers at the heart of education and they deserve to be 'valued and acknowledged within institutions for their contribution' (Zepke & Leach, 2010:175).

The formal definition of education is that there are two parties involved; the teacher and the student. This involves a 'process of building relationships' between the two parties (Sidorkin, 2002:88) as the quality of that teacher-student relationship is a key factor in educational outcomes for young people (McCoy *et al.*, 2014). The teacher accepts responsibility for the education of the other 'the pupil' (Revens, 1960, cited in Langford & O'Connor, 2010:68), where they come together for the purpose of an activity, usually learning, engaging in a manner that involves one person having knowledge and sharing it with the other person (Fenstermacher, 1986). For this to happen, teachers and students need to meet and interact (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004). **Interaction** can be described as two simultaneous actions occurring when the teacher is imparting information in the form of content and the student is preparing themselves to receive that information (Fernstermacher, 1986). Good teaching, Fenstermacher (1986:39) proposes, is when the teacher 'accommodates the readiness of the learner to learn and to encourage their interest in the material'. Therefore, a **teaching role** is to define, impart, explain, repeat, assess, correct and give feedback while the **students role** is to take in, process, understand and reproduce vital information that they have learned. Teaching is dependent

on students being available to teach, however, students do not necessarily need teachers as they can teach themselves (Fernstermacher, 1986). For the purpose of this research, the context is the PP and HE classroom where the teacher and students interact on a daily basis.

The definition of interaction and the role of the teacher and student recognises the importance of teacher-student relationships, which is at the core of quality teaching and depends on the ability of the teacher to engage the students by being flexible and adaptable (Devine *et al.*, 2013). Schwab (1983:265) likened teaching to an art: 'every art, whether it be teaching, stone carving, has rules, but knowledge of the rules does not make one an artist. Art arises as the knower of the rules learns to apply them appropriately to the particular case. In art, the form must be adapted to the matter. Hence, the form must be communicated in ways which illuminate its possibilities for modifications'.

2.1.1 Challenges for the educational system

One of the defining challenges of the 21st century is to reflect on the way teaching happens and the impact teachers have on student outcomes (Hattie, 2012), as the 'educational experiences' of any young person 'will be overwhelmingly determined by their relationships with their teachers' (O' Toole, 2013:8). This relationship may play a central role in the long-term educational trajectories of young people (McCoy *et al.*, 2014).

Problems at PP and HE level, of conventional pedagogy (Ramsden, 1991; Exeter *et al.*, 2010; O'Shea, 2013) has been linked to problems with student engagement. In particular at PP level, teacher-driven methods of rote-learning, geared towards exam success using didactic methods are prevelant (Burns & Myhill, 2004; Smyth & McCoy, 2011; Gleeson, 2012; O'Shea, 2013; Hogan *et al.*, 2007, cited in Devine *et al.*, 2013:86). At HE, the literature has expressed concerns as to the lack of stimulation and enthusiasm displayed by many lecturers (Hughes, 2011) in the way they teach at HE. In fact, many university academics do not consider themselves as teachers but merely as members of their faculty discipline (Becher, 1989; Orlando, 2014). Clark (2001, cited in Byrne & Flood, 2003:200) warns that academic staff may have difficulty adopting models of best practice transitioning from teaching to facilitating learning.

It must be recognised, however that having a shared value across education levels (Devlin, 2007a, cited in Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010:119) is essential to the successful education of students. 'Bad educational experiences can have disastrous consequences not only at an individual level but also at a collective economic level' (O' Toole, 2013:6). Given the speed of educational progress, 'to stand still is to fall further behind' (Marshall, 2013:49). Therefore, it is more essential than ever to address educational challenges particularly at a classroom level where teachers can really make a difference (Tinto, 2012). OECD countries have seen a strong increase in the number of graduates over the last decade, with Ireland's participation rate expanding more rapidly than the other OECD countries

(Schleicher, 2013). However the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results survey pose significant educational challenges for Ireland, as Ireland lag behind in numeracy and literacy capabilities (Schleicher, 2013).

'A generation ago, teachers could expect that what they taught would last for the lifetime of their students' (Schleicher, 2013:9). Educational success however, is no longer about reproducing content knowledge. In a fast changing world 'producing more of the same education' will not suffice to address the challenges of the future (Schleicher, 2013:9). Many world class countries such as Japan, Singapore and Finland have recognised teaching as a high-end profession (Schleicher, 2013) and the Government of Ireland (2011) has committed to prioritising high quality teaching. Schleicher (2013:13) purports that countries who use the best education system practices, not national standards, will be the ones to succeed: 'the task for educators and policy makers is to ensure that countries rise to this challenge'.

2.2 Teaching paradigms

Notably, teaching can only be understood in terms of what it enables the learner to do with the information (Shulman, 1986). The earliest paradigms of teaching were focused on the process-product paradigm. Gage (1963:95) explained paradigms as 'models, patterns or schemata, paradigms are not

theories; they are rather ways of thinking or patterns for research that, when carried out, can lead to the development of theory'.

Most of the historical research is cognitive based, looking at the learning outcomes of students. This has examined the effect teacher processes had on student achievement in the form of learning (Dunkin & Barnes, 1986; Smyth & McCoy, 2011). However, further development has exposed that learning is not the only outcome from teaching. Student perceptions or evaluations can be a product of the teacher process-product paradigm (Fielding, 2001; Rudduck, 2007, cited in Bovill *et al.*, 2011:135). Research on student perceptions of teaching is reflexive as it explores what it is that students want from their teachers, so that the teacher can be the best they can from that encounter, (Dunkin & Barnes, 1986).

Gage (1963) proposed the following paradigm (Figure 2.1), that the way teachers behave is as a result of their characteristics (presage), the context they work in (environment), leading to their behaviour (process) which results in student outcomes (product) usually in the form of learning.

Figure 2.1

Input-process-output teaching paradigm

Presage ➡ Context ➡ Process ➡ Product

Adapted from: Gage (1963)

This paradigm set the seeds for studying the effects teacher behaviour or processes have on students themselves in terms of action (engagement, participation, talk, behaviour) as opposed to learning (Fenstermacher, 1986). The current research study seeks to explore student perceptions of the effect of teaching on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at PP to HE level.

2.2.1 Role of interaction for classroom engagement

Newmann (1992:46) attempts to clarify the concept of **student engagement** for the student as being: 'active involvement and commitment and concentrated attention, in contrast to superficial participation, apathy and lack of interest'. This definition recognises the importance of student-teacher relationships and 'can be considered to represent a connection in the context of a relationship which a student desires or expects to belong to' (Case, 2007:130). Bryson & Hand (2007) suggest that student engagement

involves a dynamic interaction between the student and their learning environment. Cruickshank's (1985:17) model (Figure 2.2) of the teaching/learning process brings together the concepts of role, interaction, and engagement.

Figure 2.2

Relationship of role, interaction and engagement
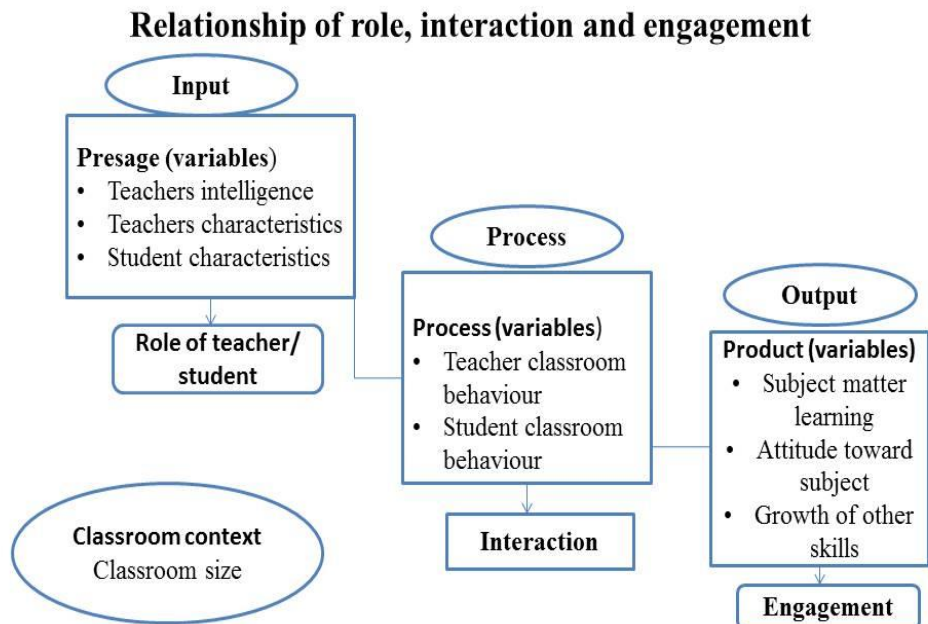
Adapted from Cruickshank (1985)

Presage is the teacher's intelligence and the teacher's characteristics as well as the students characteristics. Process is how the teacher and students behaviour affect each other; the role of interaction between both parties.

Product is student achievement in, and further pursuance of the subject, as well as the development of other skills for the student. Presage is supposed to affect process and then, of course, process will affect the product. Research shows that children who are more engaged in school do better academically and also adjust better socially to their classroom environments (Skinner *et al.*,1990). The relationship between teacher role and student behaviour in the form of engagement can be determined by the student perception of how the teacher creates a successful classroom environment (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). This in turn can shape the extent to which students feel part of the classroom both socially and academically (Van Uden *et al.*, 2013). According to Rush & Balamoutsou (2006 cited in Trowler, 2010:34) 'engaged students … share the values and approaches to learning of their lecturers; learn with others inside and outside the classroom; actively explore ideas confidently with others; and learn to value perspectives other than their own. When students are part of a learning community … they are: positive about their identity as a member of a group; focused on learning; ask questions in class; feel comfortable contributing to class discussions'.

Most of the literature to date has discussed the benefits of student engagement, however studies on the 'student voice' exploring the concept of 'student engagement' from the student perspective is lacking (Trowler, 2010). This study will explore the role of interaction in relation to classroom engagement from the students perspective.

2.2.2 The concept of student perception and experiences

Student **perception** can be defined as the feelings, attitudes, and impressions that students have regarding the teaching process (Shulman, 1986). Developed largely in the UK, Australia, Canada, and the US, 'student voice' is premised on the notion that students have a unique perspective on teaching and learning and that they should be invited to share their insights, which warrant not only the attention but also the response of educators (Fielding, 2001; Rudduck, 2007, cited in Bovill *et al.*, 2011:135).

The **student experience** is primarily the nature of the engagement of students with learning and teaching (Harvey, 2004). Harvey *et al.* (1992:1) are credited with first coining the term student experience claiming that this factor is the most important in assessing quality in higher education. They also noted that 'this is not restricted to the student experience in the classroom but to the total student experience'. It may be more appropriate to focus on the student experience of engagement in the teaching/learning process rather than their surface/deep learning approaches (Mann, 2001). Therefore the wider social implications of student experience are outside the remit of this study.

Student **perceptions** on teacher instruction has long been accepted as a valuable contribution to research literature and there is general consensus that students evaluation are a valid indicator of teaching effectiveness (Cohen, 1981; Marsh, 1987; Feldman, 1989; Marsh & Bailey, 1993; Centra, 1994; Martens *et al.,* 2004; McCoy *et al.*, 2014). Ramsden (1991) proposes

that there is no other single measure of teaching performance that is as potentially valid.

By gaining an insight into student experiences of teaching it is possible to understand teaching and identify ways of making it better (Wittrock, 1986), as 'students are in the class almost every day and they know what's going on' (McKeachie, 1983:38; Tam *et al.*, 2009). The study of student perceptions of teaching brings an understanding to the effect quality teaching has on student learning and other outcomes such as motivation and engagement (Young and Shaw, 1999; Komarraju, 2013), the development of teaching methods and the analysis of the teaching process (Doyle, 1977; Wittrock, 1978; Winnie & Marx, 1980; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004). Students experiences of teaching traits and teaching instructional activities can reveal what is happening at both PP and HE levels. Therefore improved knowledge about effective teaching can lead to better teaching instruction (Anderson, 1984). Anderson *et al.* (1979:193) aptly summarise this:

> to define relationships between what teachers do in the classroom (the process of teaching) and what happens to their students (the products)….greater knowledge of this relationship will lead to improved instruction: once effective instruction is described, then programs can be designed to promote those effective practices.

2.3 The teacher and student transaction process

In the 1980s, several researchers developed models of the teaching/learning process. The following model: 'A transaction model of the teaching/learning process', (Huitt, 2003) can be classified into four categories as outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

A transaction model of the teaching/learning process

Context	All those factors outside of the classroom that might influence teaching and learning
Input	Those qualities or characteristics of teachers and students that they bring with them to the classroom experience
Classroom Processes	Teacher and student behaviours in the classroom as well as some other variables such as classroom climate and teacher-student relationships
Output	Measures of student learning taken apart from the normal instructional process.

Source: Huitt, 2003

Context: The context in which teachers and students meet (i.e. the setting: school, institution, classroom) will also influence the teaching/learning process. Dunkin & Barnes (1986) point out that course content is often viewed as a context variable (i.e. the curricula or syllabi that teachers are

required to cover to satisfy educational requirements). The current study supports the importance of content as a determinant of teaching process. However, this study will not examine the conceptions of content, but how this content is imparted by teachers to students in the classroom setting. Cohen *et al.* (2003) concurs that content and the way it is taught is at the very heart of teaching.

Teachers are familiar with the 'content' of the curriculum, though putting it into practice in classrooms continues to be a challenge. The focus therefore is on the classroom if real change is to occur (Tinto, 2012). It is outside the remit of the current study to examine the contextual settings in detail, the focus is inside the classroom.

Inputs includes the teachers values and beliefs, knowledge, their thought processes (thinking and communication skills), performance skills, and personality traits. Teaching conceptions are explored from the students viewpoint. It is outside the remit of this study to investigate teachers thought processes.

Classroom Processes category includes all the variables that would occur in the classroom. There are three subcategories: teacher behaviour, student behaviour, other/miscellaneous. The category of teacher behaviour consists of all the actions a teacher would make in the classroom and includes three additional subcategories: planning, management, and instruction.

Planning: refers to all of those activities a teacher might do to get ready to interact with students in the classroom. Management: refers to controlling

student behaviour. <u>Instruction:</u> refers to actually guiding student learning. For the purposes of the current study, instruction processes will be explored in detail.

Teacher behaviour is affected by student behaviour and vice-versa. Student behaviour consists of student engagement, success in the form of achievement which leads to a positive and active classroom climate for both the teacher and the student.

Outputs: include student academic achievement. For the purpose of the current study student engagement and student perceptions of quality teaching are explored as proposed outcomes.

Each of these categories will in turn be examined in detail in the following sections.

2.3.1 Inputs: Teachers values and beliefs

A prerequisite to good teaching is the understanding of what good teaching is. This has been described in the literature as conceptions, beliefs, orientations, approaches and intentions (Pajares, 1992). Pratt (1992:204) offers a definition of the most commonly used term conceptions of teaching: 'conceptions are specific meanings attached to phenomena which then mediate our response to situations involving those phenomena. We form conceptions of virtually every aspect of our perceived world ……, we view

the world through the lenses of our conceptions, interpreting and acting in accordance with our understanding of the world'.

Studies on conceptions of teaching have been numerous since the early 1990's (Dall'Alba, 1991; Dunkin, 1991; Martin & Balla, 1991; Martin & Ramsden, 1992; Dunkin & Precians, 1992; Pratt, 1992; Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992; Gow & Kember, 1993; Prosser *et al.*, 1994; Kember, 1997; Van Driel *et al.*, 1997; Kember *et al.*, 2001; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). They have all reported their findings within the teacher-focused/student-focused Kember's framework (1997) for conceptions of teaching (Gonzalez, 2011).

Martin & Balla (1991) presented a continuum of teaching conception from presenting information to encouraging active learning to learning facilitation. Samuelowicz & Bain (1992) identified teaching conceptions similar to Fox's (1983) proposal of teaching as i) the transfer of knowledge, ii) teaching involving shaping or moulding the students, iii) the teacher as guide, travelling with the students on a journey and iv) growing theory where the emotional and intellectual development of the learner occurs. In 2001, Samuelowicz & Bain, (2001:306) added two further conceptions of teaching as 'negotiating understanding and encouraging knowledge creation'. Teaching conceptions and understandings of effective teaching can help teachers to transform their current teaching practices (Carnell, 2007; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2008). Many studies of teaching and learning have allowed teachers to report on their practices (Douglas, 2009). Teachers must believe in their professional capacity as they face many challenges in managing classroom life (Day & Gu, 2007). Therefore,

conceptions of effective teaching are important if teaching is to be successful at achieving the academic aims of PP and HE (Chalmers & Fuller, 1996).

2.3.2 Framework of teaching conceptions

These conceptions can be likened to Kember's (1997) model of conceptions of teaching (Figure 2.3), adopting three major approaches:

1. The teacher–centred orientation (instruction role)
2. The student–centred orientation (facilitator and encourager)
3. The student-teacher interaction (active role on behalf of student and teacher learning from each other).

Figure 2.3

A multi-level categorisation model of conceptions of teaching
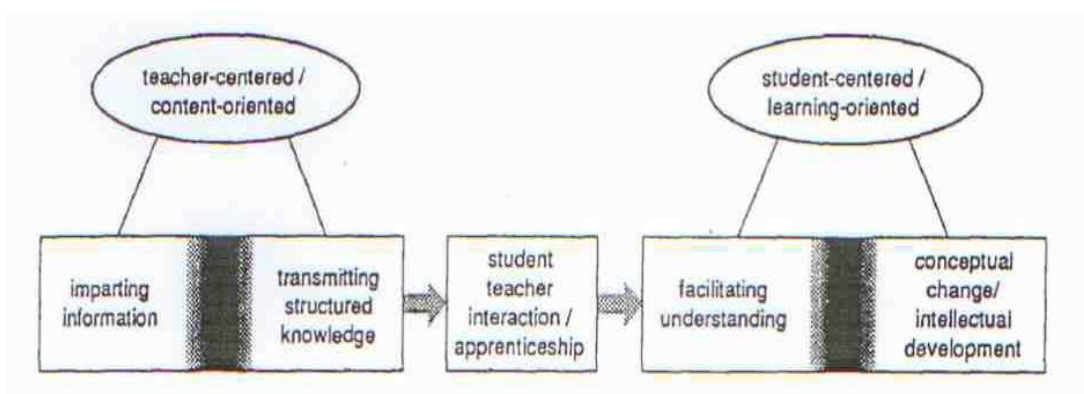
Source: Kember, 1997:264

The teacher-centred approach has been paralleled with a quantitative instructive model where teaching is seen as transmissive and the student as passive (Carnell, 2007). The teacher-centred approach is likened to a transfer theory, where part of the process involves simplifying complex information so that students can grasp the concept even at the expense of losing some detail (Fox, 1983). Fox (1983) uses the analogy of the teacher as a scatterer of seeds of wisdom not worrying where or how they fall as long as he/she [the teacher] has delivered. Postareff & Lindblom-Ylanne (2008b) propose that the content-centered approach is when the teacher is more concerned with content and the teaching performance, in contrast the student-centered approach is about ensuring learning has taken place.

The student-centred approach is seen as a qualitative constructivist model (Piaget, 1926; Vygotsky, 1978; Brown & Campione, 1990, cited in Carnell, 2007:27), where the student is the focus and the teacher facilitates the student learning in an active manner. Kember & Kwan (2000) use the terms 'learning-centered' and 'content-centered' approaches to teaching.

Lying in between the two models is a co-constructivist approach which relies on dialogue between teacher and student, collaboration and sharing and responsibility for teaching and learning (Chalmers & Fuller, 1996; Watkins *et al.*, 2002). Research has proposed that the point of excellent effective teaching occurs when the teacher challenges the students in an engaging, critical and analytical manner rather than adopting a teacher-instruction or student-centred role (Rittle-Johnson *et al.*, 2001; Boston and Smith, 2009).

2.3.2.1 Teaching conception studies at PP

There is a relatively small literature base on conceptions of teaching and reported teaching practices from a PP level perspective (Boulton-Lewis *et al.*, 2001; Gonzalez, 2011; Chen *et al.*, 2012). Earlier research by Clark and Peterson (1986) and Pajares (1992) explored school teachers beliefs about teaching and found that they lie at the heart of teaching. Some discipline areas, particularly science and mathematics, have been researched more than other disciplines (Boulton- Lewis *et al.*, 2001, Chen *et al.*, 2012).

Boulton–Lewis *et al.* (2001) present an analysis of teaching conceptions and learning in two large Australian PP schools. They found similar teaching conceptions as were reported in a HE setting. Teachers move from a focus on transferring content to developing basic skills, to interaction between student and teacher, to further development of meaning to the students own personal development.

2.3.2.2 Teaching conception studies at HE

Currently there is extensive literature on HE teaching conceptions and how they influence the teaching approaches adopted by these teachers (Kember, 1997; Boulton-Lewis *et al.*, 2001). Kember (1998) found fourteen studies on effective teaching in a HE setting. Kember (1997) and Kember (1998) found a relationship between teaching conceptions and how teachers approach their teaching. Student learning outcomes have also been linked (Kember &

Gow, 1994; Trigwell *et al.*, 1999). For example a teacher who conceives of teaching as requiring an information transfer/ teacher-focused approach may elicit surface learning responses in his/her students (Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992; Trigwell *et al.*, 1994). On the other hand, teachers who conceive of teaching in terms of helping students to develop and grow as learners approach their teaching in a student-focused way (Kember & Kwan, 2000). Trigwell *et al.* (1994) found some variation in teaching approaches at HE, and describes the variation in approaches from teacher transmission to student conceptual change and understanding. These approaches fall under Kember's (1997) teacher-focused/student-focused framework.

The teacher-focused strategy commences with

A. The teacher presenting material to the students

B. The teacher presents all the material in the curriculum within the allocated timeframe

C. The teacher clarifies all the information so that all of the material is transferred

D. The teacher gives real-life examples so as to help students understand the material

E. The teacher involves the student on a practical level with the material

F. The teacher challenges the students understandings of the material by engaging in critical thinking.

(Trigwell *et al.*, 1994:79)

Categories A, B and C are information transmission based (teacher-focused), categories D and E are student driven (student-focused) and category F is student-teacher interaction (each party learning from one another).

Perry (1970) found that students initially saw learning as a matter of memorising and reproducing knowledge in ways acceptable to the teacher. Fox (1983:152) uses the analogy that 'not many lecturers acknowledge that a good deal of the material although it is being well prepared and poured out is, in fact missing the target and sloshing over the sides of the container'. Kember (1997) noted that some HE teachers do not classify themselves as teachers but as experts in their field (Becher, 1989). Orlando (2014) believes that lecturing has little to do with teaching but that most university lecturers carry on lecturing although it is having little impact on student outcomes.

Good teaching, seems to contribute to students taking a deeper approach to learning or the absence of a surface approach (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). Aulich (1990 cited in Carnell, 2007:27) purports that universities demand rich, deep conceptions of teaching to enable students to 'possess a capacity to look at problems from a number of different perspectives, to analyse, gather evidence, synthesise and be flexible, creative thinkers'. Entwistle (1996) proposes that good teaching seems to include good explanations, enthusiasm and empathy with students and this in turn supports a deep approach to learning. Successful learning is often credited to an effective teacher, while unsuccessful learning is often linked to poor, weak, unmotivated lazy students.

Of course, the perspective of learner and teacher may differ. Tasker (1992) drew attention to a gap between students and teachers which suggested possible mismatches between teachers and learners views of what a lesson is all about including its aim, development and outcomes (Osbourne & Freyberg, 1980; Tasker & Osbourne, 1983). It is essential to be clear what learning and teaching entails. Duffy & Cunningham (1996 cited in Laurillard, 2002:67) offer the view that: (1) learning is an active process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge and (2) instruction is a process of supporting that construction rather than communicating knowledge.

Fox (1983:156) depicted an analogy of the teacher enjoying sharing their experience with newcomers but the teacher 'now recognises that he will never know everything and he shares the excitement of being a fellow explorer albeit an extremely knowledgeable and experienced one'.

It is possible that there are important differences between PP teachers conceptions of teaching and strategies employed and HE teachers conceptions and the contexts in which they operate (Boulton-Lewis *et al.*, 2001). There appears to be a consistency between these relationships at a HE level (Trigwell *et al.*, 1994; Kember, 1998). At PP level there does not seem to be the same consistency of relationship between teaching conception and approaches (Mellado, 1998). It is true that HE systems operate under different value systems, traditions and contexts than PP education settings (Boulton-Lewis *et al.*, 2001). HE can significantly change a 'student's life, self-concept and learning' (Hussey & Smith, 2010:156).

However, it is evident that this gap (the difference in teaching environment between HE and PP) is closing as calls for a more unified approach between education settings is called for (Cappon, 2006 cited in Delaney *et al.*, 2010:1; Brown, 2010; McManus, 2013).

2.3.3 Inputs: Teachers thought processes

Janesick (1977) attempted to discover what the teacher understood by their role. He put forward that it represents an inter-play between teacher beliefs, intentions, interpretations and behaviour that are constrained by social conditions. Clark & Peterson (1986) concur that teacher behaviour is substantially influenced and even determined by teachers thought processes. Prior to 1975, the dominant research paradigm was the process-product approach to the study of teaching effectiveness. Most of this research assumes linear, uni-directional relationships between teacher and student (teachers actions–student achievement). However Clark & Peterson (1986) propose a circular model of relationship between teacher and student behaviour and achievement, representing a reciprocal action as opposed to a linear one. See Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4

Teachers thought processes

CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Teachers'
Thought
Processes

Teacher Planning
(preactive & Postactive Thoughts)

Teachers' Interactive Thoughts & Decisions

Teachers' Theories & Beliefs

Teachers' Actions
and their
Observable
Effects

Students' Classroom Behavior

Teachers' Classroom Behavior

Student Achievement
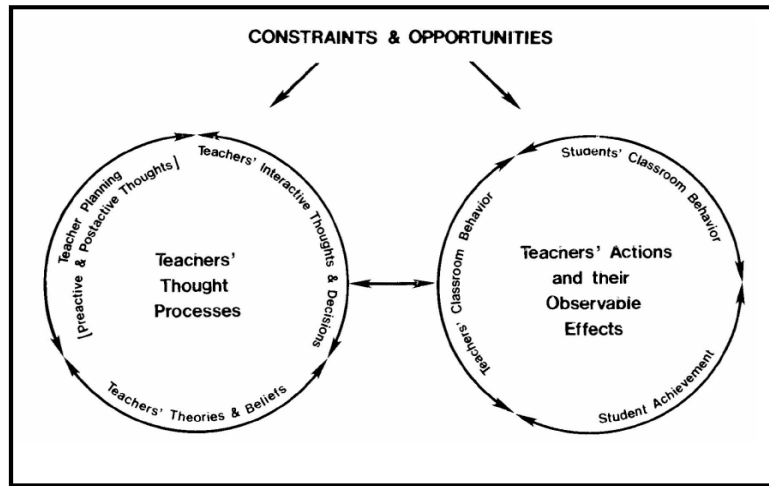
Source: Clark & Peterson, 1986: 257

Teachers theories and beliefs represent the deep inherent descriptions that teachers uniquely possess that shape the way they teach. In addition, teachers thoughts on interaction in the classroom and the decisions teachers make as they embark on the teaching process can have an impact on students in the form of student outcomes or opportunities. Good teacher classroom behaviour has a positive effect on student classroom behaviour which in turn leads to student achievement. The teaching thought process is a cyclical one with all stages of the thought process interdependent and linked (Clark & Peterson, 1986).

It is beyond the scope of the current study to examine the literature on teacher planning, the thoughts they engage in prior to teaching lessons and their reflective thoughts after lessons. This research study purports to adopt

elements of the cyclical teaching thought process as proposed by Clark & Peterson (1986) (i.e. teacher classroom behaviour and student classroom behaviour) in devising a quality teaching initiatives framework for the current study (see Chapter Three, Section 3.4 and Figure 3.1). The current study seeks to ascertain students thought processes of their teachers and how this impacts on student outcomes particularly in terms of engagement in the classroom.

2.3.4 Inputs: Teacher traits and competencies

Traits can be defined as a characteristic feature or quality that distinguishes a person, while a **competency** is the ability, sufficient skill or knowledge that a person has (Oxford Dictionary, 1994). For the purpose of this research, teaching traits will be classified as affective traits while competencies will be classified as cognitive traits of the teacher (Clark, 1995). The earliest research studies of teacher effectiveness focused on the personality of the teacher. Getzels & Jackson (1963) explored personality traits of teachers and student success rates. Studies have found students choosing teachers who are warm, friendly, approachable and communicative while having good control and positive orderly work ethic (Beck, 1967). Good teachers, according to Strikwerda-Brown *et al.* (2008), display positive personal characteristics such as being kind and respectful.

Research conducted by the Tuning Education Subject Area Group (TESAG) (2009) in fifteen European countries reported the top five competencies of quality teaching as being:

1. Knowledge

2. Ability to create a climate conducive to learning

3. Commitment to learners progress and achievement

4. Ability to communicate effectively with groups and individuals

5. The ability to respond to the diversity of learners

Similar teaching competencies are identified in the US (Schulte *et al.*, 2008) as being knowledgeable, patient, caring, understanding, communicating well, disciplining and motivating. Van Uden *et al.* (2013) propose that teachers need to invest in getting students engaged using their affective traits before subject matter can be taught (cognitive traits). Rotgans & Schmidt (2011) clarifies that social congruence precedes cognitive congruence and the teacher creates the classroom conditions for this to ensue (van Uden *et al.*, 2013).

2.3.4.1 Cognitive and affective traits at HE

At HE level, studies are numerous on effective teacher characteristics and competencies. Clark (1995) proposed both cognitive and affective traits of effective teaching at HE level. The cognitive traits included: knowledge, organisation of lesson, clear explanations and clear presentation including

articulation, attention and enthusiasm. Affective traits included: stimulation of interest of student thus engaging them, fostering active participation of students in class, respect and openness to student ideas, good interpersonal relations among student and teacher and open and effective communication.

Brain (1998) exposed four qualities that sets aside an excellent teacher: knowledge, communication skills, interest, and respect for students (Delaney *et al.*, 2010), as well as being organised, being analytical, development of knowledge, clarify complex tasks, provide feedback, good classroom management, and continually improve one's own teaching (Kyriacou, 1991; Mortimore, 1994). Saroyan *et al.* (2004) concur, that strong subject knowledge and the ability to present it clearly and stimulate student interest (Clark, 1995), along with classroom and behaviour management and enthusiasm for teaching (Witcher *et al.*, 2001), are the essential attributes of a good teacher.

Keeley *et al.* (2006:86) expanded on Clark's (1995) categorisation of effective teaching traits by summarising teachers attributes into two broad categories: 'caring and supportive' and 'professional competency and communication skills'. The first category represents traits such as understanding, approachable, caring about students as individuals and providing feedback while category two represents traits such as good subject knowledge, confident, explains well, good preparation and classroom management skills and is respectful towards students.

Vulcano (2007:114) sampled 629 Canadian undergraduate students and came up with ten categories of what makes a 'perfect instructor': (a) knowledge, (b) interesting and creative lectures (c) approachable (d) enthusiastic about teaching (e) fair and realistic expectations (f) humorous, happy, and positive (g) effective communicator (h) flexible and open-minded (i) encourages student participation and (j) encourages and cares for students.

Similarly Axelrod (2008:1) isolated seven qualities that he believes are 'common elements of good teaching': accessibility and approachability, fairness, open-mindedness, mastery and delivery, enthusiasm, humour, knowledge and inspiration. This is substantiated by Delaney *et al.* (2010) findings of respectful, knowledgeable, approachable, engaging, communicative, organised, responsible, professional and humorous as essential attributes of teachers from students perspectives. Teachers who care about students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wolk, 2002), who give clear instructional direction (Peart & Campbell, 1999; Stronge, 2007) and communicate high expectations to their students are associated with effective teaching (Stronge, 2007) and student achievement.

Devlin (2007a, cited in Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010:112) argues that there are more complex skills and practices required of teachers at HE level. Campbell *et al.* (2004) propose that the power to teach is a very distinctive attribute of a good teacher and the teacher must be able to make judgements as to the needs of students and adjust their teaching accordingly. Hattie

(2012) proposes that the solution lies with the teacher's ability to listen to their students.

Teacher performance requires professional expertise and a professional's level of capability is not static but constantly changing (Hay McBer, 2000; Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2007). From the literature, in Hong Kong caring about the students personal life and being a moral role model (Chen *et al.*, 2012) are essential attributes for the teaching profession. Hativa *et al.* (2001:701-702) conclude exemplary university teachers are well prepared and organised, present the material clearly, stimulate students interest, engagement and motivation in studying the material through their enthusiasm/expressiveness, have positive rapport with students, show high expectations of them, encourage them and generally maintain a positive classroom environment. Teachers confidence in their subject area, their preparation for class and their personal and interpersonal skills needed to interact with students on a daily basis are imperative (White paper, 2010).

Best & Addison (2000) propose that teachers are judged by their students on whether they display warmth and friendly behaviour or if they use their names and make eye contact (Wilson & Taylor, 2001) as being critical determinants of quality teaching behaviours. Teachers that are disorganised, who do not have clear course goals, talking too fast, speaking in a monotone voice rather than using changing voice patterns, and degrading or talking to students in a condescending manner (Perlman & McCann 1998; Miley & Gonsalves, 2003) are all teaching traits that bother students.

Alford & Griffin (2013:1) advise teachers to remember that 'you are not teaching lessons or subjects, you are teaching students, real people'. What teachers do, have an impact on students. Therefore, Alford & Griffin (2013:1) summate 'the degree to which you win the hearts and minds of your students is the degree to which you can motivate them to achieve in your class and throughout their college experience'. Another characteristic of effective teaching often gone unrecognised is the ability of the teacher to be creative in their own personalised way, described as artistry characteristics by Hopkins *et al.* (1994). Student-teacher interaction is at the core of artistry, the ability of the teacher to engage the students and to turn the classroom to advantage events that could not possibly have been anticipated (Stenhouse, 1984, cited in Harris, 1998:179).

Rubin (1985:V) describes an example of this classroom:

> there is a striking quality to fine classrooms. Pupils are caught up in the learning; excitement abounds and playfulness and seriousness blend easily because the purposes are clear, the goals sensible and an unmistakable feeling of well-being prevails.

Table 2.2 provides a summary of research on effective teacher traits at HE level.

Table 2.2

Summary of effective teacher traits at HE level

Cognitive traits	Authors	Affective traits	Authors
Knowledge	Vulcano, 2007; Schulte *et al.*, 2008; TESAG, 2009	Respect & openness	Clark, 1995; Brain, 1998; Delaney *et al.*, 2010
Creating positive climate	Clark, 1995; Witcher *et al.*, 2001; Hativa *et al.*, 2001	Care & understanding	Wolk, 2002; Keeley *et al.*, 2006; Chen *et al.*, 2012;
Commitment, prepared & organised	Peart & Campbell, 1999; Hativa *et al.*, 2001; Stronge, 2007	Approachable	Axelrod, 2008
Communication	Stronge, 2007	Patient	Schulte *et al.*, 2008
Respond to diversity learners	Campbell *et al.*, 2004		
Interesting and creative	Vulcano, 2007		
Performance and delivery	Axelrod, 2008		
Challenging students to think	Wood & Tanner, 2012		

2.3.4.2 Cognitive and affective traits at PP level

There is a notable lack of research evidence at PP level on teacher traits and effectiveness and particularly from student perspectives. Some subject areas have received more research attention, particularly Science and Mathematics. Mathematics teachers have been described as: patient, understanding, caring, kind, good at mathematics, explains clearly, ensures students understand, and provides individual help (Murray, 2011). Kaur (2008:346) noted that 'good mathematics teaching in Singapore is student focused but teacher-centred'.

White *et al.* (2009:4) conducted a study using 800 PP students in Australia, exploring their views on what makes good teachers. They identified attributes such as: 'explaining things well', 'getting students interested in the material', 'being approachable', 'encouraging students to achieve', 'providing useful feedback', 'checking on understanding', 'being passionate and energetic about teaching' and 'talking to students as individuals'. A study in the United States (Schulte *et al.*, 2008) identified being knowledgeable, patient and caring, understanding, teaching well, communicating effectively, disciplining and motivating as key attributes of teachers.

Explanation has been recognised as a core task of teaching (Leinhardt, 2004; Wilson & Corbett, 2007; Kaur, 2008, 2009; Shimizu, 2009; White *et al.*, 2009). Strikwerda-Brown *et al.* (2008) found that teachers who explained well, with a view to ensuring that students understood, were

deemed good teachers at PP level. Students found that a good teacher 'keep's on' explaining until the student has grasped the concept and they do 'not rush' through the material. Students also believed that 'good teachers know and understand them as individuals, and will give them one-on-one help' (Murray, 2011:17). This allows the teacher to further explain a concept and give the student a deeper understanding: 'they'll try and break stuff down into easy to understand chunks' (Murray, 2011:18). Hattie (2009) proposes that feedback on student work had the most effect on learning.

Kottler & Zehm (2000:20) reported a number of teaching attributes at primary and PP level in the U.S. which found 'subject content, good, clear methods of delivery and other related skills to be important'. But it was evident that teachers taught for exam success rather than for a love of teaching as a 'way of life'. In a subsequent study, Kottler *et al.* (2005) added being human as an essential attribute of being an effective teacher.

It is interesting to ponder on O'Shea's (2013) comments that there is a different perception of what a good teacher is as students move through the PP cycle. In the earlier years students characterise a good teacher as one 'who explains well in a number of ways and makes the class interesting' (IoT, 2013 video-conference). However towards the end of senior cycle, a good teacher is 'someone who knows what will or won't come up in the exams and will only teach to the former, they are not a good teacher if they waste time' (O'Shea cited at IoT Transition conference, 2013 video-conference). O'Shea (2013) goes on to elaborate that 'the good teacher

becomes a good predictor and is strong in the technical skills of how to answer examination questions'. Irish students are vocal about teachers who respect and care for them but also know if they have been unfairly treated (Smyth *et al.*, 2006). International studies concur (Hallinan, 2008; Gorard & See, 2011:688), proclaiming that 'respect for all students' by teachers is imperative. Table 2.3 provides a summary of research on effective teaching traits at PP level.

Table 2.3

Summary of effective teacher traits at PP

Cognitive traits	Authors	Affective traits	Authors
Knowledge	Kottler & Zehm, 2000; Murray, 2011	Respect (Talking to students as individuals)	White *et al.*, 2009
Creating positive climate	White *et al.*, 2009	Care & understanding	Murray, 2011;
Encouraging achievement	White *et al.*, 2009	Approachable	White *et al.*, 2009
Communication	Kotler & Zehm, 2000;	Patient	Murray, 2011
Interesting and creative	White *et al.*et al., 2009	Human/ Humorous	Kotler *et al.*, 2005
Explains clearly	Wison & Corbett, 2007; Kaur, 2009; Shimizu, 2009;		

	White *et al.*, 2009; Murray, 2011		
Individual help	Murray, 2011		
Create understanding	Strikwerda-Brown *et al.*, 2008; White *et al.,* 2009		

2.4 Classroom process: Teaching practices

Classroom practices relate to teacher and student behaviours in the classroom, as well as some other variables such as classroom climate. These will be explored using i) teacher-student relationship building and ii) effective teaching strategies (instruction).

2.4.1 Relationship building in teaching

Martin *et al.* (2000:397) defines the relationship into 'the how' and 'the what'. 'The how' is the way teachers approach their teaching and 'the what' is how they bring their students into this relationship. This is depicted in the representation of 'The Act of teaching' (Figure 2.5)

Figure 2.5

The Act of teaching

Act of teaching

How (Approaches to teaching)

What (Object of study)

Strategy	Intention	Referential	Structural
Teacher focus Presenting Covering Clarifying	Information transmission	Knowledge as given	**Multistructural** Topic Subject **Relational** Subject
Student focus Engaging Practising Challenging	Conceptual development Conceptual change	Knowledge as constructed or problematic	**Relational** Discipline Practice Lifelong Learning

3   2   1

Source: Martin *et al.*, 2000: 396

This supports Kember's (1997) framework, as teachers move from information transmitters to knowledge creators culminating in conceptual change for both parties. Studies have noted the difficulty with establishing a link between teaching methods and student outcomes (Eggleston *et al.*, 1976; Rutter *et al.*, 1979; Heene & Schulsman, 1988; Coker *et al.*, 1988; Mortimore & MacBeath, 1994, cited in Harris, 1998:176). The problem with looking at effectiveness of different teaching approaches is very

complex as there are so many different teaching contexts and situations (Ramsden, 1992; Harris, 1998; Young & Shaw, 1999; Biggs, 2001). One thing that is certain is that the teachers role is pivotal to student engagement (Gorard & See, 2011), and it is the teacher who is responsible for stimulating students interest and motivation (Dunkin, 1990; Gow & Kember, 1993). Students should find lessons fun (Wood & Tanner, 2012), they should be about more than information transmission; they should be exciting and inspiring (Gorard & See, 2011). Teachers should adopt a variety of delivery approaches in their classes such as practical work, role play, group work and discussions as students respond positively to these. Smyth *et al.* (2011) characterised the teacher–student relationship as one of mutual respect which allowed for independent learning.

This can cultivate a desire in PP students to continue in formal education (Gorard, 2002; Selwyn *et al.*, 2006). According to Leinhardt & Greeno (1986), the ability to effectively teach and convert knowledge into instruction in a manner that is easily understood and where learning occurs requires a cognitive skill (Wragg, 1984, cited in Harris, 1998:171).

It comprises three elements as proposed by Kyriacou (1991):

- Knowledge (subject content)
- Decision-making (how to convert knowledge)
- Action (facilitate learning by teaching)

Supportive teacher-student relationships have positive effects on students both academically and socially and are key to effective classroom

management (Smyth & McCoy, 2011). Negative teacher-student interaction can on the other hand lead to disengagement, drop-outs and students being less likely to attend HE. Smyth and McCoy (2011:13) conclude 'that both schools and teachers matter in shaping student outcomes' at PP level.

2.4.2 Effective behavioural teaching strategies

Teaching processes, or more commonly referred to as teaching methods, are behaviours engaged in for the purposes of promoting learning in others. According to Gage (1963, cited in Dunkin & Barnes, 1986:754), there are three questions to be answered;

1. How do teachers behave?
2. Why do they behave as they do?
3. What are the effects of their behaviour?

The first question will be examined in the next section. Question two relates to teachers beliefs about their teaching prior to, during and after teaching a lesson. It is outside the remit of the current study to explore teachers thought processes from the teachers perspective but students perceptions of the conceptions of effective teaching will be explored. Question three looks at the effects of teachers behaviour and this will be accounted for in Chapter Three as the outputs from the teaching process.

Conners (1978b, cited in Clark & Peterson, 1986:260) found that teachers adopt three principles in explaining their behaviour:

- Principle of suppressing emotions: (remaining silent and stern-faced until class quietens down)

- Teacher authenticity: behave in ways that encourage a good relationship with students and promote good classroom management (open, honest, sincere)

- Principle of self-monitoring: need for teachers to understand how their behaviour can affect students.

These principles cannot be adopted in the stringent sense as teachers must be capable of adapting to whatever happens in the classroom on any one day (Elbaz, 1983; Smyth & McCoy, 2011). Stenhouse (1984, cited in Harris, 1998:179) portrayed images of a good teacher as one who has the capability to engage with and turn to advantage events and responses that could not have been anticipated. Trigwell (2001) proposes that good teaching strategies involve the ability of the teacher to transfer complex subject concepts into an understandable form for students. All of the time, the teacher must be able to maintain the interest of their students and therefore teachers who maintain high levels of student involvement and low levels of disruption in their classroom display effective teaching behaviour (Doyle, 1977a).

The classroom then becomes a good learning space, with teachers helping students learn to think, structure their time, and take risks in their work (Borko & Elliott, 1999). The dynamic model of educational effectiveness (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2006; 2008) allows for a more in-depth examination of specific teaching behaviours. Teaching has a central focus in

the model at classroom level although the model is multi-level in nature (context, school, classroom and student level). The model refers to eight factors which describe teaching behaviour and the student outcomes associated with such behaviour. The factors that relate to other student outcomes apart from achievement are (1) Orientation, where the teacher is clear as to what is expected from the student in the lesson, which can result in making the lesson more meaningful to the student and in turn encourages active participation in the lesson (Paris & Paris, 2001), (2) Questioning, effective teachers use questions as a means of sustaining interaction with students and encouraging the student to re-think their answer if it is incorrect, (3) the classroom environment that allows for teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction. The dynamic model proposes that the type of interactions in the classroom is what is important in achieving student engagement (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013).

Students attributes and the way they behave with the teacher also influence the teaching processes (Cruickshank, 1985). It is outside the remit of the current study to examine student attributes.

Ramsden *et al.* (1995) summarised the behavioural qualities of good teachers as found from research literature:

1. Good learners themselves,

2. Enthusiasm for their subject and a desire to share this with their students

3. Good teachers can adapt with ease to changing circumstances

4. Develop critical thinking in their students

5. Transform knowledge rather than just transmit 'pedagogical content knowledge' (Shulman, 1987:40)

6. Good teachers set clear goals and provide feedback

7. Show respect for their students both in a professional and personal capacity.

Lingard *et al.* (2003:415) proposes that valuing teachers and their work can lead to successful student outcomes both academically and socially. They classified effective teaching into 'productive pedagogies' of i) intellectual quality, ii) connectedness, iii) supportive classroom and iv) engagement with and valuing difference. While Lingard *et al.* (2003) recognises that not all four dimensions of 'productive pedagogies' may be required in the classroom, it depends to a large extent on the needs of the students in the classroom (Trigwell, 2001). Lingard *et al*. (2003) further elaborate that it can largely depend on the professional knowledge and judgement of the teacher as to what classroom practices suit in a particular classroom situation and context. What is clear is that an effective teacher must break down misconceptions that students may have of a subject (Ramsden *et al.*, 1995; Trigwell, 2001). Marton (1992) posits that traditional teaching methods of information transmission bring about only limited changes in students thinking, suggesting that 'when students enter a class burdened with misconceptions they are likely to leave the class with the same misconception', (Marton, 1992:254).

Teachers behave also because of whom they are and the preconceptions they have about teaching (Dunkin & Barnes, 1986). Research has shown that different conceptions held by teachers about their teaching and the strategies they employ whilst in the classroom have a strong influence on student outcomes (Trigwell & Prosser, 1996b; Trigwell *et al.*, 1999).

Trigwell (2001) summarises that poor teaching arises from a teacher-focused approach while the most competent teaching arises from a student-focused approach. Theories of teaching held by teachers according to Fox (1983) affect the strategies that teachers employ in the classroom. He expands by explaining that teachers who view teaching as more than imparting knowledge are in a better position to choose the most appropriate teaching strategies for their subject. Kember & Kwan's (2000) categorisation of approaches to teaching ('learning-centered' and 'content-centred') has contributed to the purpose of teaching practices that teachers adopt (Postareff & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2008). Table 2.4 outlines variations between the two approaches, highlighting i) teaching processes, ii) teachers role, iii) students role, iv) interaction and v) learning environment.

Table 2.4

Variations in the description of teaching practices

Learning-focused approach to teaching	Content-focused approach to teaching
1. Teaching practices -Improvising is a way to construct teaching uniquely to suit different audiences -Knowledge is constructed together with the students -Teaching concentrates on large entities -Teacher is aware of students different ways of learning and uses varying, activating teaching methods in order to enhance students learning	**1. Teaching practices** -Teaching proceeds according to the exact plan the teacher has made -Teacher transmits the knowledge to the students -Teaching concentrates more on facts and details which are pointed out by the teacher -Teaching method is selected on the basis of what is most comfortable for the teacher
2. Teachers' role -Teacher encourages students to be critical and active -Teacher is a facilitator and has an equal and casual relationship with the students -Students learn from the teacher and vice versa -Teacher has a positive attitude towards teaching	**2. Teachers' role** -Teacher points out the important content -Teacher has a more distant relationship with the students -Students learn from the teacher, teacher is the expert -Teacher sees teaching as an obligatory part of being an academic
2.1 Students' role -Teacher sees students as active participants -Students are capable of finding answers by themselves and process the knowledge	**2.1 Students' role** -Teacher sees students as less active recipients and listeners -Little can be expected from students -Teacher sees students as a large crowd

-Students are individuals with individual needs -Students are responsible for their own learning in that they have to find the answers by themselves	of people -Teacher is responsible for students' learning
2.2 Interaction -Interaction between teacher and students and among students improves students' learning outcomes -Knowledge is constructed through interaction -Interactive elements are used with all group sizes in order to enhance students' learning	**2.2 Interaction** -Interaction does not enhance students learning -Teachers cannot or are afraid of using activating methods -Interactive elements are not used with large groups
2.3 Atmosphere -Good atmosphere supports learning: 'Easy to ask' and a safe atmosphere encourages students to present their views -Atmosphere is constructed together with the students	**2.3 Atmosphere** -A more dominant atmosphere -Teacher tries to create a good atmosphere through good performance or through being humorous
3. Conception of learning -Learning is about insights, application of knowledge, developing views, critical thinking, deep understanding -Learning is a process in which the students construct their own views of the phenomena	**3. Conception of learning** -Learning is more about memorizing facts or remembering the course content -Learning is about remembering the right answers or solutions -Right answers can be found through reading the course literature
4. Development of one's own teaching -Teacher is motivated in developing him/herself as a teacher -Development of one's own teaching	**4. Development of one's own teaching** -Teacher is less motivated towards development of his/her own teaching -The aim is to get better positions or

improves students learning outcomes	wage increases
-Teacher is aware of his/her pedagogical skills and has processed his/her own teaching	-Teacher has not reflected on his/her teaching practices deeply and is not aware of what kind of a teacher he/she is

Teaching practices in the classroom in the learning-focused approach to teaching stressed the importance of constructing knowledge together with the students (active) while the teacher is aware of the different learning needs of students. The teachers role is seen as a partnership with the student in the learning-centered approach; the teacher does not have all the answers, but instead he or she can learn from the students as well. The students role in the learning-focused approach reflected responsibility for their own learning. They are active participants with a capacity to find answers and to construct knowledge. Interaction between the teacher and the students and among students was considered as very important.

It is emphasised that knowledge is constructed in interaction through discussions and activating teaching methods. Creation of a good atmosphere in the learning-focused approach to teaching was considered important for building a favourable environment together with the students and for creating an 'easy to ask' atmosphere.

Teachers who have a deep conception of their own teaching leads to deep insights about learning and are more likely to elicit deep learning in their students. Some teachers are very aware of their approach to teaching and

reflect quite deeply on their teaching practices 'pedagogy awareness' (Postareff & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2008:119), while teachers who adopt content-based practices in their teaching are not aware what kind of teachers they are. The learning-focused approach is a more complete approach to teaching when compared to the content-focused approach.

Teachers, by listening to their students and giving them the opportunity to express their opinions regardless of whether their ideas are facile or not, creates a sense of self-worth and independent thinking in students (Gorard & See, 2011; Hattie, 2012). Gorard & Smith, (2008) further elaborate that this type of behaviour develops social interaction skills of students and displays what is expected of them in wider society. Good teachers are never negative, they draw 'attention to errors by implication and through subsequent questioning, so that students themselves [have] to reconsider and change their ideas' (Wood & Tanner, 2012:5).

Feedback is a fundamental ingredient of effective teaching, but this is not reflected in research outcomes on actual teaching behaviours (Voerman *et al.*, 2012). Wiggins (2012) notes that students yearn feedback (Hattie, 2008) and without it they can't possibly improve. Wiggins (2012:12) uses the analogy of teacher to coach: 'coaches are fundamentally teachers, but they spend little time lecturing or grading. Instead, they teach through feedback'. McCormick (1996:46) purported that excellent teachers are the teachers who are 'captivated by their subject matter drawn out of themselves by their teaching, which will catch their excitement like the wake of a passing train. The very best teachers do not tie students down, they pull students along'.

2.4.2.1 Teaching practices at HE

Comparing teaching strategies between PP and HE level must be characterised in terms of what understanding the teaching strategy or approach aims to develop and how it is to be done in each domain (Marton, 1992:266):

There can be no art of teaching all things to all men

Bonner (1999) concurs that there is no single one best teaching approach but that the method needs to address the topic being taught, with complex tasks requiring an active learning environment while simpler tasks require more passive teaching methods. Conventional pedagogy has been linked to problems with student engagement at both HE and PP levels (Ramsden, 1991; Exeter *et al.*, 2010).

Lectures at HE level 'have been joked as being an occasion when the notes of lecturers become the notes of students without passing through the minds of either' (Fox, 1983:152). Byrne *et al.* (2010) found that Irish accounting students need a more strategic approach whereby the lecturer can challenge students understanding, encourage them and engage them in their learning. This approach, they propose is more achievable in a small class environment. However, classroom discussion should be inspired by content that is perceived difficult, even in a large class environment (Bloemhof & Baker, 2010). Presently this is not the case in larger universities, where class sizes can be in the region of two hundred or more students and the problems with lecturing as a means of facilitating learning are well known (Bligh,

2000). Students of large class size, perceive that lecturers will not question them (Bloemhof & Baker, 2010).

Wood & Tanner (2012:8) propose that even in large classes, teachers who are committed to their students can expect the best from their students in return: 'this is about believing in and encouraging students by being inspiring, enthusiastic, caring, supportive and liberal with positive feedback'.

The goal is to avoid teaching in a judgmental fashion and not criticising or praising students directly (Wood & Tanner, 2012). Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) (2008) propose the key indicators of quality teaching at HE involve teaching approaches that inspire and motivate students and activities that enhance teaching and learning. Bloemhof and Baker (2010:12) emphasise 'the importance of class time as the main method for student learning yet warn of missed opportunity for deep and critical thinking'. Untimely feedback is an issue for students at HE (Wiggins, 2012) as they receive the feedback when the teaching has already taken place and there is no opportunity to revisit the material.

 A high level of student engagement and an improved perception of teacher quality have all been attributed to student-centred active learning at HE level (Ramsden *et al.*, 1995). Wood & Tanner (2012:9) propose the following strategy for teaching at HE: 'more of them and less of me'.

2.4.2.2 Teaching practices at PP level

Similar contexts have been exposed at PP school level (Campbell *et al.*, 1996). Burns & Myhill (2004) noted that conventional pedagogy encouraging rote-learning is geared towards exam success. This is especially prevalent at PP level (Smyth & McCoy, 2011; Kumar, 2013). The Talis report (OECD, 2009) conducted research into teaching practices of nine OECD countries. Practices were classified into:

1. Structuring teaching practices (correcting homework, summary of previous lessons, checking work and questioning)
2. Student-oriented teaching practices (group work, self-evaluation)
3. Enhanced activities (project work, discussions)

The results showed Irish teachers adopting structuring practices the most and scoring the lowest on enhanced activities, while teachers in Denmark adopted the different practices to a similar degree (Drudy, 2013). Students in Irish PP schools favour experiential learning according to Smyth *et al.* (2011) but teachers continue to adopt structuring practices the most (Drudy, 2013). International studies agree with students wishes for learning by doing (EPPI, 2005; Gorard & See, 2010, cited in Gorard & See, 2011:688; Lumby, 2011).

This is in line with Kember's (1998) proposed continuum and Marton & Booth's (1997) proposal that PP teachers are mainly concerned with students classroom management rather than content and failed to foster a love of the subject matter to the students. Prior learning experiences of a

subject can have a significant effect on students further study of a subject (Ramsden, 1992; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). Therefore, it is imperative that teaching strategies adopted suit the needs of all students (Boulton-Lewis *et al.*, 2001; King, 2013).

Overall, there is some consensus that certain teaching practices lead to improved student outcomes in terms of active engagement and interaction of the student with the teacher. These approaches are summarised by Smyth & McCoy (2011:15) in an Irish PP setting. They include 'goal setting, classroom focus, challenging material, active engagement, group work, formative assessment and teacher expectations for their students'. Guskey (1996) proposes that effective teachers check for student understanding throughout the lesson and adjust their teaching style accordingly.

Kaur (2008; 2009) investigated Singapore secondary school students views on what constitutes a 'good mathematics lesson'. Student responses consisted of: the teacher 'explained clearly the concepts and steps of procedures', 'made complex knowledge easily assimilated through demonstrations, use of manipulatives, real-life examples' and the teacher provided 'feedback to individuals or the whole class' (Kaur, 2008 :343). The students view of a good lesson was when the teacher was 'moving from desk to desk' (Kaur, 2009:960).

Smyth *et al.* (2011) exposed final year of PP in Irish schools as teacher-led exam driven practices, encouraging parrot-like learning (Kumar, 2013), 'which students use to pass exams and play the current system to become

high achievers on paper' (Kumar, 2013:56) at the expense of becoming critical thinkers (McManus, 2013). Irish students, like teachers to be prepared for class, patient, explain clearly and find alternate methods if students don't understand (Smyth *et al.*, 2011). This is consistent with student accounts internationally (Noguera, 2007; Osler, 2010).

Alexandersson (1994, cited in Boulton-Lewis, 2001:38) looked at teachers activities during teaching; they found that teachers focus on the present activity, some engage in content and others were only interested in classroom management. Tschannen-Moran (2000) reinforces the importance of classroom management as being based on respect, fairness and trust and from this a positive classroom climate is cultivated and maintained by setting clear goals and expectations for their students (Emmer *et al.*, 2003). In school, students are often unclear about the specific goal or task of the lesson (Wiggins, 2012).

Stronge *et al.* (2011:341) proclaim that 'a productive and positive classroom is the result of the teacher considering students academic as well as social and personal needs'. The provision of corrective-on-the-task feedback was seen as essential also (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hattie, 2008; Wiggins, 2012). However, feedback in the classroom is seldom given (Voerman *et al.*, 2012) and the most common form of feedback given is praise (Pauli, 2010, cited in Voerman *et al.*, 2012:1107) which is not seen as effective in student achievement (Shute, 2008, cited in Voerman *et al.*, 2012:1108). The following Figure 2.6 depicts teaching practices as a continuum, ranging

from limited effective teaching practices to ample effective teaching practice.

Figure 2.6

Summary of effective teacher behaviour continuum
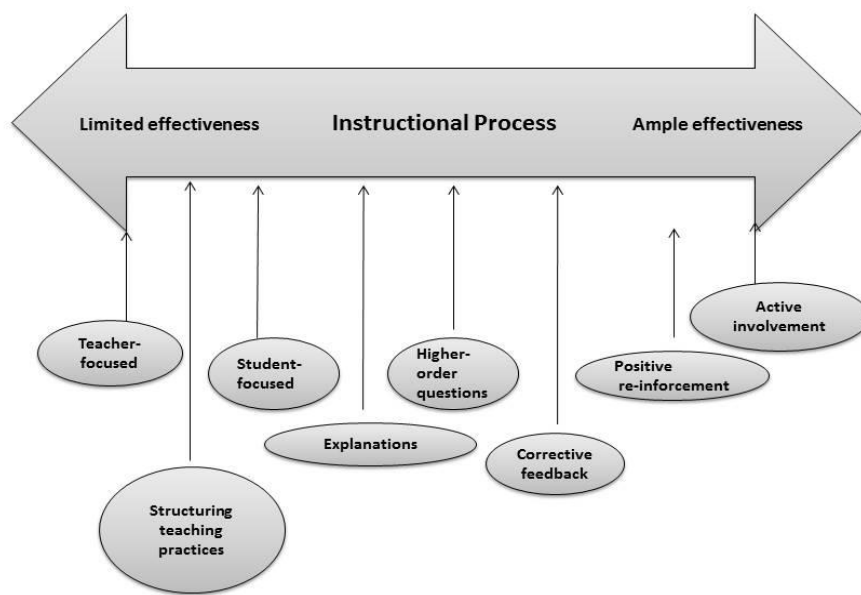
The proposed continuum summarises teaching behaviours from teacher-focused in both HE and PP to student-focused incorporating activities such as explanations, questions and corrective feedback. It is then proposed that when the teacher incorporates active involvement for all students, along with high expectations for their students in the form of positive re-inforcement (Wentzel, 2002; Stronge, 2007), this enables the students to

learn more which strongly influences student outcomes (Smyth & McCoy, 2011).

While numerous studies have looked at the impact of teacher characteristics and/or instructional practices and 'there is general agreement that teachers make a difference, there is lack of consensus about which aspects of teachers matter most' (Palardy & Rumberger, 2008:112). Teacher classroom behaviour has a direct influence on student behaviour in the form of engagement (Huitt, 2003).

2.5 Strategies to improve student engagement

Student engagement as the literature suggests (Jimmerson *et al.*, 2003) can be viewed in terms of affective (students feelings about school, teachers, other students), behavioural (the students participation in classroom and extra-curricular activities) and cognitive (students beliefs in relation to their teachers, self, school and peers). Duffy & Cunningham (1996, cited in Laurillard, 2002:67) saw it as a two way process: the students actively constructing rather than acquiring knowledge and the teacher as supporting that construction rather than imparting knowledge.

Van Uden *et al*. (2013) notes that limited studies have explored how teacher characteristics can influence student engagement (Patrick, 1998). Interpersonal teacher behaviour that accounts for interactions with their students has shown that a positive relationship between teacher and student

is important for student engagement (Anderson *et al.*, 2004; Fredericks *et al.*, 2004; Roorda *et al.*, 2011, cited in van Uden *et al.*, 2013:22). The teachers ability to place knowledge into contexts that are relevant to the student (Tinto, 2002; Kuh *et al.*, 2005; Ausse, 2009) are also seen as having an impact on student engagement.

Harris (2008) identified six qualitatively different conceptions of student engagement reported by teachers at PP level in Australia. The terms behaving, enjoying, being motivated, thinking, seeing purpose and owning were identified. In a similar sense, Krause (2007) described HE students who were engaged with university life as being satisfied, motivated and achieving success in their studies.

Harris (2008) notes a lack of clarity among academics as to what constitutes student engagement and calls for a unified approach by educational stakeholders as to its clarification (Jimmerson *et al.*, 2003). Lack of engagement should not be seen as deficiencies in students, as Zyngier (2008) emphasises that the term engagement is reciprocal meaning that both student and teacher must give of themselves for true engagement. Carswell (2006) proposes a number of strategies that teachers could use to minimise student disengagement in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5

Current strategies for minimising student disengagement

- Relevant contexts

- Doing things rather than talking or reading about them

- Group work (maximising social interaction)

- Using multiple representations of information

- Open-ended projects

- Games and challenges as learning strategy

- Variety in learning experiences

- Careful planning of the classroom environment

Source: Carswell, 2006: section 3

While this study does not attempt to delve into the nuances of student engagement, it will offer descriptions of student experiences of engagement or lack of it in the classroom at both PP and HE level in Chapter Five: Findings.

2.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored teaching paradigms. The current study will adopt the presage-process-product paradigm, with the outcome being student engagement as opposed to student learning. Teaching conceptions were

analysed at both HE and PP level with Kember's (1997) framework serving as a benchmark for all other studies. Teaching traits of respect, approachability and care for students as well as confidence in their subject area, preparedness, organised for class and interpersonal skills were all identified. Effective teaching strategies were discussed and proposals made as to what teachers can do to improve their teaching instruction.

The chapter closes with an account of student engagement strategies that may be implemented by teachers.

The next chapter explores the outputs of effective teaching inputs and classroom process strategies, which impacts on the successful transition of students at PP to HE levels.

Chapter Three:
The outputs of quality teaching and its impact on student engagement

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the outputs section of the teaching paradigm adopted in the current study. The proposed outputs are i) student perception of quality teaching and ii) successful transition of students between the education divides. The chapter commences by offering definitions of effective/quality teaching and challenges faced. Student perception as a valid indicator of quality teaching is explored. A quality teaching initiatives framework is proposed by adapting previous models in the literature, conceptualising students perceptions of the effect teaching has on student outcomes in the form of engagement. The chapter continues to investigate the effect of transition from PP to HE on students and seeks to highlight the need for a shared approach among educational stakeholders for successful transition across the education levels. It is proposed that teachers play a vital part in this transition and the ultimate success of the student in the education system. Students highlight the challenges they face in the transition process and the need for quality teaching to successfully support this process. The chapter closes with suggestions of how transition experiences can be improved for students.

3.1 Output: Quality teaching

There is no universally accepted definition of effective/quality teaching (Johnson & Ryan, 2000; Trigwell, 2001; Paulsen, 2002). Interchangeable

terms have been used for 'effective' teacher such as 'good' (Watkins & Zhang, 2006), 'highly accomplished' or 'excellent' (Kane *et al.*, 2004). The Teaching Council of Ireland (TCI) established in 2006 under the Teaching Council Act 2001 is responsible for teaching quality in the Republic of Ireland (Jordan & O'Donnell, 2013). The TCI (2012:5-8) defines **quality teaching** as including standards of teaching, knowledge and competence underpinned by the 'ethical values of respect, care, integrity and trust', 'reflective practice and evaluation of their own professional work'. Hebson *et al.* (2007:679) go as far as to say that 'caring about children' is a fundamental element of quality teaching and should be incorporated into definitions of good teaching.

Quality teaching 'is a complex phenomenon' (Stronge *et al.*, 2011) and 'there is little consensus on how to measure it?' (Lewis *et al.*, 1999: paragraph 3). Kember *et al.*'s (2006) focus is that quality can be viewed in terms of student outcomes (learning) or on teacher performance. The study of quality teaching is sometimes classified as **pedagogy,** relating particularly to teaching and instruction (Van Uden *et al.*, 2013).

Research considers whether quality teaching should be based on teacher qualifications, instructional practices, student learning or a composite of these (Stronge *et al.*, 2011). Kember & McNaught (2007) sought to address this issue by interviewing teachers (Australian and Hong Kong) who had already received teaching excellence awards. They summarised ten contributions of what constitutes quality teaching: i) focus on student needs now and for the future, ii) teach for quality rather than quantity, iii) use real-

life examples, iv) challenge students thoughts, v) engage students with variety, vi) form genuine relationships with students to promote interaction, vii) enthusiasm and passion creates positive environment and motivation, viii) subject content should meet needs of students, ix) planning and preparation of lesson and feedback and x) assessment.

Katz (1988) and Reiger & Stang (2000:62) argue that teachers 'need to be curious, imaginative, empathetic, interesting, friendly and hardworking in order to be effective in the classroom'. Despite the variations in terms, all studies describe attributes of effective teaching as being 'dynamic, reflective and constantly evolving' (Trigwell, 2001:69) so as 'to engage students in conceptual understandings, analytical thinking and reasoning during instruction' (Boston & Smith, 2009:142). The evidence suggests a multi-dimensional aspect to quality teaching (Abrami *et al.*, 1997; Marsh & Dunkin, 1997; Elton, 1998; Young & Shaw, 1999).

The work of Newmann & Associates (1996, cited in Linguard *et al.*, 2003:404) proposes that by exploring effective teaching practices, teachers may now become the subjects rather than objects of policy discourse. A universal description of pedagogy could emerge, links between pedagogy and student outcomes could be established while getting inside the classroom environment to see what is really happening. Policy implementations to date do not seem to have been successful in influencing teaching practices (Beach, 2011).

Whole school evaluations (WSE) and unannounced inspections have been introduced into PP schools in Ireland in the last decade (Mathews, 2010), to look at how teachers perform, but what is questionable is whether the recommendations of WSE reports are being bedded down into actual changes in teaching practices (Jordan & O'Donnell, 2013).

Two reports, National Economic and Social Council (NESC), (2012a; 2012b) propose that changes need to be implemented to the core activity of teaching practice in schools, a reflective assessment of every teacher should be built into 'every teacher's professional business' (DES, 2010:17) and this should be related to a national system of data and standards (Jordan & O' Donnell, 2013). Educational reforms in Australia have pioneered teacher appraisal systems, moving from external evaluation to internal evaluation (Stack, 2013), and have made significant improvements to teacher performance (Jordan & O' Donnell, 2013).

The European Union growth strategy 'Europe 2020' (European Commission, 2014) proposes that quality teaching and education lie at the heart of economic and social progress 'by developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation with a strong emphasis on lifelong learning' (Day, 2013:19). Kreber (2002:9) proposes that excellent teaching 'requires sound knowledge of one's discipline' and that an excellent teacher is one who 'knows how to motivate their students, how to convey concepts and how to help students overcome difficulties in their learning'. A key factor in educational outcomes for students is the quality of the relationship between student and teacher (McCoy *et al.*, 2014) and therefore their engagement

with school (Jensen, 2010). Quality teachers are what students want and investments in raising standards (OECD, 2005) have been related to improvements in student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Over the last two decades, educational studies on quality teaching reveal that the classroom effect is more important than the school effect on student outcomes both academically and socially (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). A weakness, of the outcomes of these studies is their lack of contribution as to the improvement of teaching practice (Scheerens *et al.*, 2003, cited in Kyriakides *et al.*, 2009:12).

Barber & Mourshed (2007:26) propose that 'you can have the best curriculum, the best infrastructure, and the best policies, but if you do not have good teachers then everything is lost'. The White Paper (2010:19): 'The importance of teaching: schools white paper: Teaching and Leadership' concludes that the 'quality of the teachers adds to the effectiveness of the whole institution'. Despite the recognition for and the need to improve teaching initiatives, interventions in the form of professional development focus on content-related developments (Peneul *et al.*, 2007; Borko *et al.*, 2010, cited in Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013:4) as opposed to generic pedagogical skill development (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013). It has been widely supported in the literature that both content and pedagogical skill, have a significant impact on student achievement (Seidel & Shavelson, 2007).

Numerous studies have analysed the 'value added impact of teachers on student achievement' (Mendro, 1998; Nye *et al.*, 2004; Palardy &

Rumberger, 2008; Stronge *et al.*, 2011:348), but few studies have accounted for qualitative student experiences of their teachers as a measure of effectiveness and in particular at PP to HE. The current study focuses on product in the form of student outcomes (experiences), process (instructional practices) of teachers and presage (teacher characteristics) as a determinant of teacher effectiveness.

Therefore, the comparison of both teacher and student perspectives on what constitutes quality teaching is necessary if education divides can ever collaborate.

3.2 Student perception as an indicator of effective teaching

HE institutions and PP schools have to attain quality standards and continually find ways to improve teaching and learning. In response to this, student evaluations on good teaching are increasingly being used to ascertain quality teaching (Perry, 2003). It is true that students are influenced by their own beliefs and the environment or institution of which they are party to, but as long as their perceptions are understood in terms of these factors then student perceptions are a valuable contribution to the teacher-student relationship (Dunkin & Barnes, 1986; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007).

HE students are one of the best resources by which to understand HE teacher behaviour since they [the students] spend much time in class with

teachers and are on the receiving end of teaching, both good and bad (Tam *et al.*, 2009). Students can feel frustrated sitting hour after hour in boring lectures, having enormous amounts of material delivered to them with very little interaction. On the other hand, teachers may embrace experiential active participation but students may be uncooperative as they feel it is the teachers job to teach: 'why should we do his job for him that is what he is getting paid for' (Fox, 1983:160). Hattie's (2008) study of student achievement argues that student learning is deepest when students become their own teachers and when their teachers learn from them through feedback and other means. Specifically, students have their own perceptions of what good teaching is but a problem occurs when there is a mismatch between students and teachers perceptions of what makes an effective teacher (Fox, 1983). Indeed, Campbell *et al.* (1996) ask if what teachers say they are doing in class is actually what is happening (Australian survey of student engagement engaging students for success (AUSSE), 2009).

Tam *et al.* (2009) note that students at HE should be engaged as reflective learners who are able to reflect on their experiences as students and therefore contribute to conversations about the constructs of effective teaching and learning, as they are co-constructors of knowledge and learning. Reflective and collaborative approaches (between students and teachers) to professional development (Cowan & Westwood, 2006) and faculty learning communities of staff and students (Richlin & Cox, 2004, cited in Bovill *et al.*, 2011:138) have become models of good practice. Yet, student involvement in developing effective teaching and learning practices

has been 'virtually invisible' (Cox & Sorenson, 2000:99; Bovill *et al.*, 2011).

Bovill *et al.* (2011:138) suggest ways to make this happen:

1. Invite students to be partners (active and authoritative collaborators) with academic staff in pedagogical planning, thus challenging traditional hierarchies and roles.

2. Support dialogue across differences (of position and perspective), which yields fresh insights and deeper engagement in teaching and learning.

3. Foster collaboration through which both academic staff and students take more responsibility for teaching and learning and adopt new views of both.

4. Serve as intermediaries, facilitating new relationships between students and academic staff.

The importance of taking account of the 'student voice', the potential benefit of students contribution to policy (Sammons *et al.*, 1994; Macbeath *et al.*, 2001; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004) and schools understandings of students experiences of teaching and learning (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004) has been highlighted.

3.3 Output: Successful transition

For students to make a smooth transition between the education divides, the following factors need to be monitored i) stakeholder attention, ii) mismatch of learning environments, iii) student concerns, iv) teacher support, v) strategies to improve transition experiences for students and vi) teaching standards.

3.3.1 Stakeholder attention

Student **transitions,** according to Hussey & Smith (2010:156), are 'large, complex transformations' that significantly change a 'student's life, self-concept and learning', with such transitions occurring throughout a student's time in HE and from PP to HE environment. Student transitions pose considerable challenges to all parties involved (Briggs *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, the transition from PP to HE requires careful attention from all stakeholders involved in the educational system; the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Irish Universities Association (IUA), Institutes of Technology Ireland (IoTI), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the State Examinations Commission (SEC) (DES, 2013), to facilitate the development of learning rather than creating hurdles (McManus, 2013).

The transitions from PP to HE is a major concern globally; in the US, Kuh *et al.* (2006) found a serious mismatch between students learning habits at PP level and the learning styles expected of them at HE level. In Europe, an

increasing number of students entering HE coupled with reduced standards at PP level has led to declining standards at HE and high attrition rates amongst first year students (EMBO, 2006). At a national and international level, student numbers entering HE has swelled but this is not reflected in the numbers successfully graduating (Tinto, 2012). Drop-out rates in first year are a particular cause of concern for many institutions (Yorke & Longden, 2006), having negative consequences for the students themselves, universities and societies (Bryson & Hand, 2007; Tinto 2006; 2007). According to Yorke & Thomas (2003:72), 'HE institutions must be prepared to react on an institution-wide basis to maximise the success of all their students'. They propose the following strategies:

1. an institutional climate supportive in various ways of students development, that is perceived as 'friendly'

2. an emphasis on support leading up to, and during, the critically important first-year of study

3. an emphasis on formative assessment in the early phase of programmes

4. a recognition of the importance of the social dimension in learning activities

5. recognition that the pattern of students engagement in HE is changing, and a preparedness to respond positively to this in various ways.

Strong links have been suggested between students early experiences and subsequent progression and success (Flores-Juarez, 2005; Yorke & Longden, 2008). 'When students begin their first-year at university, they are required to reorganise the way they think about themselves, as learners, and as social beings' (Huon & Sankey, 2002, cited in Briggs *et al.*, 2012:6). Adjustment includes making connections between their school experiences and their experiences now at HE level (Perry & Allard, 2003). This adjustment is made easier when there is the opportunity to make social connections with staff and other students (Johnson & Watson, 2004; Keup & Barefoot, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Therefore, the provision of positive and high-quality learning experiences in the first academic year is seen as a priority for HE institutions (Krause *et al.*, 2005; QAA (Quality Assurance Agency), 2006; AUSSE, 2007; 2008; Kuh, 2008; Yorke & Longden, 2008; Kift, 2008, cited in Kift *et al.*, 2010:13) as well as continual support from faculty as the student progresses through the system (Yorke & Thomas, 2003).

First year is a priority at HE level as it is costly for both individuals and universities when students fail (Tinto, 1993; Yorke, 1999; Evans, 2000; McInnis, 2001). Much of the transition-based research has focused on the first year experience, but perhaps the key to success is to take a holistic view and improve the student experience of HE across all the years (Yorke & Thomas, 2003; Briggs *et al.*, 2012). Universities have invested huge resources to try and improve completion rates, but this has not made a

significant impact. According to Tinto (2012:4), this is because 'most innovations have sat at the margins of the classroom and have failed to reach into the classroom to substantially improve the classroom experience'.

Policy makers and HE managers must give appropriate recognition to the importance of effective teaching for engaging students (Wingate, 2007; Zepke & Leach, 2010). This may require changes in academic mind-sets as to what constitutes good teaching and providing support to encourage these commitments to change (Wingate, 2007). Institutions and their teaching staff have an obligation to provide 'the necessary conditions, opportunities and expectations' for engagement to prevail (Coates, 2005:26). This is consistent with the views of Bradley *et al.* (2008), Tinto (2009) and Gillard (2010, cited in Kift *et al.*, 2010:2). 'Change in any given area [of student change] appears to be the product of a holistic set of multiple influences, each making a distinct, if small, contribution to the change' (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005:629). However, support is needed on both sides of the transition bridge so as to enable students coming from PP level to adjust to the HE environment. This is a challenge for the institutions of PP and HE to collaborate and figure out the mismatch between the students pre-transfer aspirations and the reality of their first year at university (Smith & Hopkins, 2005; Tranter, 2003, cited in Briggs *et al.*, 2012:5), which causes difficulty in adapting to the HE environment.

3.3.2 Mismatch of learning environments

Having a shared value of what constitutes good effective teaching is imperative to ensuring quality; such an understanding is critical for all stakeholders of education and across educational divides (Devlin, 2007a, cited in Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010:119). The focus at HE level is on student engagement and student retention (IoT, 2013). The question to the forefront is what can be done to aid the transition from PP to HE? There has been a considerable amount of policy discussion of the 'mismatch' between the approaches taken in PP and HE (HEA/NCCA, 2011). Ireland needs students and graduates who are independent, critical and reflective thinkers, ready for the workplace. In addition, the report on transition (DES, 2013) is striving for student enjoyment (Gorard & See, 2011) in acquiring and using knowledge.

Sladden (1979) emphasises that one of major roles of the PP system is preparation for the HE system, yet we continue to see teachers teaching for academic achievement at PP level at all costs (Smyth & McCoy, 2011). There is a more deep-rooted problem here if PP education is simply viewed as a means to entry to HE (Brinkworth *et al.*, 2008). This can lead to pressure on school teachers to perform (O'Shea, 2013). Presently 'rote-learning' and 'teaching-to-the-test' has been identified at PP level as prevalent methods of learning and teaching (Kumar, 2013).

Smyth *et al.* (2011:235-236) highlights final year student experiences in PP level as being 'teacher-led instruction, assignment of significant quantities

of homework and frequent practising of previous exam papers'. Students have continuously highlighted frustration, pressure and stresses at the senior cycle school years (DES, 2013:6): 'there is so much emphasis on this series of exams and anything can go wrong on the day'. Smyth *et al.* (2011) are concerned, as they found that many students particularly those with high aspirations, have come to see 'good teaching' as 'teaching-to-the-test', expressing impatience with teachers who seek to provide them with a broader set of educational experiences. Therefore their identities as learners may be changing.

These frustrations coupled, with student experiences of a lack of enjoyment for learning in the final years at PP level, has given rise to calls for change (DES, 2013). Hyland (2011) found a strong relationship between high achievers at PP level and their ability to achieve at HE level. There is a recognition that 'good learning outcomes and key competences developed through a high quality student experience at PP level provide a firm foundation for successful learning in HE' (Hyland, 2011:8). Therefore, it is essential that both PP and HE stakeholders take a collaborative approach to the importance of this transition (DES, 2013). The collaboration between the DES, HEA, IUA, IoT, NCCA and SEC to progress this work is more than a sharing of resources. The questions to the fore-front are what constitutes quality teaching and learning in the senior cycle of PP level education and in undergraduate programmes in HE. There is also a shared concern that the very mechanism by which students make the transition from one sector to the other may be working against the kinds of learning

valued by both (HEA/NCCA, 2011). Two key underlying and unifying principles of the approach to be considered by the educational partners (HEA/NCCA, 2011:1) are:

- A recognition that good learning outcomes and key competences developed through a high quality student experience at second level provide a firm foundation for successful learning in higher education
- A simplified, coherent and streamlined approach to system architecture and processes helps to build a bridge for students at the interface between different levels of education.

Coherence across the education levels is what is required, as too often the PP system shoulders the blame for issues that need to be addressed jointly (McManus, 2013).

3.3.3 Student transition challenges

Lowe and Cook (2003:53) propose that the transition from school to university is one of the most challenging that students encounter as they move from a 'controlled environment of school to one in which they take responsibility for their own academic and social needs'.

When students arrive at HE level they expect 'the spoon-feeding approach used in many secondary schools' (Sladden, 1979:41; McManus, 2013) and can find it a time of great stress (Greenbank, 2007). Students are hindered by their lack of preparation from school (Clark & Ramsey, 1990; Cook &

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Leckey, 1999; Smyth & McCoy, 2011). This early period of adjustment for new students can result in underperformance and/or disengagement (Pitkethly & Prosser, 2001; Gibney *et al.*, 2011). Universities expectations on students to 'adjust immediately to a different style of teaching and learning was part of the problem of transition' (Hagan & Macdonald, 2000:71).

Successful transition for students can be made smoother by strong co-operation between the PP and HE divides and a sharing of good practice (DES, 1999; HEA/NCCA, 2011). This process should begin prior to students entering HE (Briggs *et al.*, 2012). Peel (1998b) found that PP students and teachers expressed a desire for interaction with HE and in particular with HE students. This may enable PP students to visualise what it would be like to be a student at HE (Briggs *et al.*, 2009, cited in Briggs *et al.*, 2012:5). In fact, the most useful information is gained from specific program liaison activities rather than general institutional marketing open days. It has been reported that students found university more demanding than school (McInnis *et al.*, 2000), but students adjust quicker if they learn the institutional 'discourse' and feel they fit in (Harvey *et al.*, 2006).

During this initial period, students need to form their own self-identity (Huon & Sankey, 2002, cited in Briggs *et al.*, 2012:6) while adjusting to a new style of teaching environment (Kantanis, 2001; Scanlon *et al.*, 2007) and the uncertainty of what is expected of them (Milne, 2007). When a mismatch occurs between student expectations and actual experiences of

HE, then disengagement can ensue (Rowley *et al.*, 2008). Becher (1989:42) and Orlando (2014) noted that 'many university academics don't consider themselves as teachers but merely members of their faculty discipline'. Some HEI's tend to assign less experienced lecturers to teach first year students and quality/student engagement is not always achieved (Clark & Ramsey, 1990; McInnis & James, 1995; DES, 1999; McCoy *et al.*, 2014). The clear message from HE literature is that students need to learn to act autonomously as a HE student otherwise they will become disillusioned and may run the risk of dropping out of their HE studies (Scanlon *et al.*, 2005). The ability to self-direct, to think critically, to communicate, to innovate and to adapt were just some of the competencies required of students as they make the transition from PP to HE (HEA/NCCA, 2011).

Briggs *et al.* (2012) notes that social as well as academic cohesion between staff and students are important to students (Parkinson & Forrester, 2004; Nelson *et al.*, 2011). Alongside this, Pascarella & Terenzi (2005) notes the benefits of close interactions between staff and students and students and their peers.

3.3.4 Quality teaching support at HE

The literature supports the view that the quality of teaching staff in first year university is deemed critical to student engagement (Clark & Ramsey 1990; Queensland University of Technology (QUT), 2002a), but it is not guaranteed (McInnis & James, 1995). A critique of HE science and

technology identified unsound pedagogic structures (European Commission, 2004) and Ramsden (1991) reported a transmissive pedagogy to first year HE students, with a lack of direction and encouragement from their teachers (McCoy *et al.*, 2014). Students making the transition from PP to HE level can find it hard to adjust to a new style of teaching and learning environment (Kantanis, 2000; Sheard *et al.*, 2003). They can struggle to become independent learners (Bingham & O' Hara, 2007).

This is in contrast to the student-staff interaction that is proposed (Smith, 2007) to smooth the transition for students from PP to HE level. Peel (1998:1; Tranter, 2003, cited in Briggs *et al.*, 2012:6) described the feeling as 'isolated and nobody cares' as students make the transition. The solution lies with the teachers at HE level as they must nurture students entering the new teaching and learning environment (Sander *et al.*, 2000). Teaching staff who actively engage and support their students help to make transition from PP to HE level a lot smoother (Whitehouse, 1998; Peel, 1998) and reduce student attrition (Tinto, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Krause *et al.*, 2005). Students value the approachability and teaching skills of good teachers and enjoy learning through group interaction rather than the formal lecturing style approach adopted by some staff (Sander *et al.*, 2000).

Milne (2007) and McCoy *et al.* (2014) confirm that the student perception is that they receive less support from teachers at HE level than their teachers at PP level. Tinto (1993) and Pascarella & Wolfe (1985) propose that successful transition takes place at the classroom setting and that this is where, academic integration more directly affects retention rather than

social integration. This confirms the beneficial effects of a supportive teaching environment.

Minor adjustments to teaching approaches can lead to more active engagement for students without deflecting too much from subject content (Wingate, 2007). Pedadogic approaches, which enhance the relationship between students and their peers and students and their teachers in the classroom setting, provide better leaning outcomes (Tinto, 1997; Lawrence, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). This in turn provides better transition experiences and encourages retention (Milne, 2007).

This concurs with the DES (1999) proposal that lecturers are in a prime position to spot problems and therefore an inclusion approach is what is needed. An overarching challenge is that students 'want to be treated as individuals not as an item in a vast system' and therefore individual contact is crucial as the student tries to make sense of their new identity and adapt to a new system (Briggs *et al.*, 2012:18). The human touch is possible, the challenge to institutions is how to achieve it.

3.3.5 Strategies to improve transition experiences for students

It is imperative that teachers have confidence in their subject area, are prepared for class and have good personal and interpersonal skills needed to interact with students on a daily basis (Government White paper, 2010). Their interest, approachability, respect for students (Brain, 1998) and the

ability of the teacher to be creative in their own personalised way (Rubin, 1985; Tytler, 2003; Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Devine *et al.*, 2013) are all pivotal to quality teaching initiatives and good transition experiences for students.

Kuh *et al.* (2005) noted that student engagement might be lost in the transition from school to university, mainly due to reduced level of interaction between students and their teachers. Tinto (2012) believes that academic support is paramount at first year level and the way to achieve this is at the classroom level. This can be achieved by engaging the students using different teaching strategies to suit the student needs. Adopting pedagogies of engagement will lead to improved student self-awareness, both cognitively and socially. Briggs *et al*. (2012) notes that social as well as academic cohesion between staff and students are important to students (Parkinson & Forrester, 2004; Nelson *et al.*, 2011).

McLean *et al.* (2005) investigated student engagement in an Irish university and found that regular assessment and quick feedback improved student performance and satisfaction (Milne, 2007). Students want more contact with and feedback from their lecturers (DES, 1999; Wiggins, 2012), but can be very intimidated in a new environment. Students also seek clarity from their lecturers about the 'nuts and bolts' of how teaching and learning 'works' (Milne, 2007).

Students identify characteristics such as enthusiasm, approachability and 'demonstration of interest' in teachers as crucial elements of effective

teaching (Peel, 1998; Briggs *et al.*, 2012:12). An active welcome, an apparent pleasure in teaching and a commitment to knowing their name makes transition unexpectedly smooth (Peel, 1998; Whitehouse, 1998).

When students feel they fit in and they are interacting with supportive lecturers (Thomas, 2002; Johnston & Watson, 2004; Harvey *et al.*, 2006), it has often 'tipped the balance' in a student's overall transition and integration (Briggs *et al.*, 2012:12). Kuh *et al.* (2005) propose that large class sizes can make this difficult as students are just a number to their teachers, which is in stark contrast to the PP system. Large class sizes are typical of introductory accounting courses in HE (Bligh, 2000), while the problems associated with success rate in this subject are widely known (Byrne *et al.*, 2010). Leveson (1999) proposes small group work for accounting at HE, which allows the lecturer to challenge, discuss and cultivate an interest in accounting (Byrne *et al.*, 2010).

3.3.6 Teaching Standards

Teaching standards need to change (QAA, 2010) and lecturers must be able to adapt to the needs of different students (DES, 1999; Loughran *et al.*, 2012). There is not the assumption that the same thing works the same way all of the time: 'the ability to adapt, adjust and make appropriate professional judgments, then, is crucial to shaping the manner in which teachers teach' (Loughran *et al.*, 2012:12). Lawrence (2005) insists that

students must be empowered to succeed and therefore teachers at HE need to be open and honest about what they expect from students (Tinto, 2012).

A worrying aspect is that there are no clear structures in place for successful transition at a classroom level (Tinto, 2012). The quality of university teaching has been discussed in recent years, and the need to improve university teachers teaching skills and pedagogical thinking is now acknowledged to be essential (Young & Flower, 2002; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2008). To effectively implement pedagogical engagement strategies, teachers need the skills to do so (Tinto, 2012). Kay (1999, cited in Ursano *et al.*, 2007:187) notes that there are few if any natural born teachers, while it has long been recognised that many teachers in HE have no formal training in teaching (Tinto, 2012). Universities and HEI are not blind to the need to develop staff and have provided courses to enhance teaching skills, but these courses cannot be enforced upon staff (Tinto, 2012). Many countries have made decisions about the compulsory pedagogical training of university teachers (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004; Sonesson & Lindberg-Sand, 2006 and van Keulen, 2006, cited in Postareff & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2008:29). Pedagogical training for HE teachers enhances teaching practices to become more student-centered (Postareff *et al.*, 2007).

Despite calls for social and practical skill training for teachers (Beach & Player-Koro, 2012), it has not become evident in education training or continuous development programmes (Beach *et al.*, 2014). Transition

research (Pargetter *et al.*, 1999) proposes that, in a HE level context, where a 'charter' is put in place for a course that is followed then the transition experience of first year students is significantly enhanced and the learning experience and collaborative teaching strategy improves (Kift & Nelson, 2005, cited in Kift *et al.*, 2010:5).

Tinto (2002; 2012) argues for a 'collaborative pedagogy' that sees the student as an active participant in the learning process. This is supported by Bovill *et al.* (2011), who recommends students as co-creators of teaching approaches. Tytler (2003) presents a model of best practice in PP schools, where students are encouraged to actively engage, are challenged and the subject context is linked with student lives. This could be pertinent to teaching at HE level and best practice across education levels could be shared. However, adopting models of best practice may require a difficult transition by academic staff 'from teaching to facilitating learning' (Clarke, 2001, cited in Byrne & Flood, 2003:201; Orlando, 2014). This all contributes to considerable progress in easing the adjustment to HE teaching and learning and enhancing retention (Lawrence, 2003; Kantanis, 2001; Trotter & Roberts, 2006).

Krause (2005:7) propose the benefits of students interaction with lecturers and fellow students:

> undergraduates who were engaged with peers, academics and the institution as a whole were also most likely to express satisfaction with their experience, report higher levels of achievement than their

less engaged peers, and indicate clear plans to persist with their study at university.

The literature has affirmed that students perceptions of good teaching and supportive relationships with teachers in HE fosters retention and eases transition into the new environment (Cuseo, 2003; Krause *et al.*, 2005; Zepke & Leach, 2005). Haggis (2006:535) proposes a solution: 'it is vital to move from questioning what is wrong with the new student to a system that questions what needs to change with the process of interaction that can potentially prevent students from learning'. Tinto (2012:8) is a strong advocate that 'much must change, our students deserve no less'. The following section proposes a quality teaching initiatives framework by adapting previous models in the literature, conceptualising students perceptions of the effect teaching has on student outcomes in the form of engagement. Table 3.1 summarises the key sub-outcomes of the proposed outcomes above.

Table 3.1

Summary of key outcomes of quality teaching

Quality Teaching	Student perceptions of Quality Teaching	Successful Transition
Complex phenomenon: For purpose of this study explore: - teacher traits - instructional practices	Invaluable resource: -completing the link; teacher-student thinking	Stakeholder attention: Shared value across education levels
Exploring pedagogy: (teacher and teacher instruction) -description of pedagogy could emerge	Contributes to improving standards of teaching and learning	Teacher support and standards
Classroom effect: - quality teaching behaviour - quality student behaviour	Reflective and collaborative approaches to establishing best practice	Strategies to be implemented at classroom level
Policy Considerations: - teacher evaluations - teacher reflective assessments - focus on pedagogical skill development		

3.4 Output: Conceptualisation of student perceptions of the effect of teaching on student outcomes

The framework depicted in Figure 3.1 was inducted from theory, in order to address the challenges teachers and students face in the classroom. This framework can be likened to the process-product teaching paradigm (Gage, 1963). The current research seeks to study the effects that teacher traits and teacher classroom behaviour can have on students in terms of outcome (student classroom behaviour), in this case engagement. Teacher traits were explored in Section 2.3.4, teaching practices and strategies employed in the classroom were explored in Section 2.4 and student classroom behaviour was explored in Section 2.5, Chapter Two.

Figure 3.1

Proposed Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework
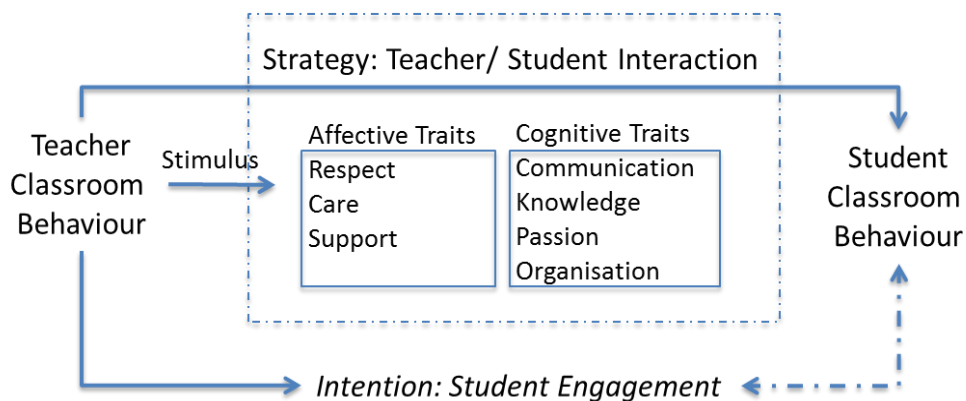
Adapted from: Clark & Peterson, 1986; Kember, 1997; Martin *et al.*, 2000

Clark and Peterson (1986) propose a model of teachers thought process indicating that teacher classroom behaviour is influenced by their pre-determined thought process of their teaching theories, teacher planning, the thoughts they engage in prior to teaching a lesson and their reflective thoughts after lessons. It is outside the remit of the current study to examine teachers thought processes of this nature. Of interest though are teachers classroom behaviour and the effect that this can have on student classroom behaviour in the form of engagement. The current study addresses the effects teacher classroom behaviour can have on students themselves in terms of action (engagement, behaviour) as opposed to learning (Fenstermarcher, 1986).

To arrange activities which promote the successful engagement of students is a complex challenge in any situation especially so in a classroom (Watkins *et al.*, 2002). The Proposed Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework addresses how this classroom environment may be enacted.

1. <u>Teacher classroom behaviour:</u>   The teacher is the person who accommodates the readiness of the learner to learn and encourages their interest in the lesson (Fenstermacher, 1986; Hattie, 2009). As far back as 1979, Mehan observed that the interaction of academic knowledge and social or interactional knowledge are necessary goals on a teachers part for student participation to be successful in the classroom. Subsequently, new terms emerged such as cognitive and affective traits (Clark, 1995; Keeley *et al.*, 2006). The terms relating to cognitive traits include: teacher knowledge, clear presentation,

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organisation and enthusiasm as displayed by the teacher. Separately, affective traits are identified as: being respectful, openness towards the students, support and care.

2. <u>Teaching strategy:</u> The teaching strategy adopted by the teacher depends on their own conceptions of teaching (Fox, 1983) and may include a teacher-focused strategy, student-focused strategy or teacher-student interaction. The latter allows for dialogue, collaboration and shared learning to occur (Watkins *et al.*, 2002; Bovill *et al.*, 2011). Duffy & Cunningham (1996, cited in Laurillard, 2002:67) and Bovill *et al.* (2011) saw this as a two-way process, with both teacher and student actively engaged. Teachers strategy and their conceptions of teaching influence students approaches in the form of outcomes (Watkins *et al.*, 2002).

3. <u>Student classroom behaviour (Outcome):</u> This may not be measurable in terms of whether the student has engaged, but outcome is achievable if the student is involved in their own learning process (Bryson & Hand, 2007). Although the learning process itself is outside of the remit of this study, it is clear from this conceptualistion (Figure 3.1) that student engagement is strongly influenced by teaching traits (Patrick, 1998; Van Uden *et al.*, 2013) and strategies (Tinto, 2002; Kuh *et al.*, 2005; Ausse, 2009). Specifically, Duffy & Cunningham (1996, cited in Laurillard, 2002:67) and Bovill *et al.* (2011) saw engagement as a two way

process, with both teacher and student actively engaged as indicated
by the dual arrow in Figure 3.1

The subsequent empirical research, as documented in Chapters Five and Six, seeks to contribute to a Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework in the context of this study's underlying research objective:

'To explore student perceptions of the effect of teaching on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at PP to HE level'.

The framework in Figure 3.1 conceptualises previous models taken from research to explain the input-process-output teaching paradigm. In the context of the extant literature on effective teaching, the following Table 3.2 clarifies the direction that the current study has taken. While the literature supports the input-process-output paradigm of teaching, predominantly taking student learning as outcome (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013), the current study aims to explore output in the form of student perceptions of quality teaching at multi-level education environments.

Table 3.2

Teacher and student transaction process

(Literature review summary)

	Chapter Two	Chapter Three
Teacher Input	**Classroom interaction**	**Output: Response**
Teaching conceptions	**Teacher behaviour** - relationship building - effective behavioural strategies	Student perception of quality teaching
Teacher thinking	**Student behaviour** engagement/disengagement	Successful transition
Teacher traits		Proposed Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework

3.5 Criticisms of teacher effectiveness approaches and methodology

Educational effectiveness research (EER) is concerned with understanding key educational and other factors and their interactions that lead to more or less effective classrooms, schools and education systems (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014:1). The origins of the research began as a result of policy and sociological research that denied that schools could make a difference to the educational and social trajectory of young people. For the past thirty years, EER has demonstrated that teachers and schools can really make a difference to student outcomes (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Reynolds et *al.*, 2012). More recently it has been acknowledged that in order to improve education at a policy level research must look at the interaction of components (Hopkins *et al.*, 2011) and working on how to improve them.

Critics of the EER field would believe that the reason progress cannot be seen at a practical level is that much of the studies were of a quantitative nature and were reactive not purposive (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014). The absence of research at classroom and teacher level and the lack of attention to teaching despite the development of teacher effectiveness research (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; Creemers, 1994) have led to discussions about the best way forward. Given clear evidence that teacher effects exceed school effects (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Muijs & Reynolds, 2010) and research that explores other outcomes apart from academic achievement is required, then this study sets about offering rich descriptions of students perspectives of how to improve teaching at a classroom level.

Numerous studies have analysed the value added impact of teachers on student achievement. There have been studies in relation to teacher effectiveness and student learning (Marsh & Roche, 1994; Ryan & Harrisson, 1995; Young *et al.*, 1999; Chen *et al.*, 2012) and on effective teaching characteristics requiring students to rank teaching effectiveness on a likert scale (Bennett, 1988; Young *et al.*, 1999; Ralph, 2003). Traditional instruments apply pre-determined characteristics assuming that students and teachers agree on these (Clark, 1995; Devlin, 2002; Ralph, 2003; Delaney *et al.*, 2010). All of the cited studies have used survey based tools and analysis of the data and in each study was carried out using statistical software, thus the research results are relatively independent of the researcher (Johnson *et al.*, 2004).

Independent quantitative research rigor substantiates the research findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1981), but there is a risk that the participants will answer what they think is desirable and not necessarily what they actually think or do (Chen *et al.*, 2012).

Few studies have accounted for the qualitative student experiences of their teachers as a measure of effectiveness and in particular between education levels such as PP and HE. There is a benefit in qualitative research being carried out as the researcher 'embarks on a voyage of discovery rather than one of verification' (Bryman, 2004:84). The optimum approach is based on the research questions rather than one or the other being 'right' or 'wrong'. This research seeks to explore how students experience a given phenomenon not to study a phenomenon itself (Marton, 1986; Booth, 1997) and to find the variation in the way students experience that phenomenon (Walker, 1998). Because of the close interactions between teachers and students who can form significant relationships (Carrington, 2006), the quality of pedagogic practices are key indicators of student engagement and achievement (Lingard *et al.*, 2000; Lingard *et al.*, 2002).

Therefore, it is more crucial than ever to look to students when contemplating teaching practice. The phenomenographic approach (Marton, 1994) can explore pedagogic practices not by explaining what this concept means but by unveiling 'the variation and architecture of this variation by different aspects that define the phenomena' (Walker, 1998:28). This research develops theoretical underpinnings (Proposed model of Quality Teaching Initiatives Figure 3.1) from existing research and will attempt to

refine a model of educational effectiveness based on this study's findings from students perspective.

3.6 Chapter conclusion

Quality teaching is the key factor in educational outcomes for students and is determined by the quality of the relationship between student and teacher and, therefore, students engagement with school. This chapter proposes a quality teaching initiatives framework to study the effects teacher classroom behaviour can have on students in terms of outcome (student classroom behaviour) in this case engagement. This framework will be refined following the research investigation and outcomes from this current study. The importance of taking account of the 'student voice', the potential benefit of students contribution to policy, and an understanding of students experiences of teaching as they make the transition from PP to HE has been highlighted.

Transition experiences of students are explored, which offers advice to educational stakeholders as to the best approach for the smooth transition of students from the PP to the HE environment. Research proposes that the real influence is made at classroom level and therefore the teachers are in a prime position to really make a difference. Too often, the PP system is left shouldering the blame for problems that students encounter when they enter a new education environment. Teachers at both levels need to collaborate and work out the best strategies to enhance students experiences of

education at both levels. It is vital to move to a system that questions what needs to change for all involved in education and the wider community. Teacher effectiveness methodologies were explored that positions this study's proposed methodology.

Chapter Four:
Methodology

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology adopted in this study. This chapter seeks to address the philosophical stance of the researcher and how this affected the methodological choices made. An account of the research process including methodological approach, data collection and analysis are explored and ethical issues considered. The chapter closes with challenges of reliability and validity and how they are addressed.

4.1 Research philosophy

Holden and Lynch (2004:12) advocate 'there is no right or wrong philosophical stance', however they believe inappropriate matching of methodology and research problem may result in ambiguous results therefore the researcher has chosen an appropriate methodology to address the research problem as mentioned previously.

A researcher's confidence in choosing an appropriate methodology to address the research problem in turn enhances confidence in research results therefore 'a researcher's technique must fit the research problem at hand' (Patton, 1979, cited in Bryman, 1984:83; Deetz, 2009). It is essential therefore for the researcher to review their philosophical stance in relation to the research they want to undertake as the methodology must be appropriate to that philosophical position (Holden & Lynch, 2004).

Based on the foregoing, the researcher will begin by outlining a brief description of both ends of the philosophical research continuum and then outline the stance this study has taken. Table 4.1 adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1979); 'a framework for analysing research assumptions', proposes that all social scientists approach a research investigation with an inherent and overt lens about the nature of the social world and how it is to be explored.

Table 4.1

Research assumptions: The subjective/Objective dimension

Subjective Approach ⟷		Objective Approach
Nominalism The social world is created by the individual concerned	**Ontology** What can and does exist	**Realism** A single reality exists independent of the individual's view
Voluntarism Free will plays a role in the relationship	**Human Nature** Relationships between human beings and their environment.	**Determinism** Relationships are determined by external environmental forces
Interpretivism Knowledge has to be personally experienced	**Epistemology** The nature of knowledge.	**Positivism** Knowledge can be acquired
Ideographic Emphasises the analysis of subjective accounts revealed through qualitative explanation gleaned inside a given situation	**Methodology** How research is/will be constructed	**Nomothetic** A deductive approach that seeks explanation through the analysis of casual relationships to allow the testing of hypotheses and the construction of generalised laws

Adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1979)

The subjectivist/objectivist approaches may be viewed as two opposing ends having unique assumptions, but can have significant inter-relationships (Holden & Lynch, 2004). The objectivist researcher may, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979) view events from the outside in, imposing measurable techniques that must be quantifiable (Bryman, 2004). On the other hand Bryman (2004:84) suggests an alternate approach as the researcher 'embarks on a voyage of discovery rather than one of verification' and is synonymous with the subjectivist approach (Holden & Lynch, 2004).

However 'the distinction is not a hard and fast one: studies that have broad characteristics of one research strategy may have a characteristic of another' (Bryman, 2004:21). What is important to mention is that intermediate positions (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Holden & Lynch, 2004; David & Sutton, 2004) have emerged and these in turn have disseminated different ideas and approaches to research (Yates, 2004; Belk, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) maintain that the subjective/objective dimensions are defined by four key assumptions relating to ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology.

This research study brings a prior knowledge to the implementation of the primary research (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003), taking a pragmatists position (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005) and therefore has evidence of both induction and deduction elements.

The assumptions will now be reviewed in light of this research study, thus helping to clarify the researcher's decision that guides this study's inquiries (Creswell, 1998).

4.1.1 Ontology

The 'object of research [in this study] is the variation in ways of experiencing a phenomenon' (Linder & Marshall, 2003:272), in different ways in different contexts (Marton & Pang, 2005). Therefore the researcher proposes that realities can be viewed in multiple forms (Creswell, 1998; Bryman, 2004). The research aim of this study embodies this ontological position and as such influences the research design. Here the researcher adopts a non-dualisitic ontology (Ornek, 2008), where the student perceptions of teaching is seen as essential to the concept of effective teaching as they are the ones experiencing it and therefore collective meanings as opposed to individual meanings is what is sought (Walker, 1998; Origill, 2002, cited in Ornek, 2008:1).

4.1.2 Epistemology

The second assumption, epistemology refers to assumptions about knowledge, how it can be obtained and how it can be communicated to others. The researcher's aim is not to pursue a definite or an absolute truth, rather the aim is concerned with exploring and appreciating (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991) human experience that attempts to get under the surface and

seek meanings (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1987) as identified in the research questions.

4.1.3 Human nature

The third assumption concerning human nature explores whether participants to the study have a deterministic perspective (determined by the environment or context they exist in) or voluntarist perspective (participants are free willed and independent of their surroundings), (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Neither extreme views of human nature is proposed in this study, instead participants are free to express their own opinions but these views may to a certain degree be influenced by the schools and colleges they find themselves in.

4.1.4 Methodology

The final assumption, methodology is the 'theory of enquiry' (Schwandt, 2001:161) that the researcher adopts having consideration to the ontological and epistemological stances previously outlined as well as the views stated on human nature (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Holden and Lynch, 2004). The researcher adopts an intermediate philosophical stance (Firestone, 1987; Holden & Lynch, 2004:15) 'allowing the researcher room to match their philosophical perspective, methodology and the problem at hand'.

To summarise the interrelationships of epistemology, methodology and method Carter & Little (2007) propose a simple relationship in Figure 4.1. Methodology, justifies the method which produces the data and analysis. Knowledge is created from data and analysis and epistemology modifies methodology and justifies the knowledge produced.

Figure 4.1

The simple relationship between epistemology, methodology and method
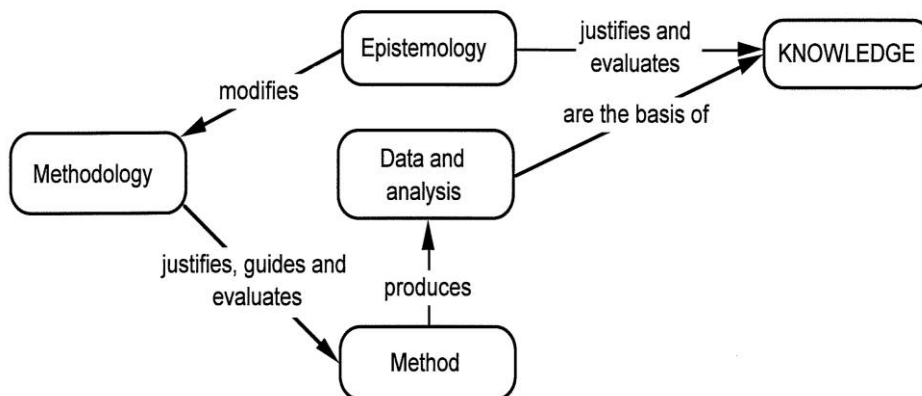
Source: Carter & Little, 2007:1317

4.1.5 Rationale for qualitative research design

The choice made of a qualitative research design is consistent with the researcher's intermediate philosophical stance with a subjective leaning.

Brannick (1997) and Silverman (2010) draw attention to the importance of choosing a research approach that fits the research question. Three broad categories of research design have been identified by Domegan & Fleming (2003); exploratory, descriptive and casual research. This study proposes adopting an exploratory design, recognising that 'some facts are known but more information is needed' (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010:103-104) and that gaps in this area can only be filled by a detailed exploration of the phenomeneon (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). It is acknowledged that some elements of a descriptive design are used as the researcher builds upon and applies what is already known in the literature as part of their exploration.

This study follows the underpinnings of the phenomenographic approach adopting 'a flexible set of guidelines that connects theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and methods for collecting empirical material' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:14) but it digresses from its suggestions that a logical set of hierarchically related categories of descriptions will ensue from this type of study. The researcher has remained open and flexible as to the outcomes from this study and as such adopts a non-commital philosophical stance (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Remenyi *et al.*, 1998). Ashworth & Lucas (2000:302) conclude 'phenomenography, in actual research practice, cannot and must not be seen as the application of a set of rules of procedure', entering the life-world of the student empathically is not reducible to technique. 'To be scientific about subjectivity demands a certain fellow feeling rather than technical rationality' (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:302).

4.2 Research approach

Following the decision to adopt an exploratory research design, a qualitative approach is compatible with the design chosen (Domegan & Fleming, 2003) and the nature of the research questions (Creswell, 1998). Therefore it is proposed to adopt a phenomenographic research approach to the current study.

Phenomenography, grew from a response to the limitations of the dominant quantitative techniques used in educational research (Sandberg, 1997) and has been recognised internationally as a valuable educational research method since the 1970's (Marton, 1981; Ashworth & Lucas, 1998). Marton (1981) first coined the name phenomenography to describe the research approach he developed with Saljo, Svensson & Dahlgren (1977, cited in Saljo, 1979:446) through empirical investigations in the fields of student and teacher's experiences of learning and teaching (Ramsden, 1992; Lucas, 1998; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).

Phenemonography, is still used widely today in education (Akerlind, 2007; Wright *et al.*, 2007; Ornek, 2008; Harris, 2008; Beutel, 2010; Gonzalez, 2011; Chen *et al.*, 2012) and differs from many qualitative approaches as it focuses on the collective understanding of groups as opposed to individual meanings or individual positions held by participants in the groups (Harris, 2000, cited in Harris, 2008:61). Instead it takes a non-dualistic ontological perspective where the object and subject are not independent of each other

(Ornek, 2008; Harris, 2000, cited in Harris, 2008:63) and draws on Bretano's (1973) understandings of intentionality.

Here the experience is seen as the internal relationship between the subject and the object of study (phenomenon) (Linder & Marshall, 2003). Students and teachers meet every day in the classroom (Carrington, 2006) which allows for student experiences of their teachers to be explored in this study.

The current study adopts a 'second-order approach' (Marton & Pang, 1999) in that it focuses on the experiences rather than the concept under study, as perceived by the participants (Marton, 1988; Ashworth & Lucas, 1998; 2000). The 'aim is not to find the singular essence, but the variation and the architecture of this variation by different aspects that define the phenomena' (Walker, 1998:28) and allow the researcher to 'embark on a voyage of discovery' (Bryman, 2004:84). Phenomenography allows the researcher this 'from-the-inside' approach (Richardson, 1999:55).

Therefore instead of studying teaching as a concept, a pheneomenographic researcher investigates the experience of teaching by participants of the study and the outcome of such a study would be the qualitatively different ways of experiencing teaching (Marton *et al.*, 1993).

The current study follows this premise. It does not attempt to assert that participants hold specific conceptions but instead collectively gathers evidence to illustrate the range of experiences within the population under study. Marton (1995:11) points out that it is the dualistic epistemology that creates the conditions, 'if you assume an independent constituted reality to

begin with, there is no way of giving an account of, how you can find out about it, .. you cannot.. how could you possibly'.

Having chosen a phenemonographic approach, the researcher must identify an appropriate research method such as interviews, focus groups and participant observation being the favoured techniques (Bryman, 1984; Marton, 1986). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used as the primary source of data collection in the current study, as supported by Beutel (2010). Phenomenography has been criticised for not detailing the actual research process of a phenomenographic study (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000), as most studies concentrate on the broad aims of phenomenography as a research method (Marton, 1981; 1994; Svensson & Theman, 1983; Johansson *et al.,* 1985; Saljo, 1988; Prosser, 1993; Marton & Booth, 1997). The current study sets out in detail each stage of the research process (see Figure 4.2) and the researcher's position at each stage is clearly documented, in considered response to the highlighted shortcomings of the applied approach.

4.2.1 Alternative research strategies for study

Other research strategies could also have been adopted in this study including ethnography, grounded theory and phenemology. An ethnographic study would require the researcher to be immersed in the field of study for a considerable period of time observing participant behaviours and even becoming part of the 'tribe' (Creswell, 1998). The researcher decided this

method did not fit this research study due to ethnography as a strategy being more suited to discovering culture which was not the remit of this study. Also time and access constraints would not permit the researcher to immerse themselves in the field of research.

Grounded theory would have required the researcher to conduct preliminary field data collection, without any reference to previously recorded empirical and theoretical findings. The data would then guide the literature review (Creswell, 1998). The researcher decided to first consult previous literature on the area so as to identify a gap in an already crowded area of research on effective teaching and hence this study took on an exploratory dimension from early on.

Phenomenology as a method could also have been considered, but because the researcher hoped to gather collective meanings of experiences as opposed to individual responses this approach was not used, although it can be argued that the approach adopted by the researcher, phenomenography has its underpinnings in this method.

4.3 The research process

The process of how this research method is conducted is of key consideration in determining the validity of this research method both ontologically and epistemologically (Silverman, 2006:13) therefore a full description of the applied process is presented in this chapter.

Students at HE were interviewed using a combination of focus group interviews and individual interviews (Marton, 1994), while focus groups were used at PP. A total of 15 participants were interviewed at HE and 20 at PP level, in total there were 35 participants in this study.

The research process followed in this study is presented in diagrammatic form in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2

The research process

Research Objective
To explore student perceptions of the effect of teaching on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at post-primary to higher education.

Research Questions

1. How do students conceptualise the role of interaction for classroom engagement?
2. What are student perceptions of their teachers traits and teaching strategies at both post-primary and higher education levels?
3. What are student experiences of their classroom environment at post-primary to higher education.

Pilot Study: Focus group HE

Helps formulate research question and design

Review of effective teaching research methodologies

Phenomenography research approach

Ethical considerations and access considerations

1. Identify participants to the study and decide on research protocol
2. Formulate interview questions

Focus groups and single interviews
video and audio-recorording

Higher Education

Two focus groups

Four single interviews

Post-primary

Four focus groups

Data analysis and emergence of themes

Descriptive model of effective teaching for PP and HE domains

4.3.1 Pilot study details and reflection

The pilot focus group was organised for Thursday 23rd May 2013 and eight students from year three of the Bachelor of Business program had volunteered to attend. All of these students had received prior information and had signed consent forms to take part in the research. On the morning in question, four students turned up as there was slight confusion in relation to the time of the focus group study. The researcher had organised this two weeks previously, before the students broke up for the end of semester and had not seen them in the intervening period. As a result some students mixed up the time and arrived late. As the focus group had already commenced with four students the researcher did not feel it appropriate to include the others as they arrived. The researcher learned that a reminder a few days beforehand and the day before is essential to ensure that the students are clear of the details involved in the focus group study.

It was the intention of the researcher to carry out a second focus group study with the second year students on the Bachelor of Business programme. When the researcher sent out a request via moodle for prospective participants to the study only two students responded as they had already begun end of semester exams. As it is proposed to have a minimum of 3 students for a focus group the researcher did not proceed with this. The pilot study used video-recording, the room layout was round-table which allowed for ease of discussion. The researcher attempted to make the students as comfortable as possible with refreshments. It was the intention of the

researcher that the students feel natural and uninhibited. The recording equipment was placed in the corner of the room and was unobtrusive.

4.3.2 The pilot focus group

The pilot focus group commenced at 11.10am May 2013 in a location known to the participants (Penn-Edwards, 2012), students were made feel comfortable by having refreshments for them. The purpose of the study was explained to them and all participants were asked individually if they were happy to be involved and if they had any questions before we commenced. Participants were reassured that their identities would remain anonymous. The researcher decided to remain completely outside the process and one of the participants volunteered to ask the questions that were provided as a guide to initiating discussion on the various themes.

The first theme was demographic based questions which provided background information on the participants. Participants were all studying on the Bachelor of Business honours degree in year three of their studies. They had taken an accounting module over four semesters (both financial accounting and management accounting). Three of the four participants had taken accounting to LC level at PP level.

The next theme was teacher efficacy which involved questions on the nature of teaching as experienced by students. Students here had eight questions to discuss. One or more of the questions were mis-interpreted by the students. This is where the researcher could have come in to the process if she had

choosen to be actively involved in the research questioning. The researcher had deliberately decided to remain outside the process so as to test how the students would discuss the questions given.

On hindsight, the questions need to be clearer and/or more specific, or the researcher needs to take an active part in the process, so that any confusion can be cleared up and the students brought back on track if they go off on a tangent, which did happen on a few occasions during the focus group interview. Students put too much emphasis on accounting as a subject as opposed to the teaching of it. The teaching characteristics question was interpreted as what they think good teachers are as opposed to what actually takes place.

The third theme was teaching strategies which involved five questions. All questions were discussed well and good data emerged. The fourth theme was student engagement, which involved ten questions, again all questions were clearly discussed and good data emerged. To finish the focus group four general questions were discussed.

The main focus of conducting the pilot study was to give the researcher the opportunity to reflect upon the data collection method and the data that emerged from the interviews. The pilot study was presented in a paper for the Irish Academy of Management conference in September 2013, entitled 'A study of accounting students engagement through quality teaching initiatives: Exploring the post-primary/higher education divide' (O' Brien & Iannone, 2013). This conference presentation allowed the researcher to get

valuable feedback from very renowned academics in the field. As a result the researcher made further adjustments to the data collection tools and interview themes as necessary.

4.4 Primary data collection approach

As it was proposed to adopt a phenomenographic methodology approach for this study, interviews and focus groups were used to collect the data. All data collection methods must allow participants to give open-ended responses containing detailed descriptions that allow phenomena to be unearthed (Bowden, 2005, cited in Bowden & Green, 2005:156).

The outcome of this type of data collection exposes all variations and ways of experiencing a particular concept, therefore this methodology will allow all aspects of teaching concepts experienced by students to be explored in this study.

Phenomenographers have developed two frameworks (what/how, referential/structural) to frame the research design and process of analysis (Cope, 2004). While it has been recognised by early researchers (Saljo, 1979; Marton, 1981) that they drew on phenomenological theory when creating 'more versatile and elaborate conceptual tools' (Marton *et al.*, 1993:279), Marton & Booth (1997:87) noted that phenomenographers 'use them [the principles] somewhat differently, stretching them to meet our own approach'. It was not the researcher's intention to fit the current study's

research process into a pre-existing neatly defined research paradigm (Silverman, 2006). The researcher intended the process to be open and transparent and to go beyond imposing a tight methodological logic in order to enter the life-world of the student (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000).

This can be a difficult task but as proposed by Ashworth & Lucas (2000) a practical set of guidelines can aid the process greatly. To this end the researcher was i) careful to lay down her own preconceptions of effective teaching, ii) identify what had been found in the literature, iii) identify a gap in the field, iv) be aware of ethical procedures, v) formulate the research questions, vi) decide on research design and protocol, vii) identify the participants to the study and viii) introduce the topic to the research participants.

When the research interview process commences it can be difficult to remain totally impartial to the study as someone must introduce the topic to the participants and ask the questions and make probes where necessary, otherwise it will potentially become 'directionless' (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). Karlsson (1993, cited in Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:298) proposes a useful technique 'empathy', whereby the researcher detaches oneself from one's own-world and enters the life-world of the student. The selection of participants for this study was on the basis, that students had lived experiences of the phenomenon under discussion and that they were presently immersed in the life-world that is under study.

A good array of student experiences would be captured from the variety of students participating in the study. Data was collected using the phenomenographic interview technique using both focus groups in PP and a mixture of focus groups and single interviews at HE for this study, which is characterised as being both *open* and *deep* (Booth, 1997). *Open* refers to the fact that the researcher is open to be guided by the responses made by the interviewee (Marton, 1994; Booth, 1997) and *deep* describes how, during the interview, individual interviewees are encouraged to discuss their conceptions in depth until both the researcher and the interviewee reach a mutual understanding about the phenomenon in question (Booth, 1997; Svensson, 1997).

The participants were given complete freedom to talk and dialogue was encouraged as much as possible. The use of video-recording, re-inforced the researcher's intention to remain impartial, in liaising with the participants. The researcher has re-played all of the recordings and is confident that she did not make any gestures or facial expressions throughout the interview process that may have influenced participant responses. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their answers (Orgill, 2002, cited in Ornek, 2008:1) and probing occurred where the researcher wanted to make clear their experience.

The pilot study, in addition to the main study adopted the use of video-recording and allowed the researcher to view interviewing techniques and to make appropriate changes where necessary. The researcher was always on alert for signs of the researcher's personal beliefs and knowledge intruding

into the interview and focus groups (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000) and ensuring that this was not directing the interview process. The use of a similar set of open-ended questions across all interviews and focus groups limited researcher intrusion into the process. Again the video-recording allowed the researcher to re-assess if she was influencing the interview process in any way.

The pilot focus group along with the first two focus groups of the main study were reviewed and changes were made to the interview practice where deemed fit (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). For example the researcher in the pilot study chose to completely remain outside the interview process and one of the research participants posed the questions of the study.

Following a review of this technique, it was felt that the researcher could not probe the participants for a deeper meaning if the need arose. In the main study, the researcher chose to pose the questions to the students and encouraged students to participate if they were not getting involved in the discussion. Simple prompts such as 'what do you think', were used.

4.4.1 Approach to selecting the study's participants

The population of interest is determined by the objectives of the study and is deemed to be PP and HE students. Deciding on the sample frame from this population involved the researcher deliberately choosing the research group that would represent the population (Jankowicz, 2000) and is composed of

participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research topic (Bowen, 2008:140). This research is conducted in post-primary (PP) and higher education (HE) levels in Ireland. PP relates to students in their final year of school with students ranging in ages seventeen to nineteen all taking accounting as a subject for their final year exam. HE comprises first, second and third year students' ranging in ages eighteen to twenty-five, all studying accounting as part of a business-related degree.

As 'students are in the class almost every day and they know what's going on' (McKeachie, 1983:38), by gaining an insight into students experiences of teaching we can better understand teaching and ways of making it better (Wittrock, 1986).

Brannick & Roche (1997) outline that researchers have to be imaginative when developing a sample frame. The researcher decided not to use probability sampling where every member of the population has an equal chance of been chosen. Purposive sampling was used where the researcher picks a group of what are perceived as 'typical' or representative elements in the population on the advice of experts in the field (Brannick & Roche, 1997). This type of sampling is recommended, in an attempt to maximise the possibility of variations and experiences by those involved (King, 2004; Beutel, 2010). The research is conducted through a non-random sample of 15 students at HE and 20 students in PP settings. At PP level four schools, two all-boys school, one all-girls school and one co-educational school were selected as sites for data collection. The researcher initially contacted school

principals at PP level detailing the nature of the research and seeking permission to approach the accounting teacher and carry out research at the school site. The researcher enlisted the help of the teachers in the case of schools in selecting representative participants who were studying the same subject (Accounting) to enable consistency of academic focus. Students voluntarily agreed to participate in this study and as the participants were known to the teacher a good range of student abilities and diversities were captured. The researcher spoke briefly to the students outlining what the research involved and ethical approval was obtained from the University of East Anglia in England. Informed consent forms were given to students, which had to be co-signed by their parents or guardian. Four group interviews were conducted involving 20 participants in total lasting between forty and sixty minutes.

At HE, three Universities in Ireland were selected as sites for data collection. One is an Institute of Technology (IoT), which is a university-led institution with over 10,000 students. The other two research sites are two of the largest and most prominent universities in Ireland with over 30,000 students in each. In seeking participants for HE the researcher contacted Accounting lecturers and asked their permission to talk to their accounting classes about the research. From this, students volunteered to become part of the focus groups. Students were given consent forms and asked to bring them with them on the day that the focus group interviews were scheduled for. Four single interviews were also carried out at HE these were decided upon because it was difficult to gain access to the larger universities. A

sample of students were approached by their Accounting teachers from PP level who knew that these students had gone to study Business degree courses with Accounting at HE and were asked if they would be interested in participating in this research. Following a meeting between the students and the researcher to inform them about the study the interviews were arranged in a place suitable for the students. All students participating were studying accounting as a module on their course at the time of the study. Two focus groups of five and six students respectively and four single interviews were conducted giving a total of 15 participants at HE. HE interviews lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. At HE, participants that have a wide range of characteristics such as different academic abilities, different stages in the study of a discipline (accounting for this study) and demographic differences were used (Marton & Booth, 1997; Akerlind, 2003a, cited in Bowden & Green, 2005:145) so as to maximise the conceptual variations in data (Sin, 2010).

The researcher was conscious of potential repetitive data emerging from contacting students which were part of mutual networks, however this did not hold up in the experience of the interviews and focus groups.

Akerlind (2003a, cited in Bowden & Green, 2005:145) supports this and goes on to elaborate that phenemenography adopts selective sampling of relatively small numbers of participants in this case a maximum of six per focus group, with the intention of gaining depth of meaning.

Emory & Cooper (1991) note that no matter, how well defined the sample no sample will completely represent the entire population and to eliminate bias the sample needs to be accurate and precise (Emory & Cooper, 1991).

The phenomenographic approach according to Bowden (2005, cited in Bowden & Green, 2005:156) and Akerlind (2003a, cited in Bowden & Green, 2005:145) needs to interview enough people to ensure sufficient ways of experiencing a phenomena but not too many that will make it difficult to manage the data.

For this study, students in PP were interviewed in groups of approximately five to six classmates in October 2013 – January 2014 of sixth year (final year of the LC). A total of 4 group interviews were conducted with 20 participants in total, anywhere between 20 and 30 participants is sufficient (Akerlind, 2003a, cited in Bowden & Green, 2005:145) and 'variation reaches saturation after 20' (Sandberg, 2000:18) and therefore reduces the need to analyse large volumes of data (Trigwell, 2000).

In HE, two focus groups of five and six students respectively and four single interviews were conducted giving a total of 15 participants at HE. Therefore a total of 35 participants took part in this study.

4.4.2 Interview protocol

The interview can be recognised as 'an active interaction between two or more people' (Fontana & Frey, 2000:646) or as a guided conversation rather

than a set of structured queries (Yin, 2009:106). For the current study both focus group interviews and single interviews were used. The benefits of using focus group interviews over individual interviews, is the greater anonymity of the group environment. This can help individuals disclose their opinions more freely and there is no pressure for an individual to answer every question, so responses made are likely to be more genuine and substantial (Vaughan *et al.*, 1996; Frederickson *et al.*, 2004). The participants can think about each other's responses (Lybeck, 1981) and become conscious of different and better ways of thinking (Marton, 1986).

Individual interviews were also necessary in this study, particularly at HE, where the researcher needed access to different HE institutions and focus group interviews proved difficult to organise and co-ordinate.

Participants were informed of the approximate duration of the interview prior to commencing and reminded that the interviews would be recorded (Patton, 1990). The intentional-expressive approach (Anderberg, 2000), where participants are initially questioned in the broadest sense regarding the phenomenon of interest was adopted and subsequent questions were then asked to encourage participants to reflect on what they have said (Akerlind 2003a, cited in Bowden & Green, 2005:145). Table 4.2 outlines the demographics of research participants and the duration of interviews for this study.

Table 4.2

Data collection participant demographics

Research sites	Interview profiles	Demographics	Courses	Period of study	Duration of interview
HE (IoT)	Focus group interview five participants	4 male 1 female Age range(19-21 years)	Bachelor of Business	5 semesters	1 hour
HE (IoT)	Single interview	Female mature student	Bachelor of Business	5 semesters	43 mins
HE (IoT)	Focus group interview six participants	5 male 1 female Age range (18-19 years)	Bachelor of Arts in Accounting	1 semester	48 mins
HE (university)	Single interview	Male Age 18 years	Bachelor of Commerce	1 semester	28 mins
HE (university)	Single interview	Male Age 19 years	Bachelor of Commerce	3 semesters	35 mins
HE (university)	Single interview	1 female	Bachelor of Commerce	1 semester	45 mins
Post-primary (all boys school)	Focus group interview six participants	All male	Leaving Certificate	1.5 years	37 mins
Post-primary (all boys school)	Focus group interview five participants	All male	Leaving Certificate	1.5 years	47 mins
Post-primary (all girls school)	Focus group interview five participants	All female	Leaving Certificate	1.5 years	40 mins
Post-primary (co-ed school	Focus group interview four participants	3 male 1 female	Leaving Certificate	1.5 years	40 mins

4.4.2.1 Interview tactics

Within the student focus groups and single interviews, the key objective was to elicit from each group of participants a comprehensive range of views, perceptions and reflections about their experiences and conceptions of teaching at each education level. The interviews were semi-structured in nature. Sample questions can be seen in Appendix B. Questions were initially formulated following a brief search of the relevant literature, careful consideration of the research objective, research questions and the type of study being conducted (Berg, 1995).

The interviews began with the researcher asking questions of a general nature to 'break the ice' before getting into more specific questions. Fontana & Frey (2000) noted that using a language that the respondents can relate to is a useful way of gaining rapport and creating a sense of shared meaning. With this in mind the researcher phrased the questions in such a way as the students could easily understand what was being asked (Patton, 1990). This was an important consideration as a good number of the participants were under the age of 18 years. Questions were asked about the role of interaction in the classroom, teaching traits, teaching activities and transition issues.

Lee (1999:62) proposes that semi-structured interviews have 'an overarching topic, general themes, targeted issues and specific questions, with a pre-determined sequence for their occurrence', with scope for the researcher 'to pursue matters as circumstances dictate'.

With this in mind, the researcher used probe questions as a follow up to participant responses to gain a deeper understanding into what the interviewee had meant (Berg, 1995; Bryman, 2004). This reduced the need for the researcher to summate a cause to these responses when the interviewee filled the gaps (McKinnon, 1988). This approach was very flexible and only used as the need arose. Questions were kept brief (Kvale, 1996).

It was interesting to note that a very small number of questions did not elicit a response from some participants and this lack of response can be as interesting as a response might be (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). However this did not occur enough in the interviews overall to justify the omission of these questions and there was no pattern as to the questions that were left silent. It is also important that the researcher is mindful of non-verbal forms of communication (Gorden, 1980), including body movements, the use of pacing of speech and silence in conversation.

As a result focus group interviews were video-recorded and the single interviews were audio-recorded. The researcher was aware of these non-verbal forms of communication and has documented them where appropriate in the interview transcripts. Recording allows the researcher to obtain more data than if they had to mentally recall the interview (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). While interview rigidity is not encouraged in phenomenography that is 'minimal use of questions prepared in advance', (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:298) the researcher recognised that an interview guide helps the researcher to remain focused.

4.4.2.2 The use of video-recording in collecting data

The interviews were video-recorded, not in the traditional sense of observational research (Powell *et al.*, 2003), but instead its purpose was to allow the researcher to conduct the interviews in a relaxed manner so as not to have to worry about who said what or take notes during the interviews (Taylor & Bodgan, 1998). The decision to use a video-recorder has many practical considerations (Penn-Edwards, 2012), so the researcher undertook training on setting it up, transporting it, learning how to use it and making sure it was not obtrusive to the interviewees. All of the interviews took place in settings familiar to the research participants (Penn-Edwards, 2012), in school sites in the case of PP students and in HE institutions in the case of HE students. This can give a confidence and support to the participants as they are on home-ground (Penn-Edwards, 2012). In all of the interviews, the researcher had access to the room prior to the interview commencing and this allowed the researcher to set up the room and lay-out the table and chairs in a semi-circular fashion. The researcher ensured that all participants including the researcher were visible to the video.

The researcher assembled the recorder on a tripod stand in a corner of the room well out of sight of the interviewees. Prior to the interview commencing the researcher pointed out the recorder and asked if everybody was comfortable with being recorded (Taylor & Bodgan, 1998). The participants had already consented to the recording in their ethics forms which were collected prior to the interviews commencing.

The researcher re-assured the participants that the recording would never appear anywhere or be shown to anybody other than the researcher and maybe one of her academic peers to verify its authenticity. The researcher also emphasised that the only reason they were being video-recorded was to aid the researcher in transcribing the interviews. The participants were told that if at any stage they wanted the researcher to turn off the recorder then that would not be a problem. This all helped to settle the participants and gain a trust in the researcher.

Although Lomax & Casey (1998:section 3.1) propose that 'the video camera has a uniquely distorting affect', once the interviews commenced the researcher and participants did not seem to be affected by the presence of the recorder. As long as the researcher displays 'an awareness of the status of the data' (Lomax & Casey, 1998:Section 8.3) with regard to trustworthiness, validity, reliability and objectivity then the value of the video is not in doubt.

Because the researcher could have been viewed in a position of authority by the participants, it was essential that the researcher could prove impartiality to the interview responses therefore the video recording was used by the researcher to 'remember what happened…, prompt reflection and stimulate recall' (Penn-Edwards, 2012:157).

Following the pilot study and the first two group interviews the researcher re-played the recordings many times to satisfy researcher impartiality. In

addition, two of the recordings were viewed independently by an academic peer to substantiate these claims.

It was noted by the independent academic peer that a good rapport (Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002) between the researcher and participants existed during the interview process.

4.5 The role of the researcher

The researcher recognised the need to build a rapport (Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002) with the students participating in the current study so as to get them to be as open as possible. The researcher began each interview by explaining that she was a doctorate student pursuing further academic qualifications. Fontana & Frey (2000) advocate that once a researcher presents themselves in a certain light it can leave an impression on the participants and can have a great influence on the success (or lack of it) of the study. Each interview began with an informal chat where the researcher explained what the study was about, the ethical consent forms were collected and any questions were answered prior to commencing.

The researcher pointed out that she was really interested in getting the participants to express themselves clearly and not to give yes and no answers, but descriptions where possible. The researcher made it clear that the interview was open, they could think aloud, pause, use dialogue, talk to each other (Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002).

The researcher remained neutral to the ideas of the participants in the study and therefore it was important for the researcher not to evaluate the answers as being right or wrong (Ornek, 2008). When responses were not clear the researcher asked questions such as 'could you explain this further?' (Barnard *et al.*, 1999:220). The researcher recognises the influence that she may have had over the interview process and the preconceptions, values and perspectives that she brought to the process. These were documented in a diary prior to and immediately following each interview. A sample copy of the diary can be found in Appendix C.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was first approved from the University of East Anglia in May 2013. A number of important considerations had to be taken into account. Participants in the current study, some of whom were under age 18 years would require parental consent to be involved in this study. Also permission from school sites (i.e. principals was also required as interviews would be conducted on school premises). With that in mind and having followed strict ethical guidelines from UEA a parental letter, information and consent form were given to interested participants to bring home and discuss with their parents (Appendix A).

The researcher visited all the schools involved in the research, spoke with the students about the study and gave consent forms to interested participants. If the students were willing to participate in the current study,

they signed the forms along with parental signature and returned these forms to the contact teacher. This teacher then made contact with the researcher informing her that the forms were signed and then a suitable date and time was set up to conduct the interviews at the school site. Interviews took place over the period October 2013 to January 2014. A reflective diary was written up by the researcher following each interview.

In the case of HE students, the researcher approached various student groups who were studying accounting as part of their degree. The researcher sent a message via moodle briefly outlining the study and looking for interested parties to make contact. The first group were specialising in accounting in year three of the Bachelor of Business (Honours) programme. The second group were first year students specialising in an accounting degree programme, the Bachelor of Arts in Accounting. The researcher spoke to the full class prior to a lecture and looked for volunteers. Again six people agreed to participate. The other interviewees who were studying for the Bachelor of Commerce degrees were approached by the researcher to participate in the study. None of the interviewees were personally known to the researcher and the researcher was not teaching any of the participants.

Consent forms were given to all interested participants which explained the purpose of the current study. Prior to the interviews commencing consent forms were collected and any questions the participants had were dealt with. A copy of the consent form and ethical clearance is attached in Appendix A. It was important for participants to feel under no obligation to participate and it was stressed to them and outlined in the consent form that they were

free to withdraw from the research at any stage. Participant consent was received for recording the interviews and they were told that nobody would see these recordings except when the researcher re-played them to write verbatim transcripts. The participants were told that the recordings and transcripts would be held in a safe secure location under lock and that the participants anonymity was guaranteed and their name would never appear anywhere in the current study.

The researcher re-assured that pseudo-names would be used to protect their real identities. Only the researcher and supervisor had access to the interview transcripts. All soft copies of the data collected were stored on the researcher's personal computer in password protected files and all hard copies of the data stored in a locked cabinet. These documents will be kept on file for a period of seven years in accordance with the Data protection Act 1988.

4.7 Data analysis and interpretation

The researcher adopted the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach in analysing the student data. IPA's theoretical underpinnings stem from phenomenology which posits that 'the meanings an individual ascribes to events are of central concern but are only accessible through an interpretative process' (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008:218).

IPA acknowledges that the researcher's engagement with the participant's text has an interpretative element. This allowed the researcher to understand and give voice to the participants (Larkin *et al.*, 2006). IPA can be challenging as it requires the researcher to try to understand their participants world and then to describe what it is like. IPA analysis revolves round the close reading and re-reading of the text (Smith *et al.*, 1999). The researcher makes notes of any thoughts, observations and reflections that occur while reading the transcript or other text. Such notes are likely to include any recurring phrases, the researcher's questions, their own emotions, and descriptions of, or comments on, the language used (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

The analytic process cannot ever achieve a genuinely first-person account of the participants so the objective is to get as 'close' to the participants view as is possible. Madill *et al.* (2000) have described this position as 'contextualism'; 'the only way to find the subject is as a person in context' (Larkin *et al.*, 2006:110). There is a responsibility for the researcher to hear what informants are saying and then relate the meaning of their experiences to the wider audience. Whether the researcher agrees with the words of participants or not the researcher has an obligation to report a true account of participants experiences. Therefore codes and sub-codes that emerged from this data analysis were words directly used by students in the transcripts.

The difficulties encountered by the researcher when analysing the data is that the researcher has their own pre-conceptions, experiences and

understandings that may initially shape interpretation of the phenomenon in question. Through documenting these pre-conceptions and continued iteration of transcripts and re coding extracts and comparing codes this allowed the researcher to address any bias or blind spots (Tappan, 1997).

Phenomenography, as a qualitative research tool adopts an interpretative approach (Svensson, 1997) which involves 'bracketing' (Ashworth, 1999, cited in Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:297) setting aside the researcher's own assumptions and holding back 'knowledge and theories to be fully and freshly present' (Sandberg, 1997:209) to participant experiences of the study. As IPA acknowledges a role for interpretation, the concept of bracketing is somewhat controversial. This is one of the reasons why the IPA researcher usually keeps a reflexive diary that records details of the nature and origin of any emergent interpretations (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

The outcomes of this phenomenographic based study represent the full range of possible ways of experiencing the conception that is under investigation (Harris, 2008) and focuses on collective rather than individual meanings from the transcripts.

With this in mind no one interview transcript can be viewed in isolation but within the context of all interview transcripts in terms of similarities and differences in meanings (Harris, 2008). Sandberg (1997:210) coined this as 'horizontalisation', treating all aspects of experiences as equally important: 'treating some aspects of what they express as more important than others

may lead us away from faithful interpretation of their experiences' and therefore invalid interpretations (Sandberg, 1997:210). It is important to point out at this stage that no attempt is made to make any inferences about individual responses. The purpose of this type of methodology is to focus on the collective meaning of groups of participants for the current study while it is important that uniqueness of individual experiences is not lost (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000).

It is interesting to articulate that participant conceptions may change depending on the context of experience (Marton & Pang, 2005) and follow up interviews may convey a new set of discoveries and cannot confirm the original findings of a similar study (Akerlind, 2005). Therefore findings identified from this data analysis is representative of this group of participants and their experiences and understandings at the time this study took place (Marton *et al.*, 2004) and no attempt is made to claim that conceptions and experiences of this study can or will be replicated by another group. Marton (1986:35) articulates: 'the original finding of the categories of description is a form of discovery and discoveries do not have to be replicable'.

The data analysis stage allows the researcher to be most creative and it can be difficult to find successful ways of achieving this. Phillips & Di Domenico (2009:560) assert that 'as a result researchers need to develop an approach that makes sense in the light of their particular study and establish a set of arguments to justify the particular approach'.

4.7.1 Early stages of the data analysis

In total 10 interviews were conducted with 35 participants comprising six focus group interviews and four single interviews. All interviews were recorded. The focus group interviews were video-recorded and the single interviews were audio-recorded. Immediately following the interviews the researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim (Whyte, 1982), listening to the tapes and handwriting out the text. The interviews were then typed up by the researcher and were then replayed and re-read alongside the recording to fill any gaps and to reflect accurately the responses of participants (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). The researcher spent a considerable amount of time (Bryman & Bell, 2003) on the transcription process and revisiting the initial data recordings and listening to them over and over (Dey, 1993) until she was completely satisfied that no omissions were made and anything that was likely to affect the interpretation of meaning was included in the transcipts (Svensson & Theman, 1983).

The researcher has been 'faithful' (Walsh, 1994; Francis, 1996) to the participants experiences of the phenomenon and was in no rush to move too quickly from the raw data in an attempt to analyse and structure the data (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000) into neatly defined categories of description (Walsh, 1994). The researcher decided to be open–minded about what might be found and subsequently broad themes began to emerge from the data. Kvale (1996) recognises that transcription is much more than a clerical task and has methodological implications.

The researcher wanted a flexible fluid approach to data interpretation (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998) and as such adopted an empathic approach to the raw data which involved an imaginative engagement with the world that is being described by the student (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000) avoiding presenting it in pre-defined constructs that follow theoretical constructed hypotheses (Ashworth and Lucas, 1998). It is important to stress that it is not about identifying 'meaning units' (Giorgi, 1985 and Karlsson, 1993, cited in Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:298) but to 'slow down and dwell on what is being said and the manner in which it is being said' (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:300). As such the researcher did not dismiss any part of the utterances just because they were not fitting into a neatly defined structure (Wertz, 1983; Walsh, 1994).

Therefore individual quotations are used to highlight unique responses that can add meaning to experiences (Ashworth &Lucas, 2000).The researcher began to question the data as proposed by Ashworth & Lucas (2000:302) in terms of 'what does this mean?', 'what does this say about student experiences?', 'are thoughts emerging that are different to what the researcher expected to find?'.

It was not the intention of the researcher to impose categories of descriptions on the data, because that is what is expected in a phenomeographic study (Marton, 1994; 1995). Therefore the researcher must be careful not to draw from previously constructed theorised words (Karlsson, 1993, cited in Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:300) when relaying the

data but instead should present the data in its truest form by being faithful to the language of the students (Francis, 1996).

The researcher found it appropriate to present key findings as they emerged in broad themes from the data and from these, sub-themes emerged adding to the overall experience. The current study focuses on a much broader slice of the student life-world as it explores various phenomena associated with the concept of quality teaching, it is not a clear-cut world but a rather muddled one (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). It was not the intention of the researcher to add to an already over-crowded construct of the phenomenon 'quality teaching' but to explore how these conceptions are 'translated into classroom practice' (Harris, 2008:75) as students make the transition between education levels. Figure 4.3 depicts the phases of data analysis.

The analysis commenced by taking a preliminary analysis of sample transcripts, in this case two transcripts one from PP and one from HE, (Prosser, 1994; Dahlgren, 1995; Trigwell, 2000), reading and re-reading the actual text comparing it to the original recorded data and attempting to assign codes to pieces of text alongside the margins (Burgess, 1984). These codes mainly emerged from the text language itself although the researcher did skim over the relevant literature as an aid to identifying coding topics (See Appendix D). The researcher looked for patterns, connections, variations within and between the texts to identify broad themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher sent the sample coding of two transcripts to the supervisor to confirm that she was on the correct trail.

Figure 4.3

Phases of data analysis
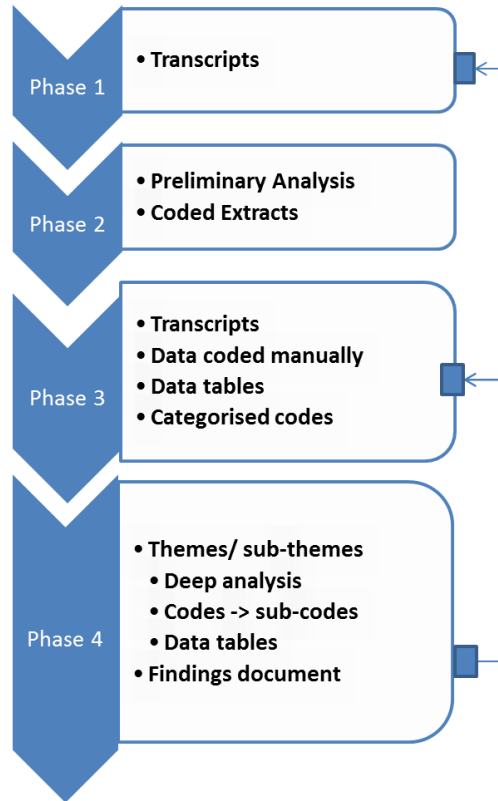
4.7.2 Second-stage analysis of data

Each transcript was read again in detail, in order to further increase familiarity with the data (King, 1994). A memo diary was created for each transcript to capture the researcher's reflective thoughts and observations at this stage of the analysis. It was decided to conduct this analysis phase manually.

After much deliberation on whether to use NVivo as an aid to analysing the data, others (Seidel, 1991; Barry, 1998; Remenyi *et al.*, 1998; Sarantakos, 2005) have warned that software can create a distance between the researcher and the data and remove it from its context. It may unintentionally drive the analysis and put a quantitative twist on what is qualitative data. It was intended that the outcome of the current study was to be as faithful as possible to student experiences and therefore 'hands-on experience counts the most' (Padgett, 1998:87). A holistic empirical data collection had occurred intending to capture all aspects of the phenomenon both conceptually and operationally and therefore fruitful rich descriptions, not tampered with, was the objective of the research findings.

The researcher approached the data analysis with a flexible approach in mind proposing a variety of approaches from summarising, to looking for surprises in data to self-interrogation through reflection (Riley, 1990), thus offering fresh ways of viewing the data (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). This approach enabled the researcher to fully explore participant experiences and capture emergent themes allowing codes to develop from the data (Dey, 1993).

This is an acceptable way of reducing the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that allows emergence of themes which may be of equal value to the proposed categories of description as advocated by Marton (1981) and Marton & Booth (1997). Word documents were created that brought together relevant coded extracts and allowed the researcher to further study and reflect on this data.

Braun & Clarke (2006:82) propose a 'theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set'. Although Cherry (2005, cited in Bowden & Green, 2005:128) relays a concern about taking data away from its owners and coding it in a detached manner. The researcher in the current study is confident that the themes that emerged are faithful to the student experiences.

4.7.3 Data management and summarising codes

Coded transcripts were printed and re-read, similar codes were brought together and re-read in the context of the data to ensure that there was consistency with regard to the text that was referred to by that particular code (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A summary of the codes was written up by the researcher in a memo diary to capture their meaning. This process can 'trigger the vital insights into, or questions about, the data that will lead to the later interpretative stages of analysis' (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003:237). A data table was constructed in word with codes as rows and interviewee participant initials as column. This was not a counting exercise but a means of indicating the importance of each code.

Within each code a deep analysis led to the emergence of sub-codes. These were recorded on the data table as a column across from the codes (See Appendix E). Sub-codes can be classified as detailed descriptions of the emergent code allowing greater insight into what the data means. There is

room for rival interpretation in this approach (Thompson, 1990:28), in which 'the evaluator may disagree with the interpretation while still seeing how the interpretive pattern derives from the data'.

Careful attention was made by the researcher not to impose her own 'notions of cause-and-effect' (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:301) into the description of participant experiences. Sample utterances relating to these sub-codes were drawn from the transcripts (Creswell, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). A memo was kept by the researcher documenting each stage of the research analysis process and allowed her to reflect on her role within this stage of the research. The researcher constantly referred to the premise that 'it is the research participant's experience which should be revealed not the researcher's expectations (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:301). The researcher then re-analysed the data table of codes, sub-codes and utterances and through continued iteration between all three strands attempted to see patterns, relationships, variations, inconsistencies and nuances emerging.

This iteration process aided the researcher in categorising and bringing together sub-themes which collectively formed overall themes and on occasion formed unexpected new themes in the context of the overall research question and objectives. The themes and sub-themes were then revisited in relation to data text extracts, until the researcher was satisfied that the data was represented in a faithful manner to student experiences. This concluding element of the data analysis phase lead to the emergence of

four key themes and seventeen sub-themes which formed the foundation to developing and presenting a set of findings.

The next phase of the process challenged the researcher to present 'a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tells within and across themes' (Braun & Clarke, 2006:93).

4.8 Research legitimacy

Rigor in research calls for quality findings that reflect the aims of the study (Sin, 2010), while quality demands that the research community have to be convinced of the findings and their contribution to the wider research in this field (Larsson, 1993). It is the responsibility of the researcher to clearly outline how other researchers can replicate the study (Miyata & Kai, 2009) and for the current study, this has been clearly documented in the previous sections. The ontological assumptions underlying the phenomenographic approach indicates that an individual's experience of a phenemona can change overtime depending on the context and situation (Akerlind, 2005) and this serves to bring about qualitative changes in the conception of a phenomenon (Johansson *et al.*, 1985).

As previously stated it was not the intention of the researcher that this study's findings be replicated (Akerlind, 2005) but 'to ensure the research has been conducted in a rigorous manner, outlining key theoretical principles and explaining data collection, methods and procedures of

analysis to establish validity and reliability' (Harris, 2008:61). The researcher believes that reality is constantly evolving and experiences identified may not be replicable by the same or different groups at some other time (Marton *et al.*, 2004).

4.8.1 Validity and credibility in this study

The main issue of credibility in a phenomenographic study is how the data is obtained from participants of the study and how it is then portrayed to reflect their experiences. Credibility refers to the researcher maintaining 'professional poise' (Padgett, 1998:20) and the ability to exercise restraint. The strength and success of this study lies in its 'emergent nature, its ability to go with the flow rather than control it' (Padgett, 1998:20). The researcher has documented how she has remained faithful to the data at each stage, from data collection to data interpretation and analysis process.

The researcher made use of memo diaries, reflection reports and checking by academic peers (Padgett, 1998) who gave some advice and feedback as the study progressed. This supports the researcher's 'bracketing' and 'empathetic' approach to this process (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:298). Validity of data can be supported by having 'excerpts' from the interview to support the themes that emerge. The use of video-recording can also support the raw data excerpts. Also an academic peer agreed to view two of the recordings to satisfy that the researcher had not influenced the process unintentionally.

4.8.2 Objectivity and reflection

One of the key criticisms of qualitative research is researcher bias and influence (Johnson-Burke & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The fact that the researcher is engaged in the research process, has preconceptions of phenomena under study and that judgment is required by the researcher in interpretation of data are all key criticisms of using the qualitative approach. However bias can be present in any type of research because of the humanistic nature of the researchers who designs and evaluates the research (Patton, 1990). A researcher's objectivity is of critical importance in order to establish credibility in their findings (Patton, 1990).

In this phenomenographic based study essentially the phenomena of interest was jointly explored between the researcher and participants (Marton, 1994). The influence of the interviewer can be deemed to be a weakness of the process. Therefore it is imperative that the researcher commit to reflexivity (Padgett, 1998:21) 'the ability to examine one's self'. Researcher reflexivity occurred throughout the current study and is documented in detail (Silverman, 2010; Sin, 2010), whereby the researcher identified her own preconceptions at the outset and continuously checked throughout the process that there was not undue influence at any stage of the process. It should not be a one-time thing, but requires on-going vigilance and must be documented clearly (Padgett, 1998), 'we do not seek to eliminate personal beliefs and biases but to understand their impact on the study', (Padgett, 1998:21).

4.8.3 Reliability

Reliability proposes whether the findings can be replicated through the use of suitable methodological approaches to ensure quality and consistency in data analysis (Akerlind, 2005). Reliability in this phenomenographic study is strengthened by the fact that the same number of focus groups/interviews consisting of a similar make-up of student type across the different education sectors were analysed. The current research study proposes to give meaning to data, constantly evolving overtime (Morse, 2006; Sin, 2010) with the idea being to revisit a phenomenon with the intention of making a fresh appraisal (Morse, 2006). It was not the intention of this research to replicate any previous study's findings but to add only to the body of existing knowledge (Malterud, 2001) and that the findings from this sample group are representative of the understandings and experiences of this group when the interviews took place (Marton *et al.*, 2004).

Reliability, in this phenomenographic process occurs when the researcher exercises an 'interpretative awareness', (Sandberg, 1997:203) and 'empathic neutrality' (Patton, 1990:58) and the emphasis is on how the research work is done as opposed to the end result (Morse *et al.*, 2002). This allows the reader to make a judgment about the reliability of the findings (Sin, 2010). Giorgi (1988:173) purports 'that there are only checks and balances and primarily the checks and balances come through the use of demonstrative procedure'.

4.9 Conclusion

Entwistle (1997:129) believes that for educational research 'the test is not its theoretical purity but its value in producing useful insights into teaching and learning'. The focus of the current study is 'not to determine reactions to situations or experiments but to meet the intention of the research' (Giorgi, 1975, cited in Richardson, 1999:64). This research is exploratory and requires reflection on both the researcher's and the participants' part. It is the job of the researcher to weigh up their own philosophical assumptions with the best methods congruent with the research objectives.

A framework as proposed by (Akerlind, 2008) confines the researcher in a constructive way; research intention, research outcomes, research questions, and research process. The researcher in this study adopts a 'non-dualistic' ontology supporting that there is not a real world out there and a subjective world in here. The world *as experienced* is not constructed or imposed but lies somewhere in the middle as an 'internal relation' (Marton & Booth, 1997:13). Qualitative research enables the researcher to approach the field 'without being constrained by pre-determined categories of analysis', that in turn 'contributes to the depth, openness and detail of qualitative enquiry' (Patton, 1990:13).

However after much deliberation on the researcher's part in order to proceed with research into the social world, research methods are necessary which facilitate an insider-view, described by Marton (1981) as a 'second-order' perspective that seeks to describe the life-world of the student as

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experienced by the student. Because the current research work seeks to explore the life-world and experiences of students in relation to a particular concept or phenomena it is appropriate to adopt a phenemenography approach to this study. If the research problem emanates from a particular epistemological framework then it is appropriate to adopt research methods that fit with that framework. Gans (1984) supports operating from a technical rather than an epistemological level. Bryman (1984:83) concurs: 'if it is true that educational innovation does make a difference and that qualitative research better equips the researcher for such inferences then an important methodological point is being established at a technical rather than an epistemological level'.

The contribution of the current study in the researcher's opinion is an extension of knowledge as well as practical contributions to practice and policy. Encouraging teachers to pay attention to students ways of thinking, facilitating students realisation that there are different ways of thinking and giving teaching colleagues the opportunity to use the research findings to improve their own practice are all expectations of the study. Quality enhancement and policy implementation are expected to be outcomes of this research process.

Chapter Five:
Findings

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings relating to the research objective of the current study which is 'To explore student perceptions of the effect of teaching on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at post-primary to higher education level'. In an attempt to set aside the researcher's preconceptions, the researcher has allowed the raw data texts to speak for themselves and the meaning of texts to emerge independently into themes and sub-themes. Sequential presentation of findings would not capture the optimised meaning in the context of the research questions. As such findings and specifically direct quotations are presented where they add most value to what was found.

5.1 Emergent themes

These findings are presented in accordance with themes and sub-themes identified in the literature review; with incumbent flexibility should new themes arise. From the analysis of the texts, four key themes have emerged;

1. Students conceptualisation of the role of interaction in classroom engagement.
2. Teachers traits
3. Instructional activities in the classroom
4. Students transitional experiences of their classroom environment at PP to HE

These four themes form the basis for the presentation of the findings. The main themes and their relationship are depicted in Figure 5.1.

Emergent themes of the classroom in PP and HE
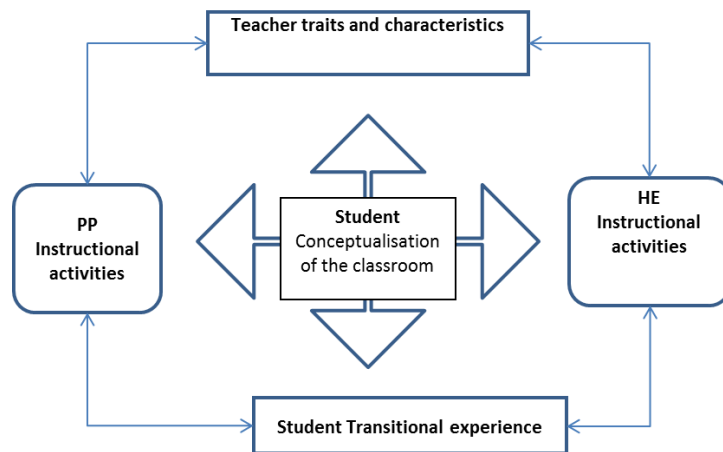
The word teacher is used at PP level and the words teacher and lecturer are used interchangeably at HE level. The researcher noted the use of the word teacher more often than lecturer at HE and therefore adopts the term 'teacher' in the description of the findings.

The contexts in which the findings are presented relate to both HE and PP in Ireland. Each context will be presented separately, as the researcher attempts to identify variations and differences as well as similarities and patterns that have emerged from the body of texts. The researcher will summarise at the end of each theme by highlighting the similarities and differences from HE and PP context. The sub-themes that have emerged from each theme will

also be presented in Table format at the end of each section to allow the reader insight into how the main themes developed. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of respondents.

5.2 Theme One: Students conceptualisation of the role of interaction in classroom engagement

It is important to clarify students beliefs on what is meant by teaching and student engagement before delving into student experiences of the classroom. Therefore, this section documents students thoughts on what is meant by the terms teaching and student engagement.

5.2.1 Conceptions of teaching at HE

Students at both post-primary (PP) and higher education (HE) hold three different conceptions of teaching:

- Teacher-focused whereby the teacher 'just stands there'[1] and 'delivers a lecture' or 'reads from a book',' the teacher does not care', 'they have a job to do and they just do it regardless of who is sitting in front of them'.

- Student-focused whereby the teacher is 'explaining', 'showing', 'helping', 'guiding' in one direction from the teacher to the student.

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[1] Individual quotation marks represent direct quotes of this study

- Teacher-student interaction whereby the teacher and student understand each other. The teacher is conveying knowledge in a manner that allows the student to understand and the teacher adapts if the student is not 'getting it'.

There was a variation in the respondents thoughts from IoTs to university. While the focus group participants and university interviewee's hold a combination of the three views of teaching above, the focus group participants of the IoTs predominantly speak about student-focused and teacher-student interactions as what they perceive 'good teaching' to be, while in contrast the university interviewees predominantly talk about transmissive style teaching. When commenting on 'student-focused teaching', the focus group respondents believe this approach encompasses certain teacher traits and characteristics:

Mick (FGR)[2]:	[A] leader, show students direction, way of doing things
Noel (FGR):	Helping people if you are stuck
Erica (IR)[3]:	Basically when somebody explains to you how to do something
Susan (IR):	For me as a mature student, wanting somebody who can explain things clearly, lead you on the right path, can explain a question when asked, that has a definite plan of action.

In contrast, university interviewees view teaching predominantly as transmissive, outlining that lecturers are researchers and 'when it comes to actual teaching it's not the best' and 'sometimes the lecturer is just doing the

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[2] FGR: focus group respondent
[3] IR: Interviewee respondent

job for the sake of it'. Lecturers wouldn't know how to change their teaching as respondents perceive 'they [the lecturer] would teach the same way regardless of how many students were in front of them':

Jeff (IR):	look this is what I [the lecturer] have to teach, I don't want to teach it
Brian (IR):	100% lecturing
Jeff (IR):	100% lecturing, there's the room if there was no one in the room they would still be doing it [the teaching] the same way as if there was a 100 people in the room.

Focus group participants also spoke about teacher-student interaction involving a shared role between teacher and student, with the teacher 'conveying the knowledge that the teacher has to the student, so that they can understand the subject'. Respondents ponder on their experience at PP level 'where you [the student] are told where it [figures] go' but now at HE the teacher goes into 'a deeper thought process' explaining 'why' and 'what'. In order for students to get the most out of teaching, respondents highlight the ability of the teacher to be able to 'turn the class around', interacting with the students by adapting their teaching style and 'taking the time' to suit all students needs:

Neil (FGR):	In secondary school [students are] told where it [figures] go, here [HE] you are told why it [figures] goes there and what its purpose is
Noelle (FGR):	Explaining how to do it, if they don't understand taking the time to explain it in a different way to make sure they get it
Declan (FGR):	Teacher can't have one set ways of doing things the whole time, not everyone is the same so you are going to have to adapt, that's what teachers have to do the whole time, teachers have to be able to show different ways, not everyone can learn the exact same way.

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5.2.2 Conceptions of teaching at PP

Again all three conceptions are held by students at PP. It is interesting to note that a selection of students from all focus groups at PP believe teaching to be teacher–centered, the respondent views teaching as a duty, on the part of the teacher: 'somebody who knows it already and have to teach you… to get the point [knowledge] across':

Stan (FGR):	Somebody who knows it already and have to teach you.
Cormac (FGR):	Getting the point across
Ivan (FGR):	Person up at the top of the class instructing people to do work from a book or giving people information that you have to learn off.

The opposite view is held by some participants who have experienced the teacher 'coming down offering one on one help';

Alice (FGR):	Stands up at the top of the class, explains it first and if anyone is finding it difficult, she will come down and give one on one.

Most of the participants at PP, similar to HE perceive teaching to be student-focused, with respondents using words such as 'show', 'explain', 'guide', 'aid', so that the teacher can get the best from their students and they can achieve their best:

Simon (FGR):	One person explaining concepts or ideas to the students.
Alice (FGR):	Showing you how to do it and giving you examples
Rory (FGR):	Helping students understand a certain method of doing things
Evelyn (FGR):	Yea, similar helping you achieve your best
Eric (FGR):	Guiding you through questions and helping you understand questions

Seamus (FGR):	They are an aid, like our teacher does extra stuff for us. If we were out she would take notes for us and proper helping us
Conor (FGR):	Trying to get the best out of us, instructing us what to do, helping us along the way.

None of the respondents at PP level gave descriptions of teacher-student interaction as a perceived meaning of teaching to them.

5.2.3 The concept of student engagement at HE

The students at both HE and PP understand that the student has an important part to play in their own education and that 'it is important for the students to engage because if you are actually doing something, you are more likely to take an interest rather than if you are just sitting there'. Therefore, the concept of student engagement for respondents of this study means: taking an 'active interest, asking questions, asking for help'. At HE respondents believe that the lecturer initiates this engagement and if students experience a lecturer that is engaging then the students are more likely to take an active interest in 'what's going on':

Mick (FGR):	Generally the teacher is the best person to initiate the students engagement, they try and interact and not just talk in the class.

Focus group respondents at HE describe how the lecturer engages the students: the students like when they [the lecturer] use a hands-on approach in accounting, gives the student questions, allowing the students to work on

the questions in class, facilitating the students by walking around and coming down to help the students on an individual level if feasible based on class size. Smaller class sizes of between '50 to 60' students are prevelant in IoTs while large class sizes in region of '400 to 500' are the norm in universities:

Paddy (FGR):	Hands on approach is a better way of teaching that makes the student have to interact with the teacher

In particular, the respondents think it is a good idea to do questions in class as they feel they are taking a more active role and interest as opposed to looking at the lecturer doing questions:

Noel (FGR):	It's important because when the student takes part they learn more. It's for their [students] own benefit. It's important for the teacher for them [the students] to take part as they are doing their job properly
Erica (IR):	I think what's really effective in Accounting is when they give us problems to do, give us a minute to do them yourself before they go through it to see if you understand what's going on or not and I find that really helpful rather than if they are just reading off slides especially for accounting it can be really difficult to engage with it. When they give you a problem because it such a physical subject anyway I like when they do that
Brian (IR):	The students asking questions and maybe a degree of the teacher asking questions of the students, you need both ways. I think it comes down to the individual as well some people are suited to listening sitting and taking in the information and other people aren't so I think you need a bit of both.

While university interviewees have a clear view of the concept of student engagement the reality is that 'there could be 500 people' in their class as opposed to the smaller class size in IoTs. Three of the interviewees propose that it can be difficult to engage in such a large class size: 'it's hard to ask

lecturers questions if they don't invite engagement', when the lecturer just delivers to the class with no or minimal interaction and then it falls on the student to figure it out for themselves:

> **Jeff (IR):** Because there are such big classes they are just reading off slides, they are pretty much reading them to you, there is not too much explanation in it. There is a lot of area that needs to be explained but I don't find that it is explained, it's put on the student to work it out.

Respondents did empathise with the lecturer who have such large class sizes to manage but students 'want to learn about accounting', but 'it's hard to do it', because 'with the atmosphere that is there [in class], everyone is drained, everyone is bored' and 'there are not many fun elements in it [accounting]'. As a result the students become disengaged: 'I would probably learn more from myself'. The lecturers 'don't ask questions, they [the lecturers] just do it', 'people end up asking the person beside them, they [the student] might be wrong as well so then you don't know where to go'.

The students suggest that 'instead of [the lecturer] just standing on their podium if they [the lecturer] came around class and asked more questions and do more questions and answers, work with you [the student] instead of reading off a sheet', it would make the subject 'more enjoyable' and 'you [the student] would attend class':

> **Robert (FGR):** Students getting involved in the class rather than the teacher just standing at the top of the class telling you what to do and how to do it and the student is coming up with different ways that they can engage in class to figure out for themselves, how to figure out the problem.

In the smaller class sizes of IoTs respondents experience a hands-on approach whereby the lecturer is in close proximity to the student and 'I [the student] would be more inclined to ask a question if they [the lecturer] were close by' as the lecturer walks around the room and takes the time to come down and help students.

5.2.4 The concept of student engagement at PP

At PP level, it's about the student getting involved in the class, interacting with the teacher, students giving feedback and the teacher being able to adapt teaching strategies if students aren't engaged.

Aran (FGR):	Be interested and listen to the teacher
Michelle (FGR):	Being interested in the subject yourself that you are studying, knowing it putting your own effort into homework rather than just doing nothing
Georgina (FGR):	Giving feedback on questions if you found it easy or difficult taking an active part in class definitely.

It was interesting that one student described student engagement as: 'reacting to the teacher'. Similar to HE, respondents at PP feel intimidated in a large class size and the teacher doesn't have the time to devote to students on an individual basis. Interaction occurs when the 'teachers are asking students questions' and when the students 'ask questions in class you [the students] do understand it better and more interaction with the teacher is better'. Students at PP level want to be 'taking part in the class, putting forward ideas' which motivates the teacher also:

> **Georgina (FGR):** I suppose if we show interest as well it encourages the teacher and gives her enjoyment then, she realises oh they like what I'm saying I must be doing it right.

Students like 'working together in a group to help each other if they are finding it difficult'. Engagement will work when the teacher is 'able to assess how his class are, understanding, being able to adapt his methods of teaching to help a class work' so that the students can 'understand together and individually'.

5.2.5 Relationship building at HE and PP

Respondents see the role of interaction as a two-way process and therefore they perceive that it is necessary to build a relationship with both teachers and other students. Making the interaction in class a positive experience requires both the teacher and the student working together. It can be difficult for the students as **'**some teachers just stand there and talk and go out the door':

> **Robert (FGR):** If the teacher just stands at the top of the class, just preaches to the students then they are not going to learn anything, they are not going to take it in, whereas if the teacher gets the students to interact in the class they are going to learn more and going to have more fun with it as well so they will probably like the subject more than they would if the teacher was just standing at the top of the class explaining it.

To be able to interact with students and create a successful learning environment requires certain professional expertise. All students want to feel part of the class and a good teacher will make sure all students feel included. The teacher will listen to what students want: 'good lecturers take on board what students say we need more of .., then they come in the next day and have that ready, the students know what they need to do, more so than what the teacher thinks as ticking boxes', they will give the student time and attention: 'if your point is being valued you feel you want to be part of the class and then you contribute more and you learn a lot more' and dialogue will ensue on a daily basis in class between the teacher and student and student and student:

Neill (FGR): If you say, volunteer points and ask questions in class then that is going to open up a dialogue between you and the lecturer and it will flow. If you keep on volunteering and the lecturer answers it will help speed up the flow of the lecture and sometimes I find where there is that sense of dialogue in class the time just flies by.

The teacher needs the students to want to take an active part in class otherwise the teacher-student relationship breaks down:

Declan (FGR): If the teacher doesn't see the students wanting to learn they are going to feel that they don't want to even teach and they end up waffling. If [the] teacher doesn't want to be there, I don't feel I want to be there and wouldn't bother going to classes.

It is really important for students to be 'interested' as otherwise the teacher becomes disheartened and can end up 'switching off'. In a similar vein

respondents at PP believe that 'they [the students] need to be 'responsible for your own learning and you need to interact in class if you want to get the grasp or hang of what you are doing' and 'you [the student] have to put in your own effort as well it's not just the teachers job it's your job to do it'. Respondents can see the teacher who puts in a lot of effort into their subject and their teaching, and students respect this. Teachers enthusiasm and passion for their subject can then be passed on to the students and this encourages the students to want to achieve in this subject. Therefore, students are more likely to attend class and enjoy the subject. One participant of the study believes the teacher needs to cultivate an interactive environment especially in accounting:

Paddy (FGR):   Accounting subjects require more effort, a lot of other subjects that are book related don't need as much interaction with the class.

It's about the lecturer's ability to create knowledge by honing in on and developing on students viewpoints and using the students questions as a means of expanding on knowledge, particularly in accounting:

Martin (FGR):   With accounting, if you give an answer the lecturer can use that, as someone else might want to know the same thing as you, the lecturer can show the right way and the wrong way to do, you feel like you are being used in class, I don't mind because if I am wrong it shows the whole class and you won't make the same mistake again

Ivor (FGR):   One person might say something, whereas another person wouldn't and it might help a couple of students in the class figure out where they got it wrong or where the figure came from.

Respondents propose a good teacher will build an integration into their classrooms whereby, 'they [the teacher] genuinely enjoy what they do and

they want to be there, they are just not there because they are being paid to do it' and 'the class are going to have more fun':

Noelle (FGR):	Teachers that engage students, [you] get the feeling that they want you to do well, understand it.

At HE, respondents spoke predominantly about interacting with the teacher and although this was a similar finding at PP two of the focus groups explain their frustration with their teachers. Because of the perceived weakness of their teacher by the respondents, 'it has brought us [the students] quite close':

Stan (FGR):	We teach ourselves to some extent
Rory (FGR):	That is the general feeling of the class and we all talk about it.

Because, their teacher focused more on getting the question done as opposed to explaining 'why', it was left up to the students to 'work together' with each other, to 'figure it out'. This they explain, 'wasn't necessarily a bad thing', but they would like to have been able 'to get the most from class':

Martin (FGR):	From my experience, I might ask him a question and he would say that is just how it is
Rory (FGR):	The way he answers questions would dissuade you from asking more questions
Stan (FGR):	It makes you wonder why you bother asking questions in the first place
Cormac (FGR):	No, not really the teacher is the same he has the same routine every day no matter what we do he doesn't seem to change.

5.2.6 Teacher role is pivotal

Accounting is quite a complex subject and 'can be really difficult to engage with it' and therefore students see the lecturer as playing an essential role to the student understanding of this subject:

| Michael (FGR): | I think in the accounting subjects the teacher is quite central to your education as they are your font of knowledge essentially they know just about all there is to know about that subject |
| Ivor (FGR): | Especially in accounting because if you [the student] don't know where something goes you can ask them, in other subjects, you might be able to figure it out yourself, in accounting if there is something missing it could take you hours to find it. |

In the larger class sizes of university, respondents warn that if you don't understand the accounting material the lecturer would not know that the student was lost and would just move on. One university interviewee described it as: 'I'm [the lecturer] in a rush… I'm in a rush, I have to get there' [to end of topic], the student commented that 'when you [the lecturer] are trying to build a foundation it makes no sense to move on'.

Both HE and PP respondents propose that the teacher is pivotal to their interest in and further pursuance of this subject. It is particularly evident from HE respondents who studied accounting at PP, who speak about the influence that their teacher had on their future choice at HE:

| Erica (IR): | I had a really good accounting teacher and I absolutely loved it that was my reason for going into accounting at Leaving Certificate[4]. She was such a good teacher and I worked well with her that probably helped me end up where I am now. |

In contrast PP respondents would be turned off the subject if they had a 'bad teacher' and wouldn't choose it at HE:

| Cormac (FGR): | If I don't like the way a teacher teaches the class it turns me off the subject and that would decide the choice of whether I would go on to do it next year or not |
| Rory (FGR): | The teaching in secondary school plays a huge role in what you want to do after. |

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[4] Final year state examination in Ireland

PP respondents who choose accounting at senior cycle, not having previously known anything about it found that they 'love the subject and that's because my teacher' and 'it really does influence your decision because now I want to go on and do it' [at HE]:

<blockquote>
Georgina (FGR):   If the teacher was standing there and was a boring teacher and made you not enjoy it [the subject] or the class you definitely wouldn't consider it. You would be saying is this what it's going to be like for the rest of my life but when the teacher shows you that's it is an enjoyable subject you say yes I would like to continue with this.
</blockquote>

HE teaching experiences also have a profound effect on student choices going forward, if the lecturer is 'interesting you in the subject then you are thinking there is a whole other possibility in it, something you hadn't thought of before', while another interviewee confirms that his 'accounting lecturer wouldn't inspire me [him] to pursue accounting as a career':

<blockquote>
Jeff (IR):   No my accounting lecturer wouldn't inspire me to go on and do accounting, from what I know a few guys just finished the commerce degree said the overall accounting experience in ---- is not the best, the teachers all the way up are not the best at explaining.
</blockquote>

5.2.7 Summary of theme one

Table 5.1 specifies the sub-themes discussed above that have emerged from theme one: the conceptualisation of the role of interaction in classroom engagement. These sub-themes have emerged from the coding of the transcripts as discussed in the previous chapter.

Table 5.1

Summary of Theme One

Theme	Sub-themes
Students conceptualisation of the role of interaction in classroom engagement	▪ Concept of teaching ▪ Concept of student engagement ▪ Building relationships ▪ Professional expertise ▪ Teacher-student interaction ▪ Teacher role pivotal

The first theme has described respondents conceptualisation of the role of interaction in classroom engagement. Respondents spoke about their understanding of the term 'teaching' and 'student engagement' and how both work in tandem to create a successful and enjoyable classroom experience. Teaching conceptualisation falls into one of three categories: teacher-focused, student- focused and teacher–student interaction. The three conceptions are experienced by respondents at both PP and HE levels. Respondents also believe that student engagement is an essential part of the teaching process.

The teacher usually initiates this engagement but the student must meet him/her half way otherwise it becomes demotivating for the teacher and then the students switch off also.

This can be more difficult to achieve in the larger class sizes at university as opposed to the smaller class sizes experienced at IoTs and PP schools.

Respondents at HE IoTs describe a hands-on approach by their teachers but respondents from universities maintain the lecturer just stands there and delivers with little or no interaction. Therefore it is difficult to build any sort of relationship with them [the lecturers] as it is mostly 'left up to yourself' and can end up turning the students off a possible future career in accounting.

PP respondents had similar experiences, interacting positively with their teachers but also negative experiences which left the respondents frustrated with their teachers. Respondents would 'not dream' of taking accounting at HE as a result. Respondents believe that teacher professional expertise creates a successful classroom environment that allows the teacher and students to work closely and interact with each other. Teacher influence on students choices is a clear finding from this data collection. The second theme emerging from the findings are teaching traits in the classroom and students experience of these.

5.3 Theme Two: Teacher traits

The key traits of a good teacher identified by the research participants at both PP and HE are mutual respect, knowledge, communication skills, approachability, relaxed manner, and inclusive teacher-student interaction. The least desirable traits identified by respondents were perceived lack of care and trust in their teachers knowledge, unapproachability and lack of patience.

5.3.1 Respect

The students recognise the importance of the lecturer at HE respecting the student and treating them as adults but realise that respect must be shown by students also to their lecturers. Respondents at HE respect their lecturers and expressed their desire to learn when the lecturer creates a good learning space:

Declan (FGR):	I think if you see the lecturer wanting you to do well you will respect them [the lecturer] for it and you will want to do well for them, it comes back to the hands-on approach
Alistair (FGR):	They [the lecturers] are quite clear on the fact that for everyone to get the best understanding they can from the lecture, then everyone needs to have respect and be quiet.

The lecturers presence can command respect and the respondents like when they are not just 'somebody in a room that they [the lecturers] are teaching and 'if they have taken the time to learn your name', 'it means a lot', 'it definitely does make a difference'.

If they [the lecturer] know your name it makes you feel like they care' and the students hint that they want the lecturer to 'acknowledge you [the student] when you [the student] walk down the corridor':

Paddy (FGR):	This year first of all she would have the respect of all the class, her presence is felt when she comes into the room, she is hands on it's very easy to say if you have a problem.

It is important to the respondents that the teacher respects them and treats them like an adult and the respondents express the viewpoint that 'you [the student] are more likely to respect the lecturer if he/she respects you':

Robert (FGR):	It's very important to know the teacher respects you, it's not secondary school, you are not forced to be here you are treated like an adult, they actually respect and acknowledge that you are an adult and you want to be there.

At PP respondents also want to be treated as adults: 'when you get to senior cycle', 'I prefer when the teacher relates to you, is talking to you as a person'. Similar to HE, the students at PP would not learn in an environment where the teacher shows the student disrespect:

Alice (FGR):	I suppose you don't really learn in an environment where the teacher shows you disrespect. If the teacher was disrespecting you, you wouldn't have any respect for them so you would find it hard to learn what they are teaching you.

Students at PP, infer that respect creates a successful classroom and learning environment. The teacher leads this respect, commanding a presence and then gets the best from the students in return. The students respond very well to this and an atmosphere of mutual respect ensues:

Conor (FGR):	She would show a lot of respect like she does generally try to get the best out of us, if we didn't do good in a test she would hold us back and ask us what went wrong, she really does respect us.

One of the focus groups perceives that their teacher doesn't care and therefore, the students do not have respect for their teacher. The teacher gives more attention to the people that understand: 'he cares about the people that are going to do well rather than the ones that are doing bad':

| Liam (FGR): | He always says he doesn't care what result we get it's our leaving certificate |
| George (FGR): | Doesn't care how everyone gets on. |

5.3.2 Teacher knowledge

The HE respondents in this study want their teacher to have a good in-depth knowledge of their subject area, be 'fairly well prepared' and 'able to convey what they are saying' so as to 'get the best out of the students'. The lecturer should have the ability to transform knowledge so that the students can understand:

Brian (IR):	Command of the class, being able to convey what they are saying, keep people interested in it [the subject] so that people, absorb what they are saying, that would probably be the best type of teacher I could ever find
Erica (IR):	Obviously intelligence some people [the lecturers] don't seem to really get almost what they are talking about, if someone understands what they are talking about you have to respect them for that and you are interested and you want to hear what they are saying
Erica (IR):	Someone who is able to engage with people that's really important to deliver the information properly who can kind of make sense of it in their own head find different ways to look at a thing someone might not understand it one way but if they come up with a different way to explain it that's really important.

Similarly, at PP students like 'when the teacher is fully knowledgeable on the topic they are teaching', they propose that maybe it is something to do with how the teacher prepares the night before because 'you can tell who properly knows what they are talking about:

| Cormac (FGR): | A person [teacher] that can do a question easily without any preparation because they have so much experience on the topic. |

A good teacher is one that can transform knowledge into easily understandable interesting material which encourages the student to want to learn it more:

> **Georgina (FGR):** I think enthusiastic, a lot of my teachers really enjoy what they are teaching and it comes across then when I am learning it, because I feel like she showed it to me in a way that is interesting so I want to go home now and learn this and really remember it
>
> **Conor (FGR):** I prefer when a teacher really knows what they are doing, trying to get the best out of the students not just reading out of a book, giving us hand-outs down at our level trying to help us, to get the best out of us.

5.3.3 Teacher communication skills

Respondents at HE like their teachers to be 'well-spoken' and 'get the message across' and 'it is easier to communicate with them [the teacher] if you like them'. The teacher should be open, easy to talk to, engaging and have the ability to listen:

> **Brian (IR):** Charismatic, that would be a very good teacher, engaging well-spoken
>
> **Erica (IR):** I suppose when they speak clearly and seem to know what they are talking about and when they engage with you it's all about engagement.

Similarly respondents at PP like their teachers to be well-spoken, good at explaining, helpful and if the students like their teacher it's easier to learn from them;

> **Jillian (FGR):** If they explain it and interact, asking questions about it, makes it easier as well
>
> **Evelyn (FGR):** Well-spoken, get the message across very helpful willing to help you as well
>
> **Tom (FGR):** Good communication knows what they are talking about

Liam (FGR):	Easier to communicate with them and learn from them if you like them rather than not like them.

5.3.4 Teacher approachable and relaxed

Respondents propose that the teacher should be, understanding and flexible to students needs at HE, create a relaxing environment so that 'you [the student] feel comfortable in class' and the teacher takes 'an active interest in my [the student's] future'. They [the teachers] should be organised, approachable and friendly. Respondents at HE, do find their teachers 'friendly while still getting the respect of their students': **Neill** explains 'they [the teachers] joke with you they don't just look at you, they have a laugh with you'. While **Jeff** adds: 'he [the economics lecturer] is charismatic, the lecturer is 50 or 60 but it is as if you are talking to a teenager its good like that':

Declan (FGR):	Relaxing, they are not stressed you don't feel you are aggravating them if you ask questions
Ivor (FGR):	Most of the lecturers would help you, they are friendly as well.

Respondents at PP, also like when their teacher creates a relaxed classroom environment, has a little humour, which in turn encourages the student to work, not lose interest in the class and work at their own pace. The teacher should be 'helpful and patient: '[when] I get stuck it's nice to know that the teacher is kind of patient and helps you go through it, whereas if they were rushing you, you kind of feel a bit stupid nearly'. **Michael** maintains

'approachable would probably be one of the main things [traits], I think also

if a teacher is intimidating the fact is you wouldn't ask them a question':

Michelle (FGR):	They have a bit of humour, they are not completely serious, if they are completely serious, the class is going to lose interest, if they have a bit of humour it keeps you having more interest in the class and your teacher
George (FGR):	Relaxed attitude, rather than being serious all the time you feel comfortable in the class and you feel comfortable asking questions
Michelle (FGR):	A little bit (humour) she can have a laugh in class then again not too much, because too much you would get distracted
Georgina (FGR):	You don't mind going into the class every day, you look forward to accounting because you know it's not exactly an easy class but you know it's not the type of class you are under pressure the whole-time, you work at your own pace.

5.3.5 Inclusive teacher–student interaction

Teachers need to be 'understanding and flexible to what students need', and

if the student 'see them [the teacher] putting in the effort you [the student]

are more likely to repay them'. The teacher as we have seen before in the

findings initiates this inclusivity. HE respondents explain:

Mick (FGR):	Usually, yes if they [the teachers] look like they are disconnected you [the student] are going to disconnect as well
Susan (IR):	Yes, definitely if you are in a class with a lecturer who pays you no interest or doesn't have a plan of action or doesn't know what they are doing you are not going to put the work in as much, I find [the teacher is], not inspiring you to go home and study their subject.

In contrast, other interviewees from HE university have not experienced

inclusivity in accounting class:

Brian (IR):	No I wouldn't have any engagement whatsoever.

Respondents at HE have observed a 'mixed bag' of teaching traits and feel some lecturers, 'don't care' and are 'just there because they are getting paid for it'. The respondents perceive the lecturer's lack of care, in the way they teach the class: 'they just rush ahead', 'are boring' and 'unapproachable'. This is particularly the case in the large class sizes in universities. In other cases, respondents feel intimidated by the lecturer and would not 'dream of approaching them' [the lecturer]. The smaller class size of HE allows the respondents to feel comfortable in class and interact with their accounting lecturer in a positive way for both students and teachers.

Respondents at PP like to feel part of the class, where the teacher 'includes everyone, if you don't understand it they [the teacher] goes out of their way to make sure you understand as well as everyone else does' and 'someone who is able to engage with people':

| **Martin (FGR):** | Someone that makes the class more inclusive to everyone and see more interaction between everyone, have a laugh and then they [the students] will put their heads down and get on with the class that's really important. |

At PP, two focus groups have experienced exclusion of students in accounting class by the teacher: 'he [the teacher] gives someone that understands, more attention', 'not approachable, not patient' and when 'he [the teacher] treats you like a child it is so frustrating'. The teacher has displayed a lack of expertise: 'incompetent and inexperienced' and the respondents would 'definitely be better at the subject if we [the students] had a good teacher'.

5.3.6 Teacher listening

Respondents like to be listened to and have their contributions valued:

Noelle stresses that 'its good lecturers take on board what students say we need more of':

Robert (FGR):	Most of them do. It feels better when they do listen to you because you will be more inclined to ask a question rather than asking a question to a lecturer who doesn't want to listen and you feel stupid.

However, the university interviewees propose that the lecturer would listen but 'the fact nobody has done it yet [ask a question] I would say it would be a bit of a shock if someone did actually ask a question to him [the lecturer].

In contrast, PP respondents have experienced the 'deaf ear' and offer advice:

George (FGR):	If you ask a question maybe he hasn't heard it, he would give you a general answer not what you are looking for
Martin (FGR):	He needs to [listen] otherwise he will lose the rest of the class.

Table 5.2 specifies the sub-themes discussed above that have emerged from theme two.

Table 5.2

Summary of Theme 2

Theme	Sub-themes
Teacher traits	▪ Desirable traits (affective preceding cognitive) ▪ Listening is key to interaction ▪ Least desirable traits (lack of care, support, no plan of action and incompetent in subject matter).

5.3.7 Summary of theme two

Theme two identified the desirable traits of teachers and the not so desirable ones that students experience at PP and HE levels. Respect between the teacher and student is identified as a key element for successful learning to take place in the classroom. Students become demotivated in an environment whereby the teacher does not care and shows little respect. Students expect that teachers have the ability to transform knowledge so that students can understand and teachers get the best from their students. Good communication skills, are identified as a key trait to getting the message across to the students. Students like their teacher to be approachable and create a relaxed classroom environment so that the student feels comfortable in class and can work at their own pace. A good teacher includes everyone in the class regardless of their ability and goes out of their way to make sure students understand. Listening is a key trait of successful interaction which students do not experience to a great degree.

The least desirable traits identified are ones of lack of care, lack of expertise, impatient and unapproachable. The current study reveals student experiences of accounting teachers both at HE and PP who display effective teacher traits and less effective teacher traits. The third theme emerging are the instructional activities adopted by teachers in the classroom process.

5.4 Theme three: Instructional activities in the classroom

Instructional activities refers to the types of classroom environment the teacher creates and according to the current study respondents describe it as an active classroom environment or passive environment.

5.4.1 Teaching environment at HE

Teachers create two types of classroom environments an active and/or passive as experienced by respondents from both HE and PP. The active classroom environment was more evident in the smaller class sizes at HE IoTs. Focus group and interviewee respondents spoke about the teacher breaking down knowledge, breaking down material 'going through individual parts rather than looking at the whole thing', 'find[ing] out what you don't understand' and will 'keep on explaining for as long as they [the teacher] have to'. The teacher is breaking down misconceptions about the perceived difficulty of accounting. The teacher will make sure 'everyone is coming along with her, that everyone understands where she is getting things from':

Declan (FGR):	We learn what we are doing more in business terms, than accounting terms [then] you find when you are doing the numbers, you know where it is coming from and why it is going there
Paddy (FGR):	[The] lecturer won't just say that's wrong, I think they will explain, show you the path where you went wrong or they will break it down; you were going right until here then what you needed to do here was this, Instead of just saying like oh no that's wrong, they will try and find some positive out of what you have answered
Susan (IR):	Yes 100%, we have all the theory behind the work

| **Paddy (FGR):** | [The teacher will] break it down into the smallest margin of where you went wrong. |

In contrast, the passive environment was particularly evident in the larger class sizes in HE universities whereby the lecturer 'stands behind their podium' and 'reads off slides' and 'rushes' to get a course done with little consideration to whom they are teaching and why. The lecturer would not change their teaching approach, and 'I don't think they [the lecturer] would know how to'. The teacher would 'move on, they try to explain it their way and if you are still stuck on it they will say you have a tutorial coming up on that topic hopefully he will explain it better'. 'She [the lecturer] wouldn't really [go over assignments] she would tell you what exercise that needed to be done for the tutorial but she doesn't go over them'. It is very much the students own responsibility to come to terms with the material being covered and respondents feel that there is not enough time to get through the course in depth:

| **Jeff (IR):** | Some of the stuff I think there is too much content in the course they don't actually have time, they kind of just tell you there is a practice section in the back of the book try that yourself |
| **Erica (IR):** | The tutor goes through it in the tutorial she goes through it fully. You would try it before the tutorial, I tried that last one and it wasn't anything like we done in class it was quite different quite difficult but then in tutorial she did it properly with us and I understood. |

Respondents of the active classroom, also propose that teachers use different teaching strategies (group work, classroom questions and discussion) and uses real-life examples, although they [the respondents] would 'like to see

more of it [real-life examples]'. This motivates the students to do well, enhanced further if the teacher gives feedback regularly. The teacher encourages the students to learn to think, structure their time, set goals and collaborate with each other:

Noelle (FGR):	Yes, they do get you to rethink
Mick (FGR):	They might know you have the wrong answer but they might adapt your answer to get it on the right path
Paddy (FGR):	You could be on the right path and they could just move you along
Declan (FGR):	She has a plan when she comes in, she knows what we are doing today next week and when we have to have this done by and [you] yourself then, you are working toward a schedule.

In contrast, respondents from the passive environment at HE university level explain that the teacher would give a quick summary [of work done in previous class] for about 20 seconds and then 'just reads out slides and bore everyone to tears', while 'she [the lecturer] just stands there watching us' and makes no attempt to help students that may be in difficulty. Students are not given an opportunity to provide feedback so the lecturer 'doesn't know whether we actually understood or not'. Students can then become disillusioned:

Morgan (FGR):	Sorry you open your mouth, the lecturer is there to lecture not answer peoples questions
Allistair (FGR):	It's the trepidation that is passed on from secondary school, where you are worried about volunteering something that is stupid.

One interviewee is tested every two-week period but proclaims that the lecturer still would not know you had not understood as 'your obviously gone way off it [the topic] by the time you do your test'. Real-life examples

are not used enough at HE and when they are used they 'are not very good ones'. Student collaboration isn't a feature: 'no never', of the large class size of university. 'She doesn't like people talking she gets really angry', but 'if you are working on questions and if you are stuck you can ask the person beside you'. Group work, is something the students would like to see in accounting although, 'it may be difficult to implement'. There is no reassurance by the lecturer to the students as: 'they [the lecturer] move straight on regardless of whether the students have understood the material':

Jeff (IR):   She [the lecturer] moves 100% straight on.

Respondents of the passive environment, also 'find in accounting, there is not too much classroom discussion and/or interaction compared to other subjects like economics or something':

Paddy (FGR):   Nothing worse, than sitting in a lecture and there is no interaction in a class, it's very hard to stay focused, constant interaction [means] you are going to be involved in the class [and] it's much easier to learn when it's that way.

An active environment, is created by good teacher classroom management skills, which allows for independence as learners, because the students have the re-assurance that if they need the teacher he/she is there and the students are confident in their teacher's ability to explain the topic. The teacher will change their teaching strategies if the need arises but in the end of the day respondents summate that 'it comes down to your [the students] own work':

Paddy (FGR):	Definitely, in accounting because if you have a problem, first of all, it's explained well and if you do have a problem she has no problem going back over it
Susan (IR):	The lecturer has to be adaptable to every class, every class is different
Brian (IR):	Obviously, a good teacher helps you absorb the information more and if you ask them questions they will help you on it, but in the end, no matter how good a lecturer or teacher you have it all comes down to your own work at the end of the day.

Respondents inform that a good lecturer should be able to command a presence: 'you know the lecturer who has control of the class, everyone is attentive, interested in their work'. '[The teacher] can manage a class really well no matter what the size and therefore the students are more likely to engage'. Students at HE, believe that it is the job of the lecturer to create a successful classroom environment. University interviewees describe 'the way they [the lecturer] teach the class, they are flying through the presentations, they are not teaching it, they are just going through it, they are not asking questions, they are giving you the answers and expecting you to know it'. Respondents, offer advice to their lecturers on how they could manage the class:

| Jeff (IR): | Instead of just standing on their podium, if they came around class and asked more questions and do more questions and answers, work with you instead of reading off a sheet |
| Brian (IR): | If he changes the way he is, stands up walks around, engage more with the class, ask questions of people to see if they understand it that would be one way. |

University interviewees find that 'lecturers are not too strict on the talking, it's a two way thing, it's good that you are able to consult with your fellow

classmates but then on the other hand because they are not that strict it's quite noisy in lectures':

Jeff (IR): Last semester we had a double class and her methodology was rush through everything and I'll leave you off early, but I would just have preferred to have sat there for the two hours and understand the material.

Respondents, of the passive environment 'get the feeling that they [the lecturers] don't really care, because they [the lecturer] are just there to do the job' and 'they [the lecturer] don't care whether you take it[the knowledge] in or not:

Declan (FGR): You feel some of them are there, cos they are getting paid they don't care at all.

The power to teach, at HE requires leadership qualities, encouragement, motivation and feedback for their students. Respondents at HE, reveal that to be a good teacher requires the ability to be a good leader, to lead by example: the teacher who can 'bring the class along', adapting along the way, 'to suit all students needs' and who 'obviously enjoys their subject'. In contrast, another interviewee implies: 'no one says anything in the class, so I wouldn't describe him [the teacher] as a good leader'. To be motivated, is an important element of successful teaching and this in turn motivates the students:

Paddy (FGR): The lecturers, that know your name they are motivated in their own job. They want at the end of the year to see their students with good results in their exams, it obviously goes half and half

| **Robert (FGR):** | If [you] get [a]question right, fully right they acknowledge that you have done well, makes you like the class more and the lecturer and do more study for the subject |
| **Susan (IR):** | Encouraging, yes definitely. |

The students experience feedback when the teacher is interacting with them and looking at how the student is doing the question. Respondents from smaller class size at HE comment:

| **Michael (FGR):** | Yes I think so, because even if you do something wrong he will say you are after getting that part right, your approach is very good but you are just missing out on this figure and the other lecturer, if you are after doing something really good, she will pick it up and show it to the rest of the class as an example and that's good feedback |
| **Robert (FGR):** | If you are trying in class and attempting the work and even if you are getting it wrong, they might say it's not the right answer but you are getting there, it's a good attempt. |

Interviewees, from universities do not experience 'extreme positive feedback' acknowledgment or praise if their work is good:

Brian (IR):	No, never had a situation like that
Jeff (IR):	Not really, the one last semester she just said 'I'm sorry this is what I have to teach you this is my job', it wasn't I want to help you here
Jeff (IR):	No it's [the feedback] just general, more of an average thing.

One interviewee receives forth-nightly tests but have moved off the topic before the exam results come out and therefore there is no opportunity to find out where you [the student] have gone wrong, but the student does find

it motivational 'when she [the lecturer] puts up the % pass, fail and those who excel that's good for motivation'.

5.4.2 Teaching environment at PP

An active classroom environment is very evident at PP, where students are working together and 'if I am stuck on a question she [my class-mate] will help me, we help each other out' and 'when there would be a discussion everyone would get involved'. The importance of the teacher in this classroom is evident:

Eric (FGR):	With a subject like accounting, especially, you need a teacher to show you something, especially if it is like a new topic, if it was another thing like Irish you could learn off a sheet but it is kind of different for accounting you really need to understand it so you do need the teacher to explain it properly like it is not something you can do yourself
Ivor (FGR):	[The teacher] would teach in a way that we could understand she would talk about a company [and when] we have to start a new topic she will give us a sheet, she will go through it all and explain how you do it and where it comes from and then we ask her questions and then we do examples ourselves.

Teachers use a combination of textbook and notes but **Shane** points out: 'she [the teacher] has been teaching it so long the textbook wouldn't be as good as her notes'. However this active interactive classroom was only experienced by two of the focus group at PP level. Passive instructional activity, is evident from the other respondents comments: 'the teacher would go through the topics quite quickly and briefly' and tell the student to 'figure it out yourselves at night', 'there is no understanding of the general

topic', 'if you knew what [the] questions related to in real-world terms it would be a 100 times easier to understand', and 'it would keep your interest in accounting':

Simon (FGR):	You are finding out what, not why, that is the answer
Aran (FGR):	He doesn't go over them [the questions] he just gives it [homework] and you have to figure it out ourselves at night
Martin (FGR):	When you get the question, he says you will be able to figure that out, if it is theory he will say it is common sense, he thinks it's easy for us, when we try to do it ourselves we are lost in an ocean
Eric (FGR):	There is no understanding of the general topic, you understand the method when you are given the solution, but you don't understand why it is being done, if something changes you are not going to have the understanding there
George (FGR):	No, he wouldn't encourage you to ask questions.

Respondents, have expressed frustration at their teachers lack of competency which has led to a lack of trust in their teacher's ability:

Rory (FGR):	Our teacher couldn't explain a concept
Martin (FGR):	At the moment, I feel this subject isn't quite a student friendly [one]. It feels like it's a very one-way subject when you are in class
Stan (FGR):	There is a big difference between somebody who knows it inside out and a novice.

Respondents, further elaborate that 'I don't think he [the teacher] knows enough to be explaining it [accounting] to us' and 'if you don't have it [the homework] done he [the teacher] would give out and if it is done and 'it is wrong', the teacher 'shouts' but 'he didn't teach it properly in the first place'. It was interesting to witness, that the respondents of one of the focus

groups were almost empathising with their teacher while the other respondents are disheartened:

Rory (FGR):	I think if he had the opportunity to be able to, taught how to change his approach, he would but how can he really. You can become a good teacher after a few years when you know how to teach a subject
Eric (FGR):	He [the teacher] probably doesn't have the time either.
Cormac (FGR):	He puts in a lot of effort, in fairness to him we are probably the longest time he has ever had a class
Tom (FGR):	Spoofer
Aran (FGR):	He says he knows it already he doesn't need to learn it again.

It is evident from this particular focus group that respondents perceive their student success 'depends on the teacher's ability as well':

Martin (FGR):	If the teacher is fully confident on what they are doing they have no problem assigning some time to thinking differently or something like that.

Respondents at PP, also identify encouragement, motivation and feedback as essential elements of good teaching. It is evident from their responses that they understand the importance of the student putting in the effort as well:

Seamus (FGR):	Yea, she would be the whole glass half empty, glass half full kind of thing, if we didn't do well she would tell us that we could get higher, we can achieve higher
Michelle (FGR):	She will always say and comment on our work if it is good and keep encouraging us to do better she will recognise when we are doing good work not just not say anything
Michelle (FGR):	It helps if you have a teacher that will motivate you but it is down to you at the end of the day
Georgina (FGR):	If you want to do well in accounting you have to put in your own effort as well it's not just the teacher's job it's your job to do it
Rosie (FGR):	Yes, there are no messers in our class we are all determined and motivated ourselves it's an easy class.

Feedback from the teacher 'gives us [the students] confidence in ourselves as well':

Georgina (FGR): When she is handing back things she would say that was very good, that was good but you need to work on here or here, she would always give you constructive criticism as well, she is very encouraging

Two of the focus groups at PP, do not experience motivation or encouragement or leadership qualities and leaves the students working together to try to 'make sense of it'[the material]:

George (FGR): Not motivational, anyway
Liam (FGR): Gives out if you haven't it done
All (FGR): No way [a good leader]
Martin (FGR): Because we are 6th years and we know that we are in a little bit of trouble with this subject we need to pull together.
Aran (FGR): We have to put the work in ourselves at home, get grinds and stuff, if we get good result it reflects on him then that he is a good teacher.

Table 5.3 specifies the sub-themes discussed above that have emerged from theme three, instructional activities in the classroom.

Table 5.3

Summary of Theme 3

Theme	Sub-themes
Instructional activities in the classroom	▪ Active environment ▪ Passive environment ▪ Classroom management ▪ The power to teach

5.4.3 Summary of theme three

The third theme, describes the instructional activities in the HE and PP classroom as experienced by the students in those classrooms. Respondents at HE, particularly in the smaller class sizes of IoTs experience active engaging instructional activities consisting of classroom discussions, student collaboration and hands-on approach by the teacher. They would, however, like to see more real-life examples used which would help them relate the theory to real-life situations. They would, also like to see group work incorporated into accounting, although they did comment that this may be difficult to achieve.

Interviewees from the larger universities have experienced mainly a passive non-interactive classroom environment. The students perceive this to be the case, because of the large numbers, it is very difficult for the lecturer to engage the students, although it is noted that some lecturers are good at student interaction despite the student numbers, but not the accounting ones.

PP students have also experienced a passive classroom style teaching whereby they perceive that the teacher just does not care and is not actively involved with the students. This has led to students coming together and trying to work it out for themselves and or getting grinds for which the [passive] teacher gets the credit if they get good marks in the exam. In contrast, some PP participants relate active classroom engagement to good teaching instructional activity. This view is shared by students at HE level. An active classroom both at HE and PP is created by good classroom

management skills on behalf of the teacher. The good teachers command a presence allowing the students to work independently with the re-assurance that their teacher is there if they [the students] need them. In contrast, the passive classroom usually is associated with teachers with poor classroom management skills. The type of instructional activity experienced by the respondents is linked with the power of the teacher's ability to be a good leader, motivational, encouraging and providing feedback to their students. The fourth theme emerging was how teachers can and do help with student transition from PP to HE.

5.5 Theme four: Students transitional experiences of their classroom environment at PP to HE

While all students experience autonomy at HE, they perceive the role of the lecturer to be important in helping them to settle in to a new environment and to cultivate an interest in a subject area.

5.5.1 Autonomy at HE

Respondents understand that 'a lot of it [the work] is left up to yourself', at HE but 'if the lecturer is interesting, you [the student] are going to want to attend class':

| Brian (IR): | The lecturer produces the information and they tell you what you need to do but you have to go off and do it yourself. A lot of my courses, the lecturer will tell you we are giving you notes, that will get you so far, but it is your own research that is going to get you high marks |

Ivor (FGR):	Kind of, if you enjoy the classes you are going to go to it, but if the lecturer is just standing up doing presentations you are not going to want to go
Robert (FGR):	When you have a good lecturer interested in their students, you [the student] go to class you like the lecturer as well, [it is] even easier to learn then.

Respondents found the most surprising aspect of college life is 'the meeting of like-minded people with similar aspirations in life'. In school, there is mixed ability and not everybody is 'interested in going to college' and therefore it can be more challenging for the teacher to engage the students:

Alistair (FGR):	I was quite pleased to come in, because back when I was in secondary school there wasn't very much of a willingness to learn attitude and I was quite pleased when coming in to college to find there was more like-minded people who are there to learn
Erica (IR):	Doing Commerce, is so different to school because everyone there, is of certain level of education kind of intelligent. In school there is a mixed ability even in 6th year there would be people in classes who can't grasp concepts they just have different ways of learning things. Suddenly you go to a place where everyone is of a certain level 475 points, everyone is intelligent has worked hard to get there, everyone is interested in working hard which is really different to school where there were so many people who had no interest who didn't even want to go to college. Now, everyone is focused everyone wants to do well with their career that's a big step.

Students at HE, enjoy the freedom of being independent and taking responsibility for their own learning. They recognise that academic support is more of a guide than the 'hand holding' of PP, although lecturers expose the students to different approaches to learning:

Alistair (FGR):	I have always considered teaching as a very two way street, the lecturer has to be willing to teach and give you an understanding of the subject but you have to be willing to learn and to engage in class and to learn to things yourself at home

Erica (IR):	They do play some part, they would give you some direction but a lot of it is very much self-directed as opposed to secondary school education
Mick (FGR):	If you want support it's there, whereas in secondary school you were fed the information, given to you, in 3rd level it's there if you want it but it's still up to yourself to go look for it
Susan (IR):	Yes, they teach you different ways of studying, learning approaching how you look at things and even in subjects that I wouldn't have loved I found I was really good.

The respondents would prefer more of a hands-on integration, group work approach but acknowledge that this can be difficult given the large class sizes:

Susan (IR):	Group work, in accounting [I] think it would be a great idea if you could because sometimes accounting can be very isolating, you are just doing your question yourself. That is one thing I really enjoy in other subjects doing group assignments, because I think you learn more when you are interacting with a group, whereas accounting can be very solitary. That is probably one criticism.

While, autonomy is a perceived feature of the HE environment respondents of this study propose that lecturers have a profound impact on students and the choices that they make going forward in their future careers:

Declan (FGR):	Big influence [all agree]
Paddy (FGR):	Very good, I had no interest coming in, in accounting and now I have picked it
Susan (IR):	In HE, [the] teacher helps you achieve a career goal focused on the end goal.

5.5.2 Easing the transition

Respondents feel that the transition from PP to HE can be daunting for many and 'it would be better, in a sense if it [college] was more personal if

they [the lecturers] did care more about how you are doing'. 'It's a lot [the transition] especially if you move away from home to manage new relationships with friends, cooking, cleaning especially in 1st year it's a huge transformation':

Brian (IR):	They would never acknowledge you on the corridors they completely ignore you. I would like if they acknowledged you.

Participants of the study agree, that there is a mismatch of teaching and learning environments between PP and HE. Respondents at HE, believe that they were 'kind of babied along at secondary school [but] at HE [students are] thrown in' at the deep end. HE, promotes understanding 'going in much deeper, getting the thought process', while, PP is more exam driven rote-learning. School is all about getting 'you through your exams to get you to college'. Collaboration, between the architects of the teaching and learning environments of PP and HE might ease the transition:

Alistair (FGR):	There is much more of a focus on the understanding in 3rd level as opposed to 2nd level
Jeff (IR):	Yea in PP, you have only spoon-feeding its all the same stuff, they know it off by heart at that stage, whereas in college you are going in at a different level you are going in much deeper getting the thought process of accounting
Declan (FGR):	[It] was a big jump, in 6th year try to integrate some of college techniques the way it works in college so that it might not as big a jump when you go into first year college
Mick (FGR):	Very straightforward [in PP], kind of babied along at secondary school at HE thrown in
Jeff (IR):	If did, like workshops at start of module in each course on how to integrate into college, note –taking, organising your time.

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Students have never experienced any different style of teaching at PP but 'being spoonfed' and although they are open to a more independent style of teaching and learning it may not suit all students at PP:

> **Brian (IR):** I never really experienced anything different in secondary school it, [independent learning] might work better but then again it depends on the different type of people, some people would be able to settle to independent learning and I would say the vast majority wouldn't so in a way I don't think it would work in secondary school.

But at the end of the day, respondents recognise the importance of being able to learn independently:

> **Brian (IR):** You always see the people that are getting the best results, at the end of the day are the people who do work independently, rather than the people who are spoon-fed. The people that are spoon-fed, will get an average to below average results, towards the people who work on their own will get higher results.

Respondents of the current study agree that support at PP is greater than at HE, where there is much more of an 'active offer of support, a very open door policy' at PP, whereas in HE 'you are just a number to them [the lecturers]:

> **Erica (IR):** Definitely, teachers at PP, definitely. They oversee everything you are doing. My lecturers wouldn't have any idea who I am
>
> **Brian (IR):** PP, definitely, maybe it is to do with the smaller classes but I definitely would have received more support from teachers at that level
>
> **Michael (FGR):** Way more support in secondary school
>
> **Noel (FGR):** Secondary school, [the] teacher stays back gives extra classes some lecturers ask them to do a tutorial to explain and they wouldn't

Alistair (FGR):	There was much more of an active offer of support in secondary school. My accounting teacher, if you had practised questions yourself at home, she had a very open door policy
Brian (IR):	PP teachers, would take on the role of constantly monitoring you, the teacher would know how well you are getting on in class tests, so they would always have an idea of how well you were doing, they would always know you personally. In 3rd level you are a number to them really they wouldn't monitor your progress, they wouldn't take an active role.

5.5.3 PP students thoughts as they prepare to make the transition to HE

Respondents at PP, have thought about college and what challenges it poses for them: 'you [the student] will have to do a lot more work yourself it's not like the teacher doing it', the respondents know that 'you are not going to be as pushed by a teacher', and 'because I will be more independent, I won't be told to do stuff I will have to take my own responsibility, I am looking forward to that plus you get to study something you love rather than something that is on a curriculum'. Respondents, see the transition as 'self-motivated' and 'enjoyable as you chose the course'. Respondents are apprehensive as, 'you are going into 3rd level you might not know anyone away from home for first time so it's kind of scary, so if you have someone there, that is understanding, at least you will feel a bit more at ease'.

Students at PP, consider the pressure on teachers at PP to perform and get results, whereas at HE lecturers are not answerable to anyone:

Georgina (FGR):	I think I will have to take my own initiative and the lecturers just says some things, you might have to go home and research it a bit more yourself because it's not the same as second level there is not much attention from the

	lecturer and you are on your own more so, which is probably more suited to the way you will be for the rest of your life
Ivan (FGR):	There's a lot more responsibility and it's up to you whether you want to do it or not there's no one going to be babysitting me through it, doesn't benefit them [the lecturers] it's not like the Leaving cert where it will reflect bad on them [the teachers] if their students do bad or whatever, so the lecturers it's not up to them what you do
Eric (FGR):	I will be more self-motivated won't have someone standing over you, it is up to you whatever you want to do
Rory (FGR):	A lot of responsibilities, it should be good.

Students recognise that HE will be different in their approaches and it can depend on the numbers on a given course:

Stan (FGR):	It depends on the size of class you go into, if you go into a course with 20 or 30 people you probably see more interaction than a big commerce course with 200.

Respondents at PP, recognise that the 'rote-style learning' environment currently in existence at PP may not be suited to change. Students may not want to adopt a more independent-style learning, taking 'responsibility for themselves', might not suit all students at PP. This is partly because the system is so exam-focused, so students just want to reach the end goal of 'getting points to get into college'.[5]

The system at PP is described as the teacher 'spewing out knowledge', whereas at HE, the lecturer is more a 'font of knowledge and you have to go to them to look for knowledge yourself'. Respondents at PP, would like

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[5] Central applications office (CAO) state wide exam points system

more understanding of what's happening in the subject, more real-life understanding and 'dig deeper' into topics of accounting as oppose to rote-learning. Respondents perceive that this approach, would make the subject more interesting. At PP, accounting, similar to many subjects, is exam-driven and the student focus is learning how to get the marks out of the exam as opposed to understanding the subject:

Rory (FGR):	You, literally have to know what to do without thinking
Martin (FGR):	It is too exam dictated, [I] want more understanding of what's happening and real-life understanding that would make it much more interesting
Eric (FGR):	I intend to do accounting in college the course is going to be a lot different and you are going to have to go back and do a lot more learning to adapt, I don't think the Leaving certificate course is that great for what needs to be known.

Students at PP, believe that 'it would be easier if we [the students] experienced more responsibility at this level', the teachers 'shouldn't baby-step you through every single thing, they should give you a sense of freedom more in second level to get you ready for third level'.

5.5.4 Teaching as a skill

Teaching at PP and HE, can play a 'huge role' in what a student chooses to do: 'a teacher can turn you off a subject and possibly a future career in that area'. All students of this study both HE and PP perceive teaching to be a 'natural skill: 'it's not something that you can pick up', 'the good teachers have it', 'it's their personality', 'you can see in class a lecturer has a

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presence', 'I think that lecturers who complicate teaching, [then] the lecture comes across more of a mechanical thing, it is a personal thing'.

Respondents, recognise that teaching is 'hard', 'patience is key', 'willing to listen', giving 'feedback' and 'interacting' are 'traits conducive to good teaching' and 'not everyone is like that'. 'There are some people who are clearly intelligent, but they can't convey information to others', 'if someone doesn't understand it one way' the teacher needs to have the skill to 'come about it another way'. Teachers who love, what they are doing and have 'a clear interest in it [teaching], it is carried on to the student as well':

Ivan (FGR):	There is no point in knowing the information if you are not going to be able to teach it, some teachers that know it, [they] just can't express it to the students, they just can't get the point across
Mick (FGR):	It comes more natural to some people
Susan (IR):	No 100%, everybody cannot teach, I don't know if it can be taught to everybody. It's an inherent skill that could be developed upon, some people shouldn't be lecturers
Brian (IR):	Teaching is a skill rather than knowledge you can pick up.
Jeff (IR):	It's a natural thing, you can see in class a lecturer has a presence
Erica (IR):	Definitely, a skill some people aren't able to engage a class, to get people interested to build relationships. There are some people who are clearly intelligent but they can't convey information to others and there are some people who are really good and they know how to convey information they know how to, if someone doesn't understand it one way they can come about it another way and if they have a clear interest in it, it is carried on to the student as well.

Lecturers at HE in Ireland, are not required to have any teacher training skills for the classroom. Respondents of this study feel very strongly that all lecturers 'should be sent for six month teacher training to see if you can do it' [teaching]:

Susan (IR):	Yes 100%, then you will know if you [the teacher] are able for the environment or not. Organisational skills required, if you know how to interact with the class. I can't understand how a person is thrown into a class in front of x amount of people and they may have no skills whatsoever it's ridiculous, that is something I feel very strongly on
Neill (FGR):	I think they should [have teacher training] anyone could come in and have slides and not teach it
Noel (FGR):	You can see it with some of the lecturers
Michael (FGR):	Some lecturers have a reputation for being a bad lecturer he just doesn't have the same methods as the accounting teachers.

Table 5.4 specifies the sub-themes that have emerged from theme four; students transitional experiences of their classroom environment at PP to HE.

Table 5.4

Summary of theme four

Theme	Sub-themes
Transition experiences of students from PP to HE	▪ Autonomy ▪ Easing the transition ▪ Mismatch of teaching/learning environments ▪ Quality teaching

5.5.5 Summary of theme four

Respondents perceive that the lecturer plays an important part in students life in HE, from helping them to settle in, to cultivating an interest in a subject area and possible pursuance of career goals. Respondents at HE, are happy to meet like-minded people with similar interests in education. Respondents, embrace the new independent learning environment

particularly where the lecturer is interactive and more hands-on with the students. Other students have found the transition daunting with so much to cope with being away from home and the perception that their lecturer is also detached from interacting with them.

It is exposed that teacher support for students is much greater at PP than HE. Respondents at PP, would like to see a less exam-dictated style of teaching and more promotion of deeper thought process in subjects, but acknowledge this can be difficult with the point system that is in place to gain entry to HE. The education divides of PP and HE need to collaborate to ensure the best interests of the students are being met by their teachers at both levels.

Respondents, propose teacher training skills for HE lecturers similar to PP teacher training. All students, both HE and PP believe that teaching is a 'natural inherent skill and not everybody has it'.

5.6 Chapter conclus*i*on

The research findings have presented student experiences of classroom teaching in a HE and PP environment. Respondents at IOT's in HE perceive their accounting teachers to be engaging, interactive, using a hands-on approach with their students. University interviewees, in contrast have little interaction with their lecturers who stand behind their podium reading off slides. They wouldn't dream of asking questions due to the large size of the classes and the fear of appearing stupid to their class. The interviewees want

to be actively involved in their lectures, which makes the subject more enjoyable and they would also be more likely to attend class.

At PP, it's all about interaction and the teacher being able to adapt strategies if students are not engaged. Respondents perceive this to be a two-way process, as students and teachers attempt to build relationships. This is easier in a small class environment. This view is shared by respondents at HE.

Accounting, is quite a complex subject and can be really difficult to engage with and therefore the students see the teacher as being central to their understanding of the subject. At both HE and PP, respondents have spoken about the influence their accounting teachers have on their further pursuance of the subject in college or as a career. Respondents of this study at both education levels have experienced both passive and active teaching environments. The active classroom environment was more evident in the smaller class sizes and allows for independence of learners as students are confident in their teacher's ability and presence. Respondents have expressed frustration and a lack of trust in their teachers in the passive classroom.

Respondents identified the key traits of a good teacher as being respectful, knowledgeable, a good communicator, approachable, relaxed and inclusive of all students. Some participants have experienced less effective teacher traits and described these as lack of care, boring, unapproachable, dis-

organised, incompetent and lack of expertise. The passive classroom environment tended to exhibit such teacher traits.

Respondents, maintain that the transition from PP to HE could be eased if collaborative practices between the architects of the teaching environments of PP and HE were put in place. All respondents of the study would however, unanimously agree, that teachers at PP are a lot more supportive than their HE counterparts. Respondents at HE like to be recognised by their teachers and do not like the fact that they [the student] are just a number. Participants at both HE and PP view teaching as a natural skill: 'the good teachers have it'.

Chapter Six:
Discussion

6.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss and interpret the themes that have emerged from the findings in the previous chapter in the overall context of the relevant literature emphasising the similarities and differences between both while delving into the nuances of students experiences in this study.

The chapter (Section 6.1) opens with a summary of an emergent organising network of themes and sub-themes from the findings chapter. Section 6.2 will then discuss the teacher and student transaction process in the context of the individual themes that emerged from Chapter Five, Findings and Chapter Two of the literature review. Students conceptualisation of the role of interaction in the classroom, documenting respondents understandings of teaching and student engagement, along with the importance of relationship building between teachers and students will be discussed. The effective as well as the less effective traits of a teacher are identified. The instructional strategies employed by teachers, as well as proposing their overall effect on the teacher-student transaction process will be discussed. The discussion will continue with data emerging from Theme Four and Chapter Three of the literature review, on the outputs expected from the transaction process of teacher and student interaction in the classroom environment (Section 6.3). The final section of the chapter (Section 6.4) presents a Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework emerging from the current study, summarising the salient conclusion of this research.

The proposed framework is a refinement of quality teaching initiatives, as described in Chapter Three (Section 3.4) aimed at both teachers themselves and educational stakeholders.

6.1 Summary of main findings

Four key themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data. These are: *students' conceptualisation of the role of interaction in classroom engagement, teachers' traits, instructional activities in the classroom and student transitional experiences of their classroom environment at PP to HE.* Figure 6.1 depicts the emergent organising network of themes and sub-themes.

Figure 6.1

Emergent organising network of themes and sub-themes
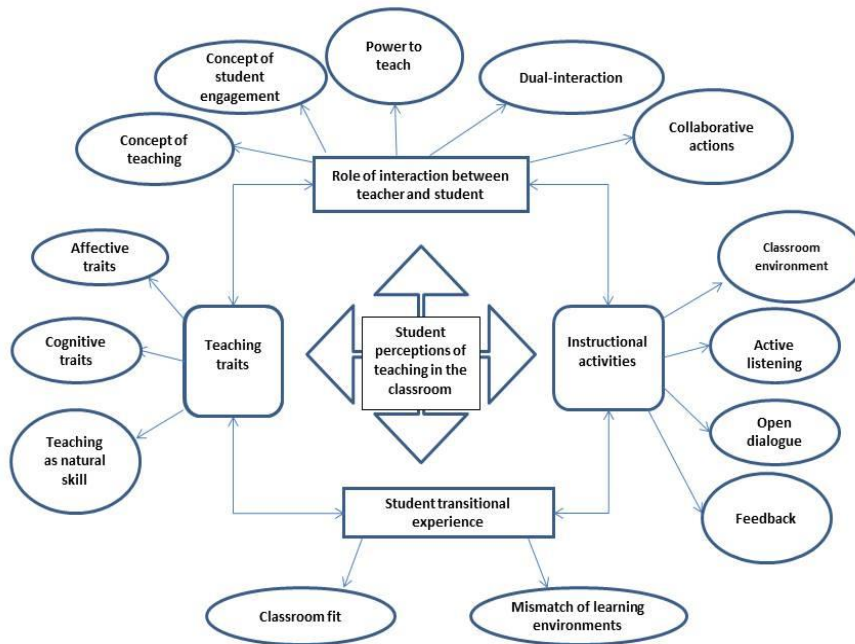
The main findings from Chapter Five are summarised in Figure 6.1 as four core themes and fourteen sub-themes. In this regard, Section 6.2 collectively discusses Themes 1 to 3, while Section 6.3 discusses Theme 4. The final section (Section 6.4) of the discussion addresses the overall themes in relation to the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework.

6.2 Teacher and student transaction process in the classroom

Teaching is a multifaceted activity (Doyle, 2006; Stronge *et al.*, 2011). The complexity of the actual teaching process is a dynamic interplay between teacher, student, context and content, constrained by external factors relating to education. The current study has not chosen to examine external constraints but has remained inside the classroom. Good education is characterised by high quality teachers (White *et al.*, 2009) as the teacher is seen as the most important factor in achieving student outcomes in the form of engagement (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013) and achievement/learning (Abell, 2007). A key factor in educational outcomes for students is the quality of the relationship between student and teacher (McCoy *et al.*, 2014). In order to gain an insight into this relationship, it is important to get students views as well as teachers (Ramsden, 1991; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Teachers viewpoints have been well documented in the literature (Martin *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, the current study documents students accounts of the teacher-student relationship at both HE and PP education levels. Before the nature of this relationship is revealed, it is important to understand student conceptions of teaching and engagement as perceived in the current study.

6.2.1 Conceptions of teaching

The respondents[6] of the current study believe teaching to be predominantly teacher-focused and student-focused as defined by Kember's (1997)

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[6] Respondents are participants of this study

framework and in a small number of instances, to be active on behalf of the teacher and student engaging with each other. HE students who have smaller class sizes in Accounting experienced a more teacher-student interaction than the larger university class sizes who predominantly spoke about transmissive style teaching. HE university respondents comment that lecturers are researchers and 'when it comes to actual teaching it's not the best' and sometimes the lecturer is 'doing the job just for the sake of it'. This echoes Clark's (2001, cited in Byrne & Flood, 2003:200) concerns that lecturers may have difficulty adopting best practice, moving from delivering information, to facilitating students needs and changing their mind-set from university academics (Becher, 1989; Orlando, 2014).

PP respondents largely view teaching as student-focused, with respondents describing the concept of teaching as showing, explaining, guiding and aiding. A selection of the respondents view teaching to be teacher-centered; 'as a duty on the part of the teacher', 'someone [the teacher] who has to get the point across, up at the top of the class instructing', the student what to do, 'from the book or giving you [the student] information that you have to learn off'. It is evident here that the respondents also view their role as a duty too; it [the teaching and learning] all becomes quite mechanical as opposed to a fluid transaction between the parties involved and 'this subject [accounting] isn't quite student friendly, it feels like it's a very one way subject when you are in class'.

6.2.2 Conceptions of student engagement

A positive relationship between teacher and student is important for student engagement (Roorda *et al.*, 2011, cited in van Uden *et al.*, 2013:22). It is clear from the current study that, regardless of class size, all students want to feel part of the class, desire to have a connection in the context of the teacher-student relationship (Case, 2007) and want to have a good teacher who will make sure that all students are included. Respondents of this study stress that the teacher is the best person to initiate this engagement (Gorard & See, 2011; van Uden *et al.*, 2013), accommodating the readiness of the learner to learn and encouraging the students interest in the material (Fenstermacher, 1986:39). If the students experience this initiation, then they are more likely 'to take a more active part themselves and this in turn encourages the teacher and gives her enjoyment'.

Respondents at both HE and PP level recognise their role in the teacher-student relationship (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996, cited in Laurillard, 2002:67). It is very important for the students to be 'interested', wanting to take an active role in the class, 'put in your own effort as well, it's not just the teachers job it's your job to do it'. Otherwise, the teacher-student relationship breaks down: 'if the teacher doesn't see the students wanting to learn they are going to feel that they don't want to even teach' and 'if the teacher doesn't want to be there, I [the student] don't feel I want to be there and wouldn't bother going to class'. Students therefore display their willingness to be part of the classroom as long as the teacher understands their role also.

It is imperative that the teacher understands what is meant by student engagement (Harris, 2008) and there are calls from all educational levels to clarify its meaning and practice (Jimmerson *et al.*, 2003; Cappon, 2006, cited in Delaney *et al.*, 2010:1; McManus, 2013) so that teachers have an understanding of how 'to engage students in conceptual understandings, analytical thinking and reasoning during instruction' (Boston & Smith, 2009:142). The evidence suggests a multi-dimensional aspect to quality teaching (Abrami *et al.*, 1997; Marsh & Dunkin, 1997; Elton, 1998; Stronge *et al.*, 2011). The literature notes that disengagement is often seen as the fault of the students, but suggestions are made that engagement is a two-way process (Zyngier, 2008). This is echoed in the current study. It is evident from participants responses in this study that they [the students] are ready, open, flexible and willing to actively participate in class, with their teacher initiating this interaction, but the teacher may not have the same agenda (Osbourne & Freyberg, 1980; Tasker, 1992).

Of concern is respondents experience at PP, where students are basically left to themselves 'to figure it out' because of the perceived weakness of the teacher to engage with the students and the material: 'from my experience, I might ask him a question and he would say that is just how it is', 'it makes you wonder why you bother asking questions in the first place'.

6.2.3 Dual- interaction

The literature has expressed concerns as to the lack of stimulation and enthusiasm displayed by many lecturers' (Hughes, 2011) in the way they teach. Prior research has concluded that good teaching contributes to students engaging with the teacher, enjoying sharing their experiences with the students (Fox, 1983) and the teacher 'recognising that he will never know everything, sharing the excitement of being a fellow explorer' with his students (Fox, 1983:156). Respondents of the current study, particularly in HE with smaller class sizes, echo this view as they conceptualise teacher-student interaction in the classroom.

A clear outcome of positive teacher-student interaction is the teachers influence on, and students further pursuance of, a particular subject or future career. Respondents at PP spoke about having 'a really good accounting teacher' and loving the subject and that is the reason 'I ended up where I am now' [studying accounting in HE]. Teaching experiences have a profound effect on student choices going forward (Gorard & See, 2011). If the lecturer is interesting the student in the subject 'you are thinking there is a whole other possibility in it'. In contrast, other respondents are turned off confirming that their 'accounting lecturer wouldn't inspire me [the student] to pursue accounting as a career'.

Other PP respondents are frustrated with their teacher and 'wouldn't dream of taking accounting at HE'. O'Shea (2013) notes that the lack of enjoyment by students for their subjects at PP can feed into their HE experience,

specifically in the accounting sphere. Accounting is quite a complex subject and 'can be really difficult to engage with it'. Therefore, the respondents see the teachers role as critical to their understanding of the subject. University interviewees warn that the lecturer may be unaware 'that the student was lost and would just move on'; respondents are aghast that 'when you [the lecturer] are trying to build a foundation it makes no sense to move on'. Therefore, a clear finding is that the teachers role is pivotal to students understanding of accounting and dispelling misconceptions about the subject. This is where teachers can make a real difference to students perceptions about the difficulty of this subject (Byrne & Flood, 2003).

High attrition rates among accounting students, poor uptake of the subject and a fall in students entering professional accounting as a career (Byrne & Flood, 2003) all serve as a catalyst for the current study. Respondents of this study propose that the teacher should listen (Gorard & See, 2011) to what the students want: 'good lecturers take on board what students say we need more of …, then they [the lecturer] come in the next day and have that ready, the students know what they need to do, more so than what the teacher thinks as ticking boxes'. Lecturers should give the student time and attention (Powell, 1980): 'if your point is being valued, you feel you want to be part of the class and then you contribute more and learn a lot more', this 'opens up a dialogue between you [the student] and the lecturer and it [the lesson] will flow'. Respondents believe that because they are enjoying the class and 'there is that sense of dialogue in class, the time just flies by'.

Therefore, a clear message from the current study is that the teacher-student relationship is a two-way process, where both parties need to meet and interact (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004). Teacher and student must be committed for this relationship to work. The outcome from this dual interactive process is dual engagement, where both teacher and student become active learners together, sharing and discussing content in a truly active classroom environment. This echoes Devine *et al's.* (2013) findings that for good teaching to take place there must be active participation and engagement of the student and teacher, which in turn results in true learning (McCormick, 1996; Biggs, 2003).

Research has called for real change in the process of interaction between teacher and student (Haggis, 2006; QAA, 2010; Smyth & McCoy, 2011). However, there has been little change to date in current practices (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2009; Beach, 2011). Tinto (2012:4) believes developments have 'sat at the margins of the classroom and have failed to reach into the classroom to substantially improve the classroom experience'. This research study seeks to address this gap. The current study has found class size to be one of the factors that determine successful interaction between teacher and student, but should not be seen as an inhibitor of successful interaction.

6.2.4 Collaborative actions

Of interest is the inference of collective understanding, as students desire to work together as well as individually so that they [the students] can feel part of the teaching and learning process. This corresponds with Trigwell (2001), Boulton-Lewis *et al.*, (2001) and King (2013) research, which indicates that teachers must readily adapt to meet the needs of their students.

The smaller class sizes of the IoTs and PP classrooms allows for teacher-student interaction and a more hands-on approach by the teacher as 'they [the teacher] walk around the room and take the time to come down and help students', allowing for dialogue to occur on a daily basis. Respondents of the current study propose that engagement will only work if the teacher is 'able to assess how his class are, understanding, being able to adapt his methods of teaching to help a class work', so that students can 'understand together and individually'. This is certainly easier in the small class environment.

Class size at HE universities is a challenge for respondents of the current study. With up to 500 people in their classes, students can find it very difficult to engage: 'there is little or no interaction', the 'lecturer doesn't invite engagement' and 'just delivers to the class, reading off slides'. Teachers are not explaining the material and 'there are a lot of areas that needs to be explained but I [the student] don't find that it is explained', 'it falls on the student to work it out for themselves'. This is a worrying finding as the literature proposes that true teaching and learning relies on dialogue

ensuing between teacher and student, collaborating and sharing responsibility for teaching and learning (Chalmers & Fuller, 1996; Watkins *et al.*, 2002). University respondents of the current study reveal that 'it is hard to ask lecturers questions if they [the lecturers] don't invite engagement'.

Students want to learn about accounting but reveal that 'it is hard to do it' because, with the atmosphere that the lecturer has created in class, 'everyone is drained, everyone is bored' and 'there are not many fun elements in it [accounting]'. This is in contrast to Wood and Tanner's (2012) recommendation that students should find lessons fun. The lecturer 'just stands there and talks', delivers the material reading off slides and 'goes out the door', not concerned with how the students are doing. This mirrors Fox's (1983) analogy of the teacher as a scatterer of seeds of wisdom, not worrying where or how they fall as long as he [the teacher] has delivered. This confirms Rittle-Johnston *et al's.* (2001) and Boston & Smith's (2009) proposal that the point of excellent teaching occurs when the teacher challenges the students in an engaging and critical manner rather than adopting a teacher-focused or student-centered role. Therefore, the current study supports that perhaps teachers should not be so focused on what approach or belief they hold about their teaching (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013) but rather on how they can promote positive relationships in their classroom. This in turn allows for reciprocal engagement of both student and teacher and student and student. The student is not the only winner in this situation as the teacher also enjoys the feeling of well-being and

belongingness, and is recognised as a quality teacher (Zepke & Leach, 2010). This is in line with advice from (Spilt *et al.*, 2011; van Uden *et al.*, 2013).

Respondents of the current study offer advice to lecturers of large class sizes as to how they can engage their accounting students: 'walk around the class, give questions to do in class, help the students'. This in turn would 'make the subject more enjoyable and the students would also be more likely to attend class'. Respondents of the current study propose that teachers need to entice their students to feel part of the class and the way that teachers can do this is by creating the classroom conditions that allows for social interaction to precede academic interaction. This is supported by the work of Rotgans & Schmidt (2011) and van Uden *et al.*, (2013), who clarify that teachers traits are a key component of the teaching input process.

6.2.5 The power to teach

The power to teach (Campbell *et al.*, 2004), as distinct from knowledge, is a clear attribute of the current study 'where the teacher is able to judge when the students are not getting it [the material] and come up with different ways to adapt, that's really important'. Respondents went as far as saying that 'some people shouldn't be lecturers', '100% everybody cannot teach', 'the lecturers who complicate teaching, it comes across more of a mechanical thing, it is a personal thing'. **Jeff** concludes 'it's a natural thing [teaching], you can see in class a lecturer who has it'. This is in line with previous

research that suggests that not all teachers have effective teaching traits (Antoniou, 2013) and there is a need to implement professional development programmes that addresses the specific needs of teachers (Desimone *et al.*, 2002). This, in time will lead to improvements in student outcomes.

Respondents note that teachers who love what they are doing and 'have a clear interest in it [teaching], it is carried on to the student as well'. This raises an important point that student perceptions of teaching is reflexive as it explores what it is students want from their teachers so that the teacher can be the best they can from that encounter (Dunkin & Barnes, 1986). Reflective practice for both teachers and students may encourage teachers and students to look at their interactions and practices (QAA, 2010).

Therefore, the current study's sub-theme of the power to teach is a key determinant of how the teacher is going to teach (classroom practice) in a particular situation and context. This is supported by the work of Lingard *et al.* (2003) and Loughran *et al.* (2012:4) who describe the power to teach as an 'expert pedagogue'. This sub-theme offers an insight into the skilful act of teaching, where the teacher intuitively knows that the same approach does not work all of the time. The teacher then uses their professional capacity to shape the way they teach and in that way, enhances student engagement and ultimately achievement in the form of learning.

6.2.6 Teacher traits

Teacher traits have been classified in the literature as cognitive and affective traits (Clark, 1995), with many studies using interchangeable terms such as 'caring and supportive' and 'professional competency and communication skills' (Keeley *et al.*, 2006:89). Other studies have clarified a competency as ones professional knowledge and the ability to put subject material into context. A trait is defined as the personal characteristics that distinguish a person. Cognitive traits include knowledge, organisation of lesson, clear explanations, clear presentation including articulation, attention and enthusiasm (Saroyan *et al.,* 2004; Axelrod, 2008). Affective traits include stimulation of students interest thus engaging them, fostering active participation of students in classes, respect and openness to student ideas, good interpersonal relations among student and teacher, open and effective communication (Witcher *et al.*, 2001; Vulcano, 2007; Delaney *et al.*, 2010).

The key traits of a good teacher identified by the research participants of the current study are 'mutual respect', 'care', 'support', 'organisation', 'knowledge', 'communication skills', 'approachable', 'relaxed manner' and 'includes everyone' by listening. These findings resonate with Marsh & Roche (1994); Young and Shaw (1999); Kottler & Zehm, (2000); Hativa *et al.* (2001); Onwuegbuzie *et al.* (2007); Kaur, (2008); Stritkwerda-Brown *et al.* (2008) and Hattie (2012). The least desirable traits identified by respondents were lack of care and trust in the teacher's knowledge, unapproachable and lack of patience.

6.2.6.1 Affective teaching traits

Affective teaching traits displayed by the teacher is a prerequisite to the successful engagement of their students, and then cognitive teaching trait implementation can easily follow. Respondents propose that respect is a key affective trait of teachers but recognise that it is a two-way process (mutual respect): 'I suppose you don't really learn in an environment where the teacher shows you disrespect', 'you [the student] are more likely to respect the lecturer if he/she respects you', while Hebson *et al.* (2007) go as far as to say that caring about children is fundamental to quality teaching. The current study supports this and agrees that care should be a key element when describing quality teaching (Teaching council, 2012).

Some respondents at PP level do not have respect for their teacher as 'he always says he doesn't care what result we get', 'he cares about the people that are going to do well rather than the ones that are going to do bad'. At HE respondents like when they [the students] are not just 'somebody in the room, that the lecturer has taken the time to learn your name', 'it means a lot', 'it makes you feel like they care', the lecturer 'makes eye contact' 'acknowledges you', 'even if they don't know your name'. This resonates with Best &Addison (2000) and Wilson & Taylor (2001) that teachers are judged by their students.

In contrast, other respondents perceive the lecturer's lack of care in the way they teach the class: they just rush ahead, are boring and unapproachable and are 'just there because they are getting paid for it'. This is particularly

evident in the larger class sizes (Kuh *et al.*, 2005), where students are just a number to their teachers which is in stark contrast to PP. Teachers who therefore care about their students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wolk, 2002), create a relaxed classroom environment so that 'you [the student] feel comfortable in class'. Teachers who 'take an active interest in my [the student's] future', 'you don't mind going into class every day, you look forward to accounting'. 'If the students see them [the teacher] putting in the effort you [the student] are more likely to repay them' and it has often 'tipped the balance' in a student's overall transition and integration into HE (Briggs *et al.*, 2012:12).

PP respondents don't like when 'he [the teacher] treats you like a child it is so frustrating'. This echoes the clear message from prior research that teachers communication of high expectations for their students, coupled with a supportive learning environment, leads to effective teaching and student achievement (Stronge, 2007) and teachers fostering a love of their subject in students (Kotler & Zehm, 2000). It is evident from the current study that students firmly want a warm, friendly and respectful person who creates a supportive caring classroom environment that fits for both student and teacher as the starting point to a successful and engaging lesson. This resonates with advice from Rotgans & Schmidt (2011) and van Uden *et al.* (2013).

6.2.6.2 Cognitive teaching traits

The cognitive teaching traits identified in the current study are professional competency in the form of knowledge, communication and organisational skills and clear presentation including articulation, attention and enthusiasm These are supported by Saroyan *et al.* (2004); Keeley *et al.* (2006); Axelrod, (2008).

The current study likens the cognitive traits to a natural skill inherent in teachers and 'it's not something you [the teacher] can pick up', 'the good teachers have it', 'it's their personality'. **Ivan** summarises 'there is no point in knowing the information if you [the teacher] are not going to be able to teach it, some teachers that know it, just can't express it to the students, they just can't get the point across'. Respondents at PP and HE level talk about a good teacher as one that can transform knowledge into easily understandable interesting material, which encourages the student to want to learn it more and 'get the best out of the student'.

The teacher should be 'well-spoken', 'open', 'easy to talk to', and if the students like their teacher this makes it 'easier [for the students] to communicate with them [the teacher] and learn from them'. When the teacher presents the material in a well prepared and organised way, this stimulates the students interest (Hativa *et al.*, 2001). This resonates with respondents comments: 'when they [the teacher] speak clearly, know what they are talking about and when they engage with you, it's all about engagement'.

Of concern are the PP respondents who experience negative teacher competencies: 'our teacher couldn't explain a concept', 'there is a big difference between somebody who knows it inside out and a novice', 'he doesn't care' and 'we [the student] would definitely be better at the subject if we had a good teacher'. HE university respondents spoke about lecturers 'lack of care', 'rushing ahead', lack of clear goals, 'no organisational skills whatsoever' and little or untimely feedback as issues that bother them. These are supported in the literature by Perlman & McCann (1998) and Miley & Gonslaves (2003). Stronge *et al.* (2011:341) proclaim that 'a productive and positive classroom is the result of the teacher considering students academic as well as social and personal needs'.

The current study clearly places social affective traits of the teacher, along with their subject matter knowledge, at the heart of good teaching. However, despite the recognition to improve generic teaching skills, professional development programmes in teaching still remain committed to a content focused approach. This echoes the concerns of Beach & Player-Koro (2012) and Antoniou & Kyriakides (2013). It has been widely supported in the literature that both content and pedagogical skill (cognitive and affective traits) has a significant impact on student achievement (Seidel & Shavelson, 2007). The current study's findings propose that both skills (affective teaching traits preceding cognitive teaching traits) are prerequisites to successful student-teacher engagement, leading to dual-interaction where the teacher and student become joint explorers making the teacher-student interaction process more enjoyable and fun for both parties.

6.2.6.3 Teaching as a natural skill

Students find differences in the natural skills of their teachers: 'It's a natural thing, you can see in class a lecturer has a presence'. The respondents propose that every teacher especially at HE should be sent for teacher training. This is in line with previous research advice, yet policy implementations to date have focused on teacher content knowledge rather than affective teacher classroom behaviour (Beach, 2011). Respondents propose that teaching is an inherent skill that could be developed upon, but some people shouldn't be lecturers.

Respondents of study propose 'that if you have a good lecturer interested in their students', 'if you enjoy the classes', 'like the lecturer, you are going to want to attend class'. Teachers do really make a difference to students and their engagement in class (Abell, 2007).

6.2.7 Instructional activity

Although it is important to have some routines in teaching, delivering the same 'bag of teaching tricks' (Loughran *et al.*, 2012:2) will only serve to disengage and might lead to possible student failure in the subject area. The literature has noted the difficulty with establishing a link between teaching strategies or processes and student outcomes (Coker *et al.*, 1988; Mortimore & MacBeath, 1994, cited in Harris, 1998:176) because of the many different teaching contexts and situations (Harris, 1998; Young & Shaw, 1999; Biggs, 2001). The current study attempts to set aside these concerns by delving deeply into student thought processes (Clark & Peterson, 1986) in a

particular subject area. Although the research is drawn from different contextual educational settings this should, however, allow for shared value across educational divides (Devlin, 2007a, cited in Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010:112), allowing the best teachers to emerge and finding ways to help teachers who struggle (OECD, 2005; 2009b).

6.2.7.1 Classroom management

It is widely accepted that supportive teacher-student relationships have positive effects on students both academically and socially and leads to better classroom management (Kounin & Gum, 1974; Powell, 1980; Reiss, 1982; Smyth & McCoy, 2011). Students learn more in classrooms that have clearly defined structures and routines (Soar & Soar, 1979; Borko & Elliott, 1999). This concurs with respondents views of the teacher: 'she has a plan when she comes in', 'the teacher structure's their [the students] time'; 'she [the teacher] knows what we are doing today, next week and when we have to have this done by', 'she sets goals and we [the student] are working toward a schedule'.

Respondents inform that a good lecturer should be able to command a presence: 'you know the lecturer who has control of the class, everyone is attentive, interested in their work' and the teacher can 'manage the class really well, no matter what the size'. This concurs with Doyle's (1977a) proposal that effective teaching behaviour is displayed by teachers who maintain high levels of student involvement and low levels of disruption.

Respondents at HE level believe that 'it is the job of the lecturer to create this successful learning environment', but empathise that 'many of them [the lecturers] cannot, as they have no formal training in teaching'. Respondents 'can't understand how a person [the lecturer] is thrown into a class in front of x amount of people and they may have no skills whatsoever'. Respondents offer a solution: that 'they [the lecturers] should [have teacher training] as anyone could come in and have slides and not teach it'.

This echoes the concern that policy developments have not moved in line with advice that has been given by educational researchers (Lingard *et al.*, 2003; Beach, 2011). Theories of teaching held by teachers, according to Fox (1983), affect the strategies that teachers employ, and Kember & Kwan's (2000) categorisation of approaches to teaching ('learning-centered' and 'content-centred') has contributed to the purpose of teaching practices that teachers adopt (Postareff & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2008). The current study proposes that a stringent dichotomy of approaches may not be the best approach and instead uses the active classroom and passive classroom to describe the teaching approaches adopted by teachers, which may be guided by their teaching beliefs or may result in shaping their teaching beliefs for the future.

6.2.8 Active classroom environment

Wood & Tanner (2012:8) propose that teachers 'who are committed to their students can expect the best from their students in return'. Respondents summate: 'If you see the lecturer putting a lot into it', 'you want to put more into it, it's a two way street'. A high level of student engagement and an improved perception of teacher quality have all been attributed to an active-centered classroom environment. A respondent of the current study proposes that 'if the teacher is fully confident on what they are doing they have no problem assigning some time to thinking differently'.

Clear evidence from respondents of the current study reflects the students desire to 'think outside the box' and be challenged to 'dig deeper' into topics of accounting: 'it would be easier if we [the students] experienced more responsibility at this level', the teachers 'shouldn't baby-step you through every single thing, they should give you a sense of freedom'. This is a very interesting exposure to the deep thinking of PP respondents, which echoes student experiences of lack of enjoyment for learning in the final years of post-primary (Smyth *et al.*, 2011; DES, 2013). Respondents are lost in a mass of 'rote learning' and 'teaching to the test' (Smyth *et al.*, 2011:42). This resonates with Smyth *et al's.* (2011) finding, that Irish PP schools favour experiential learning. This concurs with international studies (EPPI, 2005; Gorard & See, 2010, cited in Gorard & See, 2011:688; Lumby, 2011). In reality though, Irish teachers at PP level adopt 'structuring teaching practices' as opposed to enhanced teaching activities (OECD, 2009) when compared to other European countries (Drudy, 2013).

The active teacher uses a variety of approaches from group work, classroom discussion and classroom questions to the use of real-life examples, although respondents would like to see more of this: 'it would be 100 times easier if you knew what it related to in real terms'. The teacher is breaking down knowledge 'into the smallest margin' and you [the student] are learning 'what you are doing more in business terms than accounting terms, [then] you find when you are doing the numbers, you know where it is coming from and why it is going there'. The active teacher will adapt their teaching strategies (Trigwell, 2001) as the lesson progresses, aware that there are many different teaching methods needed to match students understandings (Marton, 1992). Respondents agree that their teacher in the active classroom will 'keep on explaining for as long as they [the teacher] have to' and 'the lecturer has to be able to adapt to every class, every class is different'.

6.2.8.1 Open dialogue and active listening

Dialogue will ensue on a daily basis in class between the teacher and student and student and student negotiating with one another through content. It's about the lecturer's ability to create knowledge by honing in on and developing on students' viewpoints and using the students' questions as a means of expanding on knowledge, particularly in accounting. The use of questions as a teaching method is one that the respondents of the current study recommend: **Erica** proposes 'what's really effective in accounting is

when they [the lecturers] give us problems to do, give us a minute to do them yourself before going through it to see if you understand what's going on or not I find that really helpful'. Good teachers are never negative. **Mick** comments: 'they might know you have the wrong answer but they might adapt your answer to get it on the right path'. While **Declan** explains that he 'doesn't mind being used' when he makes an error, the teacher draws attention to this, by subsequent questioning so that the students themselves have to reconsider and change their ideas. This is supported by Wood & Tanner (2012). Listening is a key finding of the current study. The researcher has only found two studies (Gorard & See, 2011; Hattie, 2012) that stress the importance of listening. The current study proposes the concept of active listening on the part of both teacher and student. Respondents comment: that 'it feels better when they do listen to you because you will be more inclined to ask a question rather than asking a question to a lecturer who doesn't want to listen and you feel stupid' while **Noelle**[7] posits that 'it's good lecturers take on board what students say, we need more of this'.

Having a positive, caring and respectful classroom re-assures students that 'not knowing' is not negative so that students will not fear appearing stupid in front of their peers. Instead, the teacher has created a classroom climate that encourages students to work together until they all understand.

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[7] Respondent of the current study

6.2.8.2 Feedback

Feedback from the teacher is valued by the students as Ivan points out that it 'Gives us [the students] confidence in ourselves as well'. The smaller class sizes of IoTs in HE and PP allows for more direct contact between the teacher and the student. Teachers of smaller class sizes tend to adopt a 'hands-on approach'. Respondents give an example: 'if you do something wrong he [the lecturer] will say you are after getting that part right, your approach is very good, but you are just missing out this figure, he [the lecturer] will pick it up show it to the rest of the class as an example and that's good feedback'. This supports the recommendation that an effective teacher checks for understanding throughout the lesson and adjusts the teaching style accordingly (Guskey, 1996). Therefore, it can be concluded that the 'hands-on' teaching approach is motivational for both the teacher and the student.

PP respondents of the current study would agree with good reported teaching practices from the literature (Kaur, 2008; 2009). Respondents sample utterances include: 'yea, she would teach in a way that we could understand', 'she has been teaching it so long the textbook wouldn't be as good as her notes', 'yes she's relating to us she's not speaking to us in these huge complicated words she's talking to us one on one', 'she's not trying to impress anyone', 'it's the little things she does', 'there's teaching and then there's teaching with care'. PP respondents propose that feedback from the teacher 'gives us [the students] confidence in ourselves as well' and has

been related to improvements in student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

The current study proposes that an active 'positive classroom environment' is created by the teacher, with the students wanting to be part of it. Respondents propose that: 'constant interaction means you are going to be involved in the class [and] it's much easier to learn when it's that way' with the teacher considering students academic as well as social and personal needs (Stronge *et al.*, 2011). This type of teacher behaviour develops social interaction skills of students (Gorard & See, 2011) and displays what is expected of them in wider society (Gorard & Smith, 2008).

6.2.9 Passive classroom environment

Traditional teaching methods will bring about only limited changes in thinking: 'when students enter a class burdened with misconceptions they are likely to leave the class with the same misconception' (Marton, 1992:254). This finding also surfaces in the current study in the passive classroom environment: 'when we try to do it ourselves we are lost in an ocean'. Negative teacher-student interaction can lead to student disengagement (Smyth & McCoy, 2011). Evidence from the current study accounts student experiences of a passive classroom environment, particularly by HE university respondents and also some respondents at PP level. At HE level, respondents report of the lecturer standing 'behind their podium', 'reading off slides', 'rushing to get a course done', 'with little

regard to whom they [the lecturers] are teaching and why'. Conventional pedagogy has been linked to problems at both HE and PP level (Ramsden, 1991; Exeter *et al.*, 2010). Respondents of the current study propose that: 'they [the lecturers] wouldn't change their teaching approach and I [the student] don't think they [the lecturer] would know how', they [the lecturer] are 'just standing there watching us' making no attempt to help students that may be in difficulty.

At PP level respondents agree that their teacher would go through the topics quite quickly and briefly and tell the student 'to figure it out yourselves at night', 'there is no understanding of the general topic'. Because these respondents are in their final year of PP education, 'we [the students] know that we are in a little bit of trouble with this subject and we need to pull together' and 'it has brought us quite close', and 'we get grinds' and 'if we get good results it reflects on him [the teacher] then that he is a good teacher'. Student collaboration, because of possible teacher in-competency is an area that certainly deserves more research attention. In the passive classroom, feedback is seldom given (Voerman *et al.*, 2012), however, the most common form of feedback given is praise (Pauli, 2010, cited in Voerman *et al.*, 2012:1107). PP respondents of the current study in the passive classroom would concur.

University interviewees report that because the accounting lecturers 'are not too strict on the talking', that it can become quite noisy in lectures and difficult to engage and 'people are on their phones or laptops'. There is no reassurance by the lecturer as 'she [the lecturer] moves 100% straight on'.

Respondents report that student collaboration or classroom discussion isn't a feature ('no, never') of the large class size of university (Bligh, 2000). Group work is something the students would like to see in Accounting as 'sometimes accounting can be very isolating, as you are just doing the question yourself'. Bloemhof & Baker (2010) recommend that classroom discussion, even in a large classroom environment inspired by content can work.

Respondents propose that accounting, unlike other subject areas, 'requires more effort'. Students yearn feedback (Hattie, 2008; Wiggins, 2012) and without it they cannot possibly improve. HE university respondents of the current study propose that they do not receive feedback: 'no never had a situation like that', while **Jeff** describes: 'the one [the lecturer] last semester, she just said I'm sorry this is what I have to teach you, this is my job, it wasn't I want to help you here'. Respondents are not given the opportunity either to provide feedback to their lecturer, so the lecturer 'doesn't know whether we [the students] actually understood or not'. While some respondents are tested every two weeks, there is still no feedback as you 'are obviously gone way off it [the topic] by the time you do the test'. Respondents of the current study offer advice to their HE lecturers; 'stand up, walk around, ask questions of people to see if they understand'. This will create a platform for classroom discussion and dialogue can ensue in a controlled way with a large class size.

There is a perception by students that in a large class environment that lecturers will not question the student (Bloemhof & Baker, 2010).

Respondents of the current study propose that 80% of the class will skip questions for homework but if they think there is a chance 'you [the student] may be asked, you will do the question and prepare yourself better'. Respondents of the current study agree, that lecturers should ask more questions and 'work with you', 'instead of [speaking] at you'. Respondents propose that 'if they [the teachers] are helping you out you want to return and answer the questions' and therefore 'put more effort in to that subject'. Changes need to be implemented to the core activity of teaching practice in large passive classroom environments.

6.2.10 Summary of teaching traits and instructional activities in the classroom

The complexity of the actual instructional context in the classroom represents a dynamic interplay between teachers beliefs, teachers traits, teachers behaviour and students behaviour. This begs the question whether these factors are dependant or uni-directional, or is one area more relevant than the other? It might be more worthwhile to focus on the rationale behind teaching behaviour instead of simply characterising teachers instructional practices as either teacher-focused or student-focused (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; 2006; Prosser *et al.*, 2005) and to look at the impact teachers have on student outcome in the form of engagement.

Considering the findings, it is evident from the current study that students have clear views on what instructional practices are appropriate, given

specific teaching circumstances and what is appropriate teaching behaviour. Therefore, the current study would support calls for professional development programs aimed at the development of teaching professionals who are 'pedagogically sensitive' and are competent in explicit professional reasoning (Loughran & Berry, 2005:126; Van Manen, 2008). Policy should provide for a reflective assessment of every teacher to be built into 'every teacher's professional business' (DES, 2010:17) and this should be related to a national system of data and standards (Jordan & O'Donnell, 2013).

The study of student perceptions of teaching brings an understanding to the effect quality teaching has on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement (Komarraju, 2013). The next section discusses the expected outcomes from the teacher-student interaction process as discussed above.

6.3 Outputs: Quality teaching and successful transition

This section details the outputs from a successful teacher input, classroom process transaction. It proposes the value to all education stakeholders of listening to students perspectives. Institutions and their teaching staff have an obligation to provide 'the necessary conditions, opportunities and expectations' for engagement to prevail (Coates, 2005:26). Successful transition between education levels is very much to the forefront of policy makers agendas, therefore, the time is right to make real change as 'our students deserve no less' (Tinto, 2012:8). Appropriate recognition of the importance of effective teaching for engaging students (Wingate, 2007;

Zepke & Leach, 2010) must be given to effective teachers. Support is needed on both sides of the transition bridge so as to enable students coming from PP level to adjust to the HE environment. The following section discusses the challenges involved in transition from PP to HE level and how successful outputs can be embedded to ease this transition.

6.3.1 Advice from students

It is evident from the current study and from the literature, the benefits of letting students have a voice (Perry, 2003; Tam *et al.*, 2009). By listening to students, education stakeholders can question and address what needs to change with the education systems at classroom level at both PP and HE levels. It is therefore, worthwhile to involve students in dialogue about the constructs of teaching as they are co-constructors of knowledge and learning (Tam *et al.*, 2009). Students after all, are in the classrooms everyday experiencing teaching both good and bad.

What is evident from previous research is that to stand still, is to get left behind (Marshall, 2013). Looking to best practice countries (Japan, Singapore and Finland), should only serve as a guide as one size does not fit all. There is nothing to stop Ireland leading the way in educational innovation and what better way to start than by turning to the young generation for advice. Policy changes need to be implemented that not only recruit and train the best teachers, but support them after they take up their

positions as teachers in the classroom environment. Quality teaching lies at the heart of social and economic progress (Day, 2013).

HE respondents propose that lecturers have a profound impact on students and the choices that they make going forward: 'big influence, 'I had no interest [in accounting] coming in, now I have picked it', 'no, my accounting lecturer wouldn't inspire me to go on and do accounting'.

6.3.2 Mismatch of teaching/learning environments

Respondents point to a mismatch in the teaching environments of PP and HE level and a lack of enjoyment for students in the final years of PP (DES, 2013). PP respondents describe the system as the teacher 'spewing out knowledge', 'you [the student] literally have to know what to do without thinking', 'it is too exam-dictated', whereas at HE the lecturer is more a 'font of knowledge' and 'you [the student] have to go to them [the lecturers] to look for knowledge'. Autonomy is a perceived feature of HE according to participants of the current study but this is not always the case. The smaller class sizes allows for a more hands-on approach between the lecturer and student, while the university respondents would prefer 'if it was more personal, if they [the lecturers] did care more about how you [the student] are doing' as 'it is a huge transformation moving away from home'. Again, this reinforces Alford & Griffin's (2013) message that students are real people.

The current study has found differing teaching strategies to exist at both HE and PP levels. HE respondents talk about differing experiences at HE: they did not expect a collaborative approach at HE but 'constant interaction means you are going to be involved in the class'. In contrast, other HE respondents did not expect to be completely 'thrown in at the deep end', and found lecturers to be 'disorganised, didn't seem to know what they were doing', 'it's like they don't even remember teaching us, there is nothing worse than that', 'playing music in classrooms' 'totally scatty', 'unapproachable'.

At PP level, respondents did expect a 'spoon-feeding' strategy; 'kind of babied along at secondary school'. **Jeff** remarks that 'in PP, you have only spoon-feeding, it's all the same stuff, they [the teachers] know it off by heart at that stage, whereas in college you are going in at a different level, you are going in much deeper getting the thought process of accounting'. Comments such as these would indicate that respondents have thought about these issues and that it does bother them and possibly stifles their creativity as independent thinkers. This echoes Hyland's (2011) advice that high achievers at PP will also be high achievers at HE, and so it is essential that PP and HE stakeholders take a collaborative approach to the importance of transition. McManus (2013) agrees, as she notes that too often the PP system shoulders the blame for issues that need to be addressed at both education levels together.

HE respondents of the current study ponder on their feelings about their experience in HE, the most notable being 'the meeting of like-minded

people with similar aspirations in life'. **Anthony** 'was quite pleased when coming into college to find there was more like-minded people who are there to learn', because back in secondary school 'there wasn't the same willingness to learn'. Therefore, it can be more challenging for the teacher to engage the classes. At HE level, 'there is more of a focus on understanding, going in much deeper, getting the thought process'.

A clear finding from respondents at HE is that there is much more of an 'active offer of support, a very open door policy' at PP level, whereas in HE 'you are just a number to them [the lecturers]'. This concurs with Milne's (2007) finding of less support from lecturers at HE, than teachers at PP. This was particularly evident with the university respondents of the current study. However, at the end of the day, respondents recognise the importance of being able to think independently and become critical and reflective thinkers, ready for the workplace (McManus, 2013). They recognise that academic support at HE level is more of a 'guide' than the 'hand-holding' of PP level, although some lecturers do expose the students to different ways of thinking.

It is evident from the current study that both HE and PP students have 'high aspirations as learners' and want to achieve: 'the people that are getting the best results at the end of the day are the people who work independently', 'I take my own initiative', 'I am self-motivated'.

Despite the willingness and readiness of the students to learn: 'everyone is focused, everyone wants to do well' and universities having invested huge

resources to try and improve completion rates (Bryson & Hand, 2007) there has been little change with success rates (Yorke & Longden, 2006; Tinto, 2012). This resonates with Hopkins & Levin (2000), Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) and Tinto's (2012) advice that change needs to happen inside the classroom.

Rowley *et al.* (2008) warn that when a mismatch occurs between students expectations and actual experiences, then disengagement can ensue. **Brian, a HE respondent** posits that: 'no, I wouldn't have any engagement whatsoever'. Tinto (2002) argues for a collaborative pedagogy that sees the student as an active participant in the learning process.

6.3.3 Creating the classroom fit

What is clear from the current study is students recognition of the importance of their lecturers to them both academically and socially; 'they [the lecturers] joke with you', they are 'friendly while still getting the respect of their students', 'he [the university economics lecturer] is charismatic, the lecturer is 50 or 60 but it is as if you are talking to a teenager it's good like that' and 'it's even easier to learn then'.

This resonates with students feelings that they 'fit in' when they are interacting with supportive lecturers (Thomas, 2002; Johnson & Watson, 2004; Harvey *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, the current study supports social as well as academic cohesion and recognises its importance to students

(Parkinson & Forrester, 2004; Nelson *et al.*, 2011). University interviewee's confirm that integration and successful transition takes place in the classroom setting (Pascarella & Wolf, 1985; Tinto, 1993); 'they [the lecturers] would never acknowledge you on the corridors, they completely ignore you, I would like if they acknowledged you'. Respondents of the current study agree 'that if you have a good lecturer interested in their students', 'if you enjoy the classes', 'like the lecturer, you are going to want to attend class'.

Similarly at PP level, respondents, 'don't mind going into class as [the teacher] has a bit of humour and it keeps you having more interest in the class and your teacher'. The current study supports the finding that minor adjustments to teaching approaches could make a real difference to student outcomes (Wingate, 2007), enhancing the relationship between teachers and students and students and their peers in the classroom setting (Lawrence, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The current study's findings support that it is the teachers, both HE and PP that are in a prime position to really make a difference to education at both HE and PP levels. Despite calls for social and practical skill training for teachers (Beach & Player-Koro, 2012), it has become evident there are no clear structures in place to improve teachers teaching skills in education training or continuous professional development programmes (Beach *et al.*, 2014). Respondents at HE level agree that all lecturers 'should be sent for 6 month training to see if you [the lecturer] can do it [teach], then you [the lecturer] will know if you are able for the environment', while 'some

lecturers have a reputation for being a bad lecturer' and 'can turn you off a subject for life'.

Policy decisions need to be implemented in Ireland that address pedagogical engagement strategies, offering all teachers, (particularly HE that have no formal training in teaching) the opportunity to continually upskill and improve their teaching skills and techniques. This resonates with what many countries have already implemented (Gibbs & Coffey 2004; Van Keulen, 2006, cited in Postareff & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2008:29).

The current study has explored student experiences of their teachers at both PP and HE levels and therefore the findings can help 'inform both current teachers professional development and future teachers aspirations, which in turn could lead to an improvement in teaching' (Chen *et al.*, 2012:945). In the next section, the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework proposes how real change can be implemented at a classroom level in a way that can make a real difference to how teaching happens at PP and HE levels.

6.4 Refining the Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework

The research process adopted in the current study was supported by the conceptualisation of the quality teaching initiatives framework as described in Chapter Three (Section 3.4) and repeated here for completeness (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

Proposed Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework
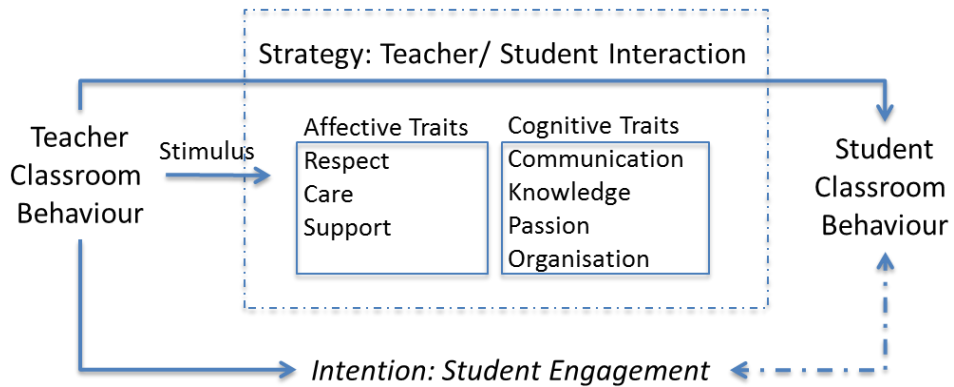
Based on the key research findings detailed in Chapter Five and discussed in Chapter Six, the author refined the Proposed Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework (Figure 3.1) to reflect these research revelations (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2

Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework
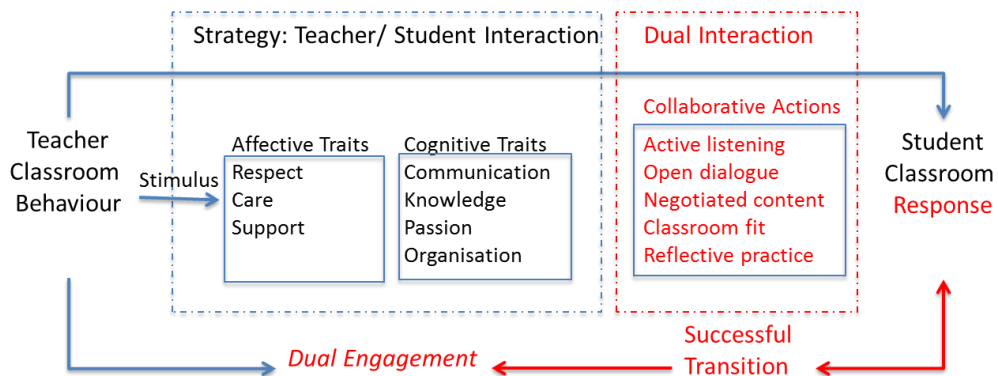
As in the previous proposed framework of quality teaching initiatives, this refined framework describes the process-product paradigm in the context of

the classroom environment. This framework, as depicted in Figure 6.2, describes teacher classroom behaviour as the stimulus for student classroom response. The framework acknowledges that teacher traits and teaching strategies adopted are key determinants of the successful implementation of this framework. The research outcomes, as depicted in the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework (Figure 6.2), propose some important points relating to existing theory as set out in this framework:

Teacher as a catalyst to engagement: Respondents of the current study propose that the effective teacher has a presence and provides the stimulus to initially catch the interest of their students. In addition, respondents comment that they [the students] are ready, open, flexible and willing to actively participate in class, but if the teacher does not have the same agenda, then the student will begin to disengage.

Teaching Traits: Teaching traits are identified in the literature as cognitive and affective and are key determinants of effective teaching. It is interesting to draw attention to respondents of the current study's emphasis on affective teacher traits as preceding cognitive teaching traits. With regard to *affective traits,* respect of the teacher is paramount as students will not learn in an environment of disrespect. Teacher care and support means a lot to the students as this creates a relaxed environment so that the student can feel comfortable in class. The student looks forward to going into that classroom everyday where the teacher has created this environment. Following the teacher's successful implementation of a respectful, caring and supportive classroom environment, students are enticed to want to be part of this class.

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Cognitive teaching traits can then commence*, which involves the teacher having the ability to place knowledge into context that are relevant to the students, while displaying a passion and good communication skills to release this knowledge. Students become engaged in the classroom lesson and with the teacher. The teaching strategy adopted is teacher-student interaction and the teacher probably holds this conception of teaching also.

The parts of the framework highlighted in red are the researcher's presentation of the effects of quality teaching initiatives on engagement and transition.

Dual interaction: As highlighted in Chapter Two, dual interaction is a two-way process, with both teacher and student actively engaged (Duffy & Cunningham 1996, cited in Laurillard, 2002:67; Bovill *et al.*, 2011). Student and teacher are motivating and negotiating with one another through active listening, which allows for depth of thinking and requires genuine dialogue between the teacher and student (Hattie, 2012). This models dual-interaction and mutual respect for both teacher and student perspectives. This allows for collaboration to occur (Watkins *et al.*, 2002) and influences student behaviour in the form of outcome (Watkins *et al.*, 2002). This is the point where students respond to the positive active classroom environment created by the teacher by displaying an excitement and passion to dig deeper into topics. Similarly, this is where misconceptions about the subject matter are broken down and students are inspired to fully interact with the teacher, compete against themselves and to take on tasks that seem to exceed their grasp. The outcome is dual engagement.

Dual engagement: Students now have the confidence that they can achieve in this classroom climate and they feel part of the 'fit' that has been created by quality teaching, with teacher-student and student-student collaborating together. True dual-engagement occurs for both teacher and student as they reflect on their actions. The teacher offers feedback to the students, which in turn gives them the confidence to continually improve. The student also provides feedback and advice to their teacher of what needs to change, enhancing the duality of this relationship. Over time, students become co-constructors of knowledge and learning, as advised by Tam *et al.* (2009), through 'open dialogue'. This allows for greater classroom 'fit' on the part of both student and teacher.

Successful transition: Because of the input-output process of education under this framework, interactions are solid foundations in their own context, allowing for reflective practice to occur. Successful transition for students can happen as they move from one education level to the next and expect to experience similar constructs in both environments. Co-construction of knowledge is the assumed norm by both teacher and student, and dual engagement is the natural state in the classroom. What is key, is that the quality teaching initiatives recommended are equally effective across different education levels (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013).

6.5 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has discussed the findings in light of the literature, has highlighted areas of similarities and variations and has added fresh ideas to research of this nature from the respondents experiences, which opens the gate for further research in these areas. The current study set out with two separate research sites (PP and HE), with the intention of delving into students experiences of both. Independent teaching strategies, presently exist at both education levels. This is influenced to a certain degree by the contexts they operate in and the teachers ultimately, can display similar traits of a desirable and less desirable nature that respondents have experienced, at both education levels.

Policy considerations could be i) teacher evaluations, ii) teacher reflective assessments, iii) focus on pedagogical skill development and iv) reflective and collaborative approaches by all education stakeholders to establishing best practice with strategies to be implemented at classroom level. The Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework was presented, which extends existing theory of the teacher-student process of engagement. The next chapter sets out the salient conclusions of this research study, while emphasising the main contributions of this research work. It will offer recommendations relating to this research study and suggest further areas for research of this nature.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and recommendations

7.0 Introduction

The previous chapter critically examined and discussed the current study's research findings within the context of the extant literature and offered student advice to education professionals and policy makers based on these research findings. This chapter reminds the reader of the aim and objectives of the current study, summarising the main research outcomes and establishing a link between these outcomes and the fulfilment of the research objectives. The contributions to theory and practice are then established. Recommendations of the current study are proposed. Limitations of this study are recognised and suggestions for future research are offered. A reflexive analysis of the role of the researcher is provided. Concluding comments are then given.

7.1 Research objective and questions

The overall objective of this research was to explore student perceptions of the effect of teaching on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at PP to HE. This was achieved by examining the following research questions:

1. How do students conceptualise the role of interaction for classroom engagement?

2. What are student perceptions of their teachers traits and teaching strategies at both post-primary and higher education levels?

3. What are students experiences of their classroom environment at post-primary to higher education?

7.2 Summary of research outcomes

This section provides an overview of the linkages between the literature review (Chapters Two and Three), the methodology used (Chapter Four) and the findings and discussion (Chapters Five and Six).

The literature review offered the researcher reassurance as to the credence of certain findings, while allowing the researcher the flexibility to investigate variations between the findings of the current study and those from previous studies in the literature. The research outcomes from the current study are now outlined, based on the themes identified from this study:

1. Students conceptualisation of the role of interaction in classroom engagement

2. Teacher traits

3. Instructional activities in the classroom

4. Students transitional experiences of their classroom environment at PP to HE

7.2.1 Theme 1: Students conceptualisation of the role of interaction in classroom engagement

Theme 1 addresses research question one: How do students conceptualise the role of interaction for classroom engagement?

Teaching is a multifaceted activity (Doyle, 2006; Stronge *et al.*, 2011). The complexity of the actual teaching process is a dynamic interplay between teacher, student, context and content, constrained by external factors relating to education. The current study has chosen to examine the classroom rather than the external constraints. Students thought processes on teaching and student engagement led to the exposure of three types of teaching conceptions; teacher-focused, student- focused and teacher-student interaction. This research study has found combinations of all three teaching approaches. Teaching traits and practices associated with the teacher-focused and student-focused conceptions are predominant in this study's findings. Taking the classroom as the basis for investigation, the current study provides support for combining the teacher-focused and student-focused approaches, depending on the content to be taught. Teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction is the desired outcome of teacher classroom behaviour and student classroom behaviour, but can be difficult to achieve (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013). Key among effective teaching practices

is teacher-student interaction or the degree to which the teacher is able to create an environment that engages the student's attention (Hattie, 2009). Respondents of the current study offer descriptions of what teachers can do to improve classroom processes and ultimately engagement of both teacher and student.

Students propose that the teacher provides the stimulus that catches the students attention. This requires a natural skill on behalf of the teacher; the good teachers have a presence as students see the teacher as being central to the success of their interaction. The students comment that they are ready, open, flexible and willing to actively participate in class, but if the teacher does not have the same agenda then the students will begin to disengage. The current study indicates that positive teacher-student relationships and interactions contribute not only to student engagement but also to teaching quality initiatives.

7.2.2 Theme 2: Teacher traits

Themes 2 and 3 address research question 2: What are student perceptions of their teachers traits and teaching strategies at both post-primary and higher education levels?
Good education is characterised by high quality learning opportunities for students. In this respect, 'the teacher is the most important factor for student learning' (Abell, 2007:1105). Therefore, efforts to improve education are served by efforts to improve teaching competences and to get teachers to

reflect on their practices in the classroom. In this regard, cognitive traits relate to teaching practices in the classroom that maximise student engagement according to the students descriptions (Kyriakides & Creemers, 2008). The cognitive traits identified in the current study are communication, knowledge, passion and organisation.

Affective traits displayed by the teacher (respect, care and support) are a prerequisite to the successful engagement of the students and then cognitive trait implementation can follow easily (Hattie, 2012). Respondents propose that respect is a key affective trait of teachers, but recognise that it is a two-way process (dual-engagement). Along with the care and support displayed by the teacher, the student is now ready to interact with the teacher in this supportive classroom environment. The teacher can then prepare to release their cognitive traits in the form of knowledge by re-assuring the students that the subject content is not beyond their grasp. They can relate the current lesson to other subject areas, and they can adapt the lessons according to the students needs. A student-centered teacher is passionate about engaging students with what is being taught. Overall, the teacher has created a supportive classroom environment where positive relationships can ensue.

This allows for the teacher to release their knowledge in a manner that captivates the student and cultivates an interest in the student to dig deeper into topics, breaking down mis-conceptions and creating an active classroom environment.

7.2.3 Theme 3: Instructional activities in the classroom

Students have clear views on what instructional activities are appropriate, given specific teaching circumstances and what are appropriate teacher practices. Students want to be part of their classroom experience, getting actively involved in the class, with the teacher considering students academic as well as social and personal needs (Stronge *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, student engagement could be increased by improving teachers practices associated with student desire to be part of their own student outcomes (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013). When teachers have a clear idea of the goals they have set out together with the student in a collaborative way, actively listening to students, seeing the lesson through the eyes of students, then true engagement occurs for both teacher and student. This allows the teacher to innovate when teaching strategies are not succeeding, have a high level of flexibility, and become 'adaptive learning experts' (Hattie, 2012:25). In order to achieve teacher-student engagement, the teacher is provided with the opportunity to utilise in a flexible manner the current study's existing findings of effective teacher classroom behaviour and adapt it to their specific needs. Also, the teacher can develop their own strategies and action plans for improvement. Therefore, efforts to improve the classroom experience are served by efforts to improve teaching practices. When teachers differ as to their understanding of their teaching role, then anything goes may be the normal behaviour (Hattie, 2012). By exploring effective teaching practices, a universal description of teaching roles may emerge. Links between teaching and student outcomes may be

established by getting inside the classroom environment to see what is really happening.

Policy implementations to date have focused on teacher content knowledge rather than affective teacher classroom behaviour (Beach, 2011). Educators may have to change their mind-set from top teaching strategies that should be employed in the classroom (Hattie, 2012), to realising that one size does not fit all. The best teaching may require the ability to alter instruction based on reflective practice between teachers and students (See Framework Section 6.4, Figure 6.2).

7.2.4 Theme 4: Students transitional experiences of their classroom environment at PP to HE

Theme 4 addresses research question 3: What are students experiences of the classroom environment at post-primary to higher education? The outcome of the current study is the proposal of a Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework that can be mirrored across different education levels. This framework has been devised from student experiences of the teacher-student transaction process at both PP and HE, taking on board students suggestions of how quality teaching initiatives can be successfully embedded in the classroom. Respondents of the current study have described the good teaching initiatives and poor teaching practices of both PP and HE levels. This appears to be in line with previous research. Despite the positive relationship between good teaching practices and student

engagement (Biggs, 1999; Kyriakides *et al.*, 2009), it appears that in practice teachers are slow to incorporate this approach into their everyday classes (Hughes, 2011). The Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework devised from the current study's findings outlines how quality teaching initiatives in the classroom can lead to successful transition of students between education levels. Students can transition with ease between PP and HE because similar constructs exist at both levels. Dual-interaction can lead to dual-engagement, with the teacher and student becoming co-constructors of knowledge, reflecting and collaborating together as depicted in the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework described in Chapter Six (Section 6.4).

It appears that educational stakeholders must share: i) a fundamental commitment to improving outcomes for students, and ii) an emerging recognition that, to make a difference, change must be meaningfully situated and sustained at the classroom level (Hopkins & Levin, 2000; Teddlie & Reynolds; 2000; Tinto, 2012).

7.2.5 Summary

A key research outcome of the current study is the importance of listening to students viewpoints and involving them [the students] in dialogue about the constructs of teaching and engagement. The phenomenographic approach afforded the researcher an 'insider view', giving the students a platform to air their perspectives on the quality teaching initiatives that could be

implemented, particularly inside the classroom. Once the classroom environment ethos of dual engagement has a solid foundation, students can transition with ease between education levels. The Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework devised from the current study offers educators a model to work with in devising best practice.

7.3 Contributions to knowledge

The purpose of this research study was to explore student perceptions of the effect of teaching on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at PP to HE level. The focus of this research was to explore students conceptualisation of the role of interaction in classroom engagement, teaching traits and teaching practices in PP and HE environments. The relatively limited focus of the current study allows for a more in-depth description and analysis of student perception of quality teaching initiatives as opposed to considering broader teaching approaches and educational effectiveness (Seidel & Shavelson, 2007; Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013). This research was presented in the context of the PP and HE sectors in the Republic of Ireland.

This research makes a valuable contribution on a number of levels:

7.3.1 Theoretical contribution to knowledge

The phenomenographic method and incumbent techniques of focus groups and one-to-one semi-structured interviews yield valuable insights into theoretical issues gleaned from the literature review. Focus group and interview dialogue allowed an investigation into how these issues are impacting on student outcome in the form of classroom engagement in the PP and HE environments. On a theoretical level, this research study has highlighted new areas for description and the extension of existing theory.

New areas for description

Current literature does not adequately explore other student outcomes, apart from cognitive student outcomes and in particular at HE level (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013). The current study explores student perceptions of the effect of teaching on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at PP to HE level. Calls are made for coherence across the education sectors as to the importance of transition between PP and HE and the implementation of quality teaching initiatives which are equally effective between the levels (DES, 2013; McManus, 2013). The research outcomes of the current study set out students perceptions of how collaboration between education levels can happen. Research has called for real change in the process of interaction between teacher and student (Thomas, 2002; Johnston & Watson, 2004; Haggis, 2006; QAA, 2010; Smyth & McCoy, 2011).

Barber & Mourshed (2007) and Tinto (2012:4) argue that the reason most teaching innovations and educational reforms have not improved student

engagement, is that research has sat at the margins of the classroom and has failed to reach into the classroom to substantially improve the classroom experience (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Decades of research on quality teaching have explained why teaching factors are important for student engagement and learning. However, Antoniou (2013:25) 'identified that a void of existing approaches for modelling education effectiveness is a possible reason for the process not contributing significantly to the improvement of teaching practice'. The current study's Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework Figure 6.2 (Section 6.4) proposes to address this gap by offering educators a framework to work with so that they can put quality teaching initiatives into practice at both PP and HE levels.

The literature has supported the importance of quality teaching at classroom level (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000; Tinto, 2012), but has expressed concerns as to the lack of stimulation and enthusiasm displayed by many teachers (Hughes, 2011) in creating a classroom environment that will encourage students to engage (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2009). This research has sought to address these calls for research at a micro-level inside the classroom environment by exploring student perceptions of quality teaching initiatives that could be implemented (Cuseo, 2003; Krause *et al.*, 2005; Zepke & Leach, 2005; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007; Smyth & McCoy, 2011).

Extension of existing theory

The existing models of Teacher thought processes (Clark & Peterson, 1986), Kember's (1997) model of conceptions of teaching and The Act of teaching model (Martin *et al.*, 2000) have been adapted in a Proposed Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework (Figure 3.1) and subsequently refined into the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework (Figure 6.2) as described in Chapter Six (Section 6.4). This framework contributes to the body of existing knowledge concerning teacher classroom behaviour, student classroom behaviour and transition between the education levels (Trigwell, 2000; Anderson *et al.*, 2004; Harris, 2008; Postareff & Lindblom Ylanne, 2008; Gibney *et al.*, 2011; Smyth & McCoy, 2011; McCoy *et al.*, 2014). The current study has found combinations of all three teaching conceptions which may explain variation in student outcomes in the form of engagement. Previous research has identified the necessary teaching skills and practices required of effective teachers but have neglected to consider how to achieve this effectiveness alongside student outcomes (Antoniou, 2013). The current study's Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework addresses this challenge.

The researcher has presented the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework by being faithful to the language of the students. Since not many empirical studies are available of this nature, the current study describes students experiences of the type of teacher behaviour demonstrated in the classroom and contributes to suggestions of how real improvements can be made by teachers and their teaching practices. Students at PP level are

constrained by the rigid environment that presently exists at PP, but express a desire to work collaboratively with their teachers. In contrast, students at HE level often find themselves so independent that they feel completely isolated. HE students also express a desire to work collaboratively with their HE teachers.

A lot of the transition based research has focused on the first year experience, but it may be more beneficial to take a more holistic approach by following students throughout their time at HE level (Briggs *et al.*, 2012). The current study answers this call. The findings comprise student experiences of first year, second year and third year as well as mature students in its HE focus groups. In addition, PP students offer an account of their hopes and fears as they make the transition from PP to HE. This offers a wider variation in student experiences as to how quality teaching can become the normal construct across education levels.

Currently, classrooms are dominated by teacher talk (Lingard, 2007). There is a need for teachers and students to see their role as active listeners – they should listen to one another's questions, ideas and feedback. Gorard & See (2011) and Hattie (2012) first proposed listening as an important teaching factor for student engagement. The current study goes further, by applying the term 'active listening' on the part of both teacher and student as an important determinant of the quality of the teacher-student interaction process.

7.3.2 Practical contributions to knowledge

On a practical level, the research outcomes display rich descriptions of a qualitative nature on the role of interactions between teacher and student leading to dual engagement of student and teacher which may make the difference to practitioner uptake. This research addresses the finer details of interactions at classroom level (Hopkins *et al.*, 2011) and therefore policy makers could work at how to embed these details (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014). Teachers may also be able to reflect and discover their own perceptions of what makes a quality teacher and examine how this is impacting on their teaching practice (Hofer, 1994, cited in Chen *et al.*, 2012:945; Pang, 1999; Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013). The outcomes of this research study propose to establish stronger links between quality teaching initiatives at PP and HE levels, and to put these initiatives into practice. The research also offers a baseline for improvements in policy to make these changes happen. The current study provides support for quality teaching initiatives recommended by students which may have implications for policy makers and practitioners in implementing teacher preparation and continuous professional development education programs. What is key, is that the quality teaching initiatives recommended are equally effective across different education levels (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013), as proposed in the current study's Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework (Figure 6.2). This framework can also give prospective and practising teachers the opportunity to rehearse and practice these initiatives in their teaching.

A number of specific practical implications relating to quality teaching initiatives have been proposed and their impact on student outcomes in the form of engagement has been identified during the research. In summary:

- Hone an appreciation of the students perspective

  Respondents recommend that teachers should have an open door policy and should actively listen to what their students want.

- Reflect on concepts relating to teacher-student interaction in the classroom

  Respondents desire for collaborative action between teacher and student and student and student allows for dialogue on negotiated content which leads to a teacher-student fit both inside and outside the classroom.

- Promote continuous professional development programmes in quality teaching initiatives

  Continuous professional development programmes should encompass both pedagogical engagement strategy training as well as social engagement strategy training based on the current study's research outcomes. The current study proposes the importance of social affective traits of teaching staff prior to cognitive teaching traits or otherwise the students have already begun to disengage.

- Encourage dialogue and collaboration in classroom education

  Dialogue and collaboration at all points in the teacher-student interaction process have a direct positive impact on students interest and further pursuance of a subject and/or career. Dialogue and collaboration among

education levels and education stakeholders at a macro-level can lead Ireland into and alongside the best performing education economies.

These are not prescriptive actions that will guarantee quality teaching and dual engagement of the teacher and student, but are a firm foundation that 'much must change, our students deserve no less' (Tinto, 2012:8). These recommendations are a starting point as to how teachers can acquire and develop more effective types of teacher behaviour and could form the basis for further research on teacher professional development.

7.3.3 Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework

The model of teacher thought processes, the framework of teaching conceptions and the act of teaching model (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Kember, 1997; Martin *et al.*, 2000) have been adapted in Chapter Three, (Section 3.4, Figure 3.1), to propose a quality teaching initiatives framework from existing research. The current study presents a Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework as outlined in Chapter Six (Section 6.4), Figure 6.2. This framework, as adapted from the literature and refined through the current research, presents a novel way of explaining the dynamics of the teacher input-student outcome process. Teaching has a central focus in this framework at classroom and interaction level. The model is based on the assumption that improvement of teaching quality cannot be based on acquiring skills and competencies on an isolated basis,

but on helping teachers to develop and exercise the type of classroom behaviour that leads to quality outcomes for both teacher and student. The framework proposes the classroom environment that needs to be established by teacher initiatives, enabling dual interactions in the classroom that allow for true engagement to ensue.

Dual interaction through active listening shows humility on the part of the teacher and comprehension on the part of the student. The result is that the teacher values the student perspective and the teacher is modelling deep communication skills which may have a future impact on the students own communication skills. Deep thinking allows for engaging dialogue on negotiated content in the classroom. Students now have the confidence that they can achieve in this classroom climate and they feel part of the 'fit' that has been created by quality teaching initiatives. The teacher and student reflect on each other's actions enhancing the duality of this relationship. Teacher-student interactions are solid foundations in their own context, allowing for successful transition for students from one education level to the next as students expect to experience similar constructs in both environments. Once co-construction of knowledge is the assumed norm by both teacher and student, dual engagement is the natural state in the classroom.

Teachers professional development programs could be modelled using this framework's suggestions. Small changes to teaching practice can have a very significant impact not only to the student and the teacher but to the classroom environment. Teachers develop their teaching skills through

practice but also by reflecting on their mind-sets and inquiry with their students as to what makes an effective teacher (Van Huizen *et al.*, 2005). No studies to date, that the researcher is aware of, have been conducted into student perceptions of quality teaching traits and classroom practices as students make the transition between education levels. In helping teachers address their teaching skills and practices, other factors such as their teaching beliefs and attitudes towards the teaching profession may improve (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2009).

It is important that teachers are open to looking at evidence of their teaching impact on student classroom engagement outcomes and therefore are better able to meet the education needs of students. This is the first framework that offers a solution to the impact that teachers have on students classroom engagement and transition issues for students as they move from one education level to another. The current study suggests that students in final year PP are frustrated with the existing system (McCoy *et al.*, 2014) and are ready and willing to respond to any innovation that may occur. The framework could be modelled across PP and HE to ensure transition issues for students are addressed.

Further, adopting a phenomenographic approach as the student makes the transition from PP to HE in the Republic of Ireland offers insights into the transition process that are valuable to other researchers and education practitioners. Research into this pool of knowledge is required as the need for research on educational experiences (O' Toole, 2013; Day, 2013) is likely to continue in the future.

7.3.4 Summary

As stated previously, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, research on student perceptions of quality teaching at a classroom level, at both PP and HE in the Republic of Ireland, does not exist. Despite calls being made for coherence across the education levels (DES, 2013; McManus, 2013; Kyriakides *et al.*, 2013), no study has suggested how this coherence can be effectively embedded. The current study's Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework proposes how successful transition between education levels can happen, as students can expect to experience similar constructs in both environments.

7.4 Recommendations from the current study

Some of the recommendations set out in this section mirror what has been found from previous research, while others are distinct to the current study, as previous studies may not have jointly reflected on teaching for transition at PP to HE.

7.4.1 Recommendations to teachers as professionals

Teachers that are committed to their students can expect to get the best out of their students in return. Good teachers display a passion for their subject, their students and are never negative. This ultimately inspires confidence in students and can increase student engagement and ultimately performance.

Teachers and students at PP face challenges of moving away from parrot-like teaching and learning in their final years (Smyth *et al.*, 2011; McManus, 2013). It is evident from research that high achievers at PP go on to be high achievers at HE (Hyland, 2011) but presently their creativity is being stifled at PP. This calls for collaboration across education levels in addressing the needs of the best students.

It is the job of teachers to create a successful classroom environment and effectively implement pedagogical engagement strategies, but many teachers cannot because of their lack of formal training in teaching skills particularly at HE level. Change is needed in the academic mind-sets of some HE teachers who operate as transmitters of knowledge. The current study recommends formal teacher training for HE lecturers. The cognitive training of teachers in knowledge development is on-going, but educational stakeholders need to take a closer look at how to implement generic pedagogical affective teaching skills.

7.4.2 Recommendations to education stakeholders

A shared concept of quality teaching across education levels and among educational stakeholders is recommended. Combined professional development training in both HE and PP of related disciplines is essential if coherence across the levels is going to be successful.

HE, PP teachers, students and education management forums could be established to discuss the challenges in education specifically at the classroom level. To ensure progress and development, a reflective assessment of teachers internally in the classroom, possibly through peer-review teaching could take place at least once a term.

The sharing of teachers between HE and PP levels would encourage dialogue and the sharing of best practice across education levels. The current system at HE encourages guest lecturers visits, at a national and international level. One university respondent confirms; '[when] you hear some other lecturer or professor, that's really helpful for me'[8].

Professional development programs built on the current study's findings could facilitate teachers and their willingness to adopt new approaches. Recognition for teachers that adopt quality teaching initiatives in line with best practice should be put in place at policy level.

7.4.3 Recommendations for accounting teaching strategies

The teacher role is critical to student understanding, as accounting is quite a complex subject and 'there are not much fun elements to it'. It has been shown that even minor adjustments to teaching strategies can lead to more active engagement of students. Respondents of the current study offer advice to their teachers; students at PP level express a desire to 'dig deeper' into topics of accounting. Active listening on the part of teacher-student

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[8] Direct quotes from the current study

needs to be encouraged. Teachers must therefore engage in experiential teaching practices as opposed to the structuring teaching practices identified in the current study. Respondents propose group work, classroom discussion, interactive questioning style, real-life examples and feedback as ways to address the changes in practices.

Teachers need to be aware of students level of understanding of the subject. Respondents propose that a good teacher ensures that 'everyone is coming along with her [the teacher], that everyone understands where she [the teacher] is getting things from'. The teacher is breaking down knowledge into 'the smallest margin' which ultimately breaks down misconceptions about the perceived difficulty of the subject.

Respondents like their teachers to have good communication skills, display a positive orderly work ethic and be well prepared and organised for class. A hands-on interactive teaching approach and inclusivity of all learners allows for quality teaching and dual engagement to ensue in the classroom.

7.5 Recommendations for future research

As this research is drawn from an educational context, there are numerous opportunities for future research. The Proposed Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework Section 3.4 (Figure 3.1) could be used as a basis to investigate international differences between PP and HE levels. These differences could be compared and insights provided that may further refine the quality teaching initiatives framework.

Taking the outcome of dual-engagement, from the Refined Quality Teaching Initiative Framework and exploring the effect of dual-engagement on student achievement in the form of learning could be a further progression of this current study. The researcher is planning to complete further analysis of the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework by seeking to implement the framework (Figure 6.2) in actual teaching practices and to document the reflective outcomes as a result.

A longitudinal study that explores the same students and teachers overtime following the implementation of the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework may test the effectiveness of the model.

The study of the effects on students in terms of affective outcomes as a result of changes in the classroom as advocated in the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework would be interesting work.

Further research is needed to extend and deepen teachers understanding of professional practice that is interrelated with performance and development of that practice. Interviewing teachers at both HE and PP levels to gain an appreciation of their perspectives of the work of teachers could yield valuable insights into the culture of the teaching profession and their willingness to adapt to change.

7.6 Research limitations

The current study has a number of research limitations which are now highlighted. This research study was a learning experience and has served to raise issues rather than provide definitive answers.

The purpose of the current study was to conduct an exploratory investigation into student perceptions of quality teaching at multi-level education environments. The researcher gleaned rich, deep insights into student perceptions of teaching with a relatively small sample size of 35 participants, using a purposive-sampling approach to selection. Collectively, the small sample size and non-probability approach to selection means that in adopting the above focus, the generalisability of the findings to the population is understandably limited. However the sample size was in line with the advice of phenomenographic researchers (Sandberg, 2000; Bowden & Green, 2005) for the purposes of seeking data saturation. It was not the intention of the researcher that the current study's findings be replicated by the same or different participants at some other time; the emphasis was on how the research work was done as opposed to the end result (Morse *et al.*, 2002).

The fact that the researcher was engaged in the research process has implications for the preconceptions of phenomena under study can also be viewed as a limitation. In addition, judgment was required by the researcher in the interpretation of the data. While the researcher accepts that it is not possible to completely eliminate these challenges, steps have been taken to

address their impact. The researcher has been careful to consider all of the above in the research study, as documented in Chapter Four. Specifically, the researcher attempted to address these challenges by committing to 'researcher reflexivity' (Padgett, 1998:21; Sin, 2010) as outlined in Section 4.5 and Section 7.7. The researcher constantly referred to the premise that 'it is the research participant's experience which should be revealed not the researcher's expectations' (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:300).

When other researchers are involved in the coding process, they can compare and refine codes until the coding process becomes consistent. The researcher coded the data as a lone researcher, with codes mainly emerging from the text language itself, although the researcher did engage with the relevant literature as an aid to identifying coding topics. The methods through which the researcher coded the data are highlighted in Chapter Four Section 4.7. A sample of the coded transcripts is provided in Appendix D. This led to the emergence of sub-themes and themes, as outlined in Appendix E. The researcher did send sample coding of two transcripts to her supervisor to confirm that she was on the correct track. This helped to increase the reliability and validity of the coding process. Another limitation could be that the researcher did not account for respondent differences or agreements within focus groups. However, this was clearly documented in the transcripts. Because it did not occur very often the researcher felt that it did not need to be included in the data analysis/findings.

7.7 Reflexive analysis of the role of the researcher

The strength of the current study lies in its 'emergent nature, its ability to go with the flow rather than control it' (Padgett, 1998:20). The researcher has maintained 'professional poise' (Padgett, 1998:20) and exhibited the ability to exercise restraint throughout the process. The researcher has documented how she has remained faithful to the data at each stage, from data collection to the data interpretation and analysis process. The researcher made use of memo diaries, reflection reports and checking by academic peers (Padgett, 1998), who gave some advice and feedback as the study progressed. This supports the researcher's 'bracketing' and 'empathetic' approach to this process.

The researcher found it appropriate to present key findings as they emerged in broad themes from the data and from these, sub-themes emerged, adding to the overall experience. The current study focuses on a much broader slice of the student life-world, as it explores various phenomena associated with the concept of quality teaching. 'This is not a clear-cut world but a rather muddled one' (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000:304), with the researcher empathising with student experiences, recounting their true realities, and therefore 'the better we are able to understand teaching, learning and other kinds of human interaction with society' (Sandberg, 1997:208).

The researcher currently teaches at HE and previous to this taught for ten years at PP level. Having trained as a professional teacher, I feel that there are numerous challenges facing teachers everyday not only from students

but also from the wider education stakeholders. Therefore it is understandable that teachers may lose sight of their true vocation and why they choose this profession in the first instance. Yes it is true that many teachers become negative and disillusioned throughout their careers and it can be very difficult to change teachers mind-sets. My message is that each teacher is responsible for how they engage with their students in their own classrooms. This comes easier to some but it can be worked upon by all. We have a responsibility to our students no matter what their age to create and instil in them a passion for what we have taught and the way we behave may have social implications for the students as they progress in life. Educators hold a very privileged position and have been entrusted the opportunity to really make a difference to another's future trajectory. This reminds me of an edict by Miles (1975): 'pick an innovation and go at it hard, implement with precision and energy, then study the effort, reflect on it, re-energise and refine'. If teachers were to really reflect on what they do inside their own classrooms with their students and possibly take one or two elements of the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework, implement it and reflect to see if it has made a difference. While I was undertaking this research I implemented the affective traits of respect, care and approachability in my classrooms and I was overwhelmed by how much the students responded. As a result we had a very warm friendly relaxed classroom, I loved teaching these classes and the students responded accordingly. It is important not to lose sight that we are all human beings with basic instincts of wanting to be

part of a relationship therefore it is our role as educators to create this education partnership with our students.

7.8 Concluding comment

The current study set out to explore student perceptions of the effect of teaching on student outcomes in the form of classroom engagement at PP to HE level. In addressing this objective, the researcher contends that an improved understanding of the concept of quality teaching along with its role in the interaction process in the classroom environment has been offered. The key message to education stakeholders is that they must look at the impact that current and/or future strategies have or will have on student outcomes not only in terms of learning but in the overall social development of the student. The current study offers recommendations that policy-makers could take on board. In light of the weaknesses exposed in the existing education system, the current study has offered a fresh approach, the Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework, as to how teacher classroom behaviour and student classroom behaviour can be implemented so as to offer quality outcomes for both students and teachers.

Going forward, the teacher should be recognised as central to the effect they have on student outcomes. To date, a number of good practices are in place but continued support and a renewed energy to enhance teaching as a core activity in the classroom is important. The Refined Quality Teaching Initiatives Framework proposed in the current study offers educators a

contemplative framework to work with in pursuit of quality teaching practice. There is nothing to prevent Ireland leading the way in education best practice. However, educational stakeholders must work in harmony and must be committed to a high quality teaching profession for this to occur.

They may forget what you said but they will never forget how you made them feel

Carl W. Buechner

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical clearance and consent forms

Ethical consent letter from UEA

Dear Breda,

Your revised application was reviewed today by the EDU research ethics committee. We were pleased with the considerable revision that had been made to the application and we are now able to approve the ethics application provided some further changes are made.

The information sheet and consent form for parents of the school students is unclear. The information sheet is addressed to the students but the consent form to the parents of the students. If these students are under the age of 18 – it would be helpful if you could email me to let me know their age as we were unclear about this - then the consent should be obtained from parents, as you suggest. However I think you need to revise the information sheet somewhat to make it clear it is going to both the students and their parents, otherwise it is rather confusing for the reader.

You also state that there are no risks associated with this research. This is to over claim and ethical considerations are about identifying potential risks and how you will address them rather than stating there are no risks at all. In particular there is a potential risk of students being critical of teachers and lecturers and perhaps therefore creating problems for staff which does need to be recognised and treated sensitively in your research.

Please would you bear the latter point in mind, and please would you amend the information and consent documents for parents and return these to me for our records. Otherwise your application is now approved and you can begin your research.

With best wishes, Jackie.

Dr Jacqueline Watson
Chair EDU Ethics Committee
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ, UK
Email: Jacqueline.Watson@uea.ac.uk
Telephone: +44 (0)1603 592924

A1. Consent form for HE students

Higher education level students' information and consent form.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

STUDY TITLE: Proposing a framework for Accounting student engagement through quality teaching initiatives: exploring the post-primary/higher education divide.

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Ms. Breda O' Brien

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Thank you for taking time to read this.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The aim of this study is to propose a quality teaching framework to bridge the gap between post-primary and higher education level experienced by accounting students in Ireland. This will be explored by isolating the characteristics that students believe are essential to effective teaching and identifying teaching behaviours that demonstrate this effectiveness. Student perceptions of effective teaching will be compared to teachers' conceptions of effective teaching and their reported teaching practices.

WHY HAVE I BEEN CHOSEN?

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a higher education student studying Accounting.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I VOLUNTEER?

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You will be asked to be involved in a focus group interview of approx. 5 students which will be video-recorded. It will take one class period to complete. If you initially decide to take part you can subsequently change your mind without difficulty.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM MY PARTICIPATION?

There are no positive or negative consequences to you directly from participating in this study. The information received may be very valuable in proposing a teaching framework for engaging Accounting students in post-primary and higher education.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE?

If you decide not to participate in this study that is perfectly fine.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I can fully assure you that all the data received within this study will be entirely confidential. Your identity will remain confidential. A study number to protect identification of participant will apply. A secure password-protected file will be used to store the data. Your name will not be published or disclosed to anyone.

WHO IS ORGANISING THIS RESEARCH?

This study is being organised by Ms Breda O' Brien who is a doctoral student in the University of East Anglia, Norwich.

Will I be paid for taking part in this study? No

HAS THIS STUDY BEEN REVIEWED BY AN ETHICS COMMITTEE?

The Research Ethics Committee, University of East Anglia have reviewed and approved this study.

Who do I speak to if problems arise?

 If you need to clarify any point in relation to this study please contact:

CONTACT DETAILS	Contact Details
Breda O Brien, (Researcher)	Dr Paola Iannone (Supervisor)
School of Education and Lifelong	School of Education and Lifelong
University of East Anglia	University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park	Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR47TJ	Norwich NR4 7TJ
United Kingdom	United Kingdom
	Tel 00 44 1603 591007
B.molonyoBrien@uea.ac.uk	p.iannone@uea.ac.uk

If you have any complaint in relation to this study please contact Dr Nalini Boodhoo Head of School of Education and Lifelong learning University of East Anglia. N.Boodhoo@uea.ac.uk

PLEASE TICK YOUR RESPONSE IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX

I have read and understood the Participant

 Information   YES ☐   NO ☐

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss

the study   YES ☐   NO ☐

I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions

                                                           YES ☐   NO ☐

I have received enough information about this study

                                                           YES ☐   NO ☐

Do you agree to be part of a focus group for

this study which will be video-recorded   YES ☐   NO ☐

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study

at any time without giving a reason   YES ☐   NO ☐

I agree to take part in the study   YES ☐   NO ☐

Participant's Signature: _____   Date: _____

Participant's Name in print: _____

   Researcher's Signature: _____   Date: _____

   Researcher's Name in print: _____

A2. Consent form for PP students

Post-primary students' and parents' information and consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

STUDY TITLE: Proposing a framework for Accounting student engagement through quality teaching initiatives: exploring the post-primary/higher education divide.

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Ms. Breda O' Brien

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Thank you for taking time to read this.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The aim of this study is to propose a quality teaching framework to bridge the gap between post-primary and higher education level experienced by accounting students in Ireland. This will be explored by isolating the characteristics that students believe are essential to effective teaching and identifying teaching behaviours that demonstrate this effectiveness. Student perceptions of effective teaching will be compared to teachers' conceptions of effective teaching and their reported teaching practices.

WHY HAVE I BEEN CHOSEN?

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a secondary school student studying Accounting at senior cycle.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I VOLUNTEER?

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You will be asked to be involved in a focus group interview of approx. 5 students. This will be video-recorded. It will take one class period to complete. If you initially decide to take part you can subsequently change your mind without difficulty.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM MY PARTICIPATION?

There are no positive or negative consequences to you directly from participating in this study. The information received may be very

valuable in proposing a teaching framework for engaging
Accounting students in post-primary and higher education.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE?

If you decide not to participate in this study that is perfectly fine.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I can fully assure you that all the data received within this study will
be entirely confidential. Your identity will remain confidential. A
study number to protect identification of participant will apply. A
secure password-protected file will be used to store the data. Your
name will not be published or disclosed to anyone.

WHO IS ORGANISING THIS RESEARCH?

This study is being organised by Ms Breda O' Brien who is a
doctoral student in the University of East Anglia, Norwich.

Will I be paid for taking part in this study? No

HAS THIS STUDY BEEN REVIEWED BY AN ETHICS COMMITTEE?

The Research Ethics Committee, University of East Anglia have
reviewed and approved this study.

Who do I speak to if problems arise?

 If you need to clarify any point in relation to this study please contact:

CONTACT DETAILS   Contact Details

Breda O Brien, (Researcher)   Dr Paola Iannone (Supervisor)
School of Education and Lifelong   School of Education and Lifelong
University of East Anglia   University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park   Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR47TJ   Norwich NR4 7TJ
United Kingdom   United Kingdom
                                     Tel 00 44 1603 591007
B.molonyoBrien@uea.ac.uk   p.iannone@uea.ac.uk

If you have any complaint in relation to this study please contact Dr Nalini
Boodhoo Head of School of Education and Lifelong learning University of
East Anglia.   N.Boodhoo@uea.ac.uk

PLEASE TICK YOUR RESPONSE IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX

I have read and understood the Participant Information
and am happy for my child to participate

<div align="right">YES ☐   NO ☐</div>

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss
the study   YES ☐   NO ☐

I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions

<div align="right">YES ☐   NO ☐</div>

I have received enough information about this study

<div align="right">YES ☐   NO ☐</div>

Do you agree for your child to be part of a focus group study
 which will be video-recorded

<div align="right">YES ☐   NO ☐</div>

I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the
 study at any time without giving a reason

<div align="right">YES ☐   NO ☐</div>

I agree for my child to take part in the study   YES ☐   NO ☐

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signature: _____   Date: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name in print: _____

Participant's Signature: _____Date: _____

Participant's Name in print: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____Date: _____

Researcher's Name in print: _____

A3. Parents' information letter for PP students

15th October 2013

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian,

I am currently pursuing a Doctorate in Education in the University of East Anglia, Norwich. As an accounting and finance lecturer and a member of faculty in a Higher Education Institute, my interest area is student engagement with Accounting as a subject area. This research study will attempt to bridge the gap between post-primary and higher level education experienced by accounting students in Ireland, by isolating the characteristics that students' believe are essential to effective teaching and identifying teaching behaviours that demonstrate this effectiveness when engaging with this subject matter.

Your son/daughter has been selected to participate in a focus group interview using a video-recording. It will take one class period to complete. I can fully assure you that all the data received within this study will be entirely confidential and your son's/ daughter's name will never appear within this document.

Please read the enclosed information. If you are happy for your child to participate, it is important that you and your child sign the attached consent form. I will collect the filled forms from the school in the next few weeks. Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries.

I greatly appreciate your involvement with this process.

_____

Breda O' Brien
School of Education and Lifelong
University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR47TJ
United Kingdom

B.molonyoBrien@uea.ac.uk

A4. Letter for PP schools

<div align="right">5th June 2013</div>

Dear Principal,

I am currently pursuing a Doctorate in Education in the University of East Anglia, Norwich. As an accounting and finance lecturer and a member of faculty in a Higher Education Institute, my interest area is student engagement with Accounting as a subject area. This research study will attempt to bridge the gap between post-primary and higher level education experienced by accounting students in Ireland, by isolating the characteristics that students' believe are essential to effective teaching and identifying teaching behaviours that demonstrate this effectiveness when engaging with this subject matter.

A number of senior cycle students will be asked to get involved in a focus group interview which will be video-recorded. Approximately five to eight students will be needed for the focus group. These students should represent a mix of abilities and be studying senior cycle accounting.

I would also like to conduct an interview with a senior cycle accounting teacher.

Parental information sheets and consent forms will be available for students willing to participate and teacher information and consent form will be given to the teacher involved.

If you are happy for your school to be involved with this research study I would be very grateful if you could email me your response.

Yours sincerely

_____

Breda O' Brien
School of Education and Lifelong
University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR47TJ
United Kingdom

B.molonyoBrien@uea.ac.uk

Appendix B: Sample interview questions

PP students

<u>Focus group questions</u>   November 2013

<u>Participant Group</u>: **Post-Primary Students**

<u>Demographic Questions</u>
- What class are you in
- What type of school is this (all boys, girls, or co-ed)
- How long have you studied Accounting at post primary
- Do you enjoy studying accounting and do you think you might like to study it in HE

<u>Theme 1:</u> **How do students experience the role of interaction in the classroom?**

- What do you understand by the term teaching?
- What do you understand by the term student engagement
- Do you think it is important or is there a need for teacher to want the students to take an active role in class?
- Does the teacher teach class as whole group, teacher- driven?
- Does the teacher invite engagement (move around, interact with students, make eye contact)? And encourage you to ask questions?
- Does teacher listen to your responses?
- Do they value your contributions?
- Do you reflect on what you have learned?
- How do you think the teacher could engage you to become involved in class?
- Do you learn because you have to or want to?
- Do you think the way you behave or act in class can influence the way teacher teaches?
- Do you think size of class affects how you engage?
- Do you engage with the teacher? Other students? How?
- Do you get involved with classroom discussion?
- Do you see the teacher as being central to education of students?

Theme 2: Teaching traits and behaviours

- Can you describe characteristics of your favourite teacher?
- Can you describe characteristics of your least favourite teacher?
- Does your teacher use praise
- Are they encouraging, understanding, motivational
- Are they friendly/interesting
- Do they use humour/ criticism?
- Does your teacher show respect and care for students? How important is this to you?
- Do they give you their attention?
- Do they acknowledge your responses?
- Do they get you to rethink if your response is incorrect?
- Do they give positive feedback?
- Are they a good leader, do they manage the class well?
- Would you feel that your achievement in class is related to behavioural strategy of teacher?
- How does teacher organise class and students time?
- Could you list the qualities of good teacher

Theme 3: Instructional design and approaches to teaching

- Describe the way your teacher teaches?
- Does teacher explain assignments go over them and then allow students to work independently?
- Does teacher reassure you that you will be able to understand the content?
- Does teacher use textbook or notes?
- Does teacher explain the principles of a topic before teaching the detailed facts?
- Does teacher use real-life examples to explain accounting?
- Does the teacher provide drill or practice after each skill is taught?
- Does teacher use unfamiliar words in class?
- Does the teacher start lesson by re-cap of previous lesson?
- Does the teacher re-cap on main points of a lesson at end of each class
- Does the teacher continue to the next unit if students haven't fully understood the last section?
- If students give incorrect answers to questions what does teacher do?
- Are all students included when answering questions?

- How long does teacher wait for a response to a question?
- Do you get the opportunity to collaborate with other students during class?
- If you have difficulty grasping a concept what does the teacher do?
- Does teacher change their teaching approaches as need arises?

Theme 4: Transition experiences of students at post-primary to HE

- What are you expecting when you go to college and are you ready?
- Do you think the lecturers' in HE should play a part in you adapting to HE, explain?
- What approach do you think will be expected of you in HE (independent learning or does lecturer play any part?)
- Would you say you receive a lot of support from your teachers' at post-primary level?
- How do you think the transition from post-primary to HE could be eased?

Overall

- What is your view on Accounting teaching as you have experienced it at post primary?
- What advice could you offer to your teachers?
- Do you enjoy studying Accounting and why?
- Do you set standards for yourself inside and outside class?
- Do you think prior learning/ teaching experiences have an effect and choice you make in further study/life
- Can everybody teach or is it a skill taught or inherent?

B1. Sample interview questions for HE students

Focus group questions   November 2013

Participant Group: **Higher Education Students**

Demographic Questions
- How long have you studied Accounting at higher education?
- What programme of study are you currently enrolled?
- When did you leave school?
- Did you study Accounting at post-primary level?
- What are your experiences of studying Accounting at higher education level as opposed to post-primary level;? did you prefer Accounting at post-primary level or do you prefer it now and if so why?

Theme 1: How do students experience the role of interaction in the classroom?

- What do you understand by the term teaching?
- What do you understand by the term student engagement?
- Do you think it is important or is there a need for teacher to want the students to take an active role in class?
- Does the teacher teach class as whole group, teaching as a lecture method?
- Does the teacher invite engagement (move around, interact with students, make eye contact)? And encourage you to ask questions?
- Does teacher listen to your responses?
- Do they value your contributions?
- Do you reflect on what you have learned?
- How do you think the teacher could engage you to become involved in class?
- Do you learn because you have to or want to?
- Do you think the way you behave or act in class can influence the way teacher teaches?
- Do you attend class regularly?
- Do you think size of class affects how you engage?
- Do you engage with the teacher? Other students? How?
- Do you get involved with classroom discussion?
- Do you see the teacher as being central to education of students?

Theme 2: Teaching traits and behaviours

- Can you describe characteristics of your favourite teacher?
- Can you describe characteristics of your least favourite teacher?
- Does your teacher use praise
- Are they encouraging, understanding, motivational
- Are they friendly/interesting
- Do they use humour/ criticism?
- Does your teacher show respect and care for students? How important is this to you?
- Do they give you their attention?
- Do they acknowledge your responses?
- Do they get you to rethink if your response is incorrect?
- Do they give positive feedback?
- Are they a good leader, do they manage the class well?
- Would you feel that your achievement in class is related to behavioural strategy of teacher?
- How does teacher organise class and students time?
- Could you list the qualities of good teacher

Theme 3: Instructional design and approaches to teaching

- Describe the way your teacher teaches?
- Does teacher explain assignments go over them and then allow students to work independently?
- Does teacher reassure you that you will be able to understand the content?
- Does teacher use textbook or notes?
- Does teacher explain the principles of a topic before teaching the detailed facts?
- Does teacher use real-life examples to explain accounting?
- Does the teacher provide drill or practice after each skill is taught?
- Does teacher use unfamiliar words in class?
- Does the teacher start lesson by re-cap of previous lesson?
- Does the teacher re-cap on main points of a lesson at end of each class
- Does the teacher continue to the next unit if students haven't fully understood the last section?
- If students give incorrect answers to questions what does teacher do?
- Are all students included when answering questions?

- How long does teacher wait for a response to a question?
- Do you get the opportunity to collaborate with other students during class?
- If you have difficulty grasping a concept what does the teacher do?
- Does teacher change their teaching approaches as need arises?

Theme 4: Transition experiences of students at post-primary to HE

- What has been the most surprising aspect of college life and why?
- List and describe three aspects of college life that make you happy or give you encouragement?
- Do you think the lecturers' in HE had a part to play in you adapting to HE, explain?
- What approach was expected of you in HE (independent learning or does lecturer play any part?)
- Would you say you receive more or less support from your teachers' at HE than your teachers' at post-primary level?
- What are the main differences between your teachers at post-primary and HE?
- How do you think the transition from post-primary to HE could be eased?

Overall

- What is your view on Accounting teaching as you have experienced it at HE
- What advice could you offer to your teachers?
- Do you enjoy studying Accounting and why?
- Do you set standards for yourself inside and outside class?
- Do you think prior learning/ teaching experiences have an effect and choice you make in further study/life
- What is the most notable difference between accounting at school and HE
- Do you think the role of the teacher is different in HE as to Post-primary
- Can everybody teach or is it a skill taught or inherent?

Appendix C: Reflective diary extract

Focus group 14.11.2013 (Higher Education) 60 minutes

Video-recording

Five participants: four students specialising in accounting and have had 5 semesters of the subject.

Originally had seven participants, two did not show up but sent their apologies. Five was a good number as otherwise the interview would have taken too long.

At start students took it in turns to answer questions so that each person had a chance to speak, then later it became more of a discussion as they settled down. One student read out the themes to be discussed and prompt questions under each theme. This helped focus the students and get more in-depth information rather than throwing out a general theme and hoping they would pick up on all areas that needed to be fleshed out. This allowed the researcher to remain completely outside the process.

Single interview 23.11.2013 (HE University student) 40 minutes

Used Dictaphone to record the interview

The single interview allowed the researcher to get the student experience in a larger environment, different contextual setting

Focus group 6.12.2013 (post-primary) 40 minutes

Video-recording

Six participants, the video-recording did not impinge on students. It was slow to get the students talking. Didn't get much detail in answers as felt the students had said really all there was to say in the situation. I felt students at PP level are independent and express their desire for their own independence. Many are looking forward to leaving the rigid environment they presently experience.

Focus group 26.11.2013 (post-primary) 40 minutes

Five students participated in the focus group. It went very well, students were all very relaxed and spoke clearly. Their ideas worked off each other. Dialogue ensued. It is important for the researcher to sit with the students as it felt more like an informal chat. The researcher read the questions. All questions did not need to be asked if students had already addressed them in previous answers. All questions were easily understood by students.

Focus group 12.12.2013 (post-primary) 40 minutes

The focus group had four participants. Two of the participants were quiet and the researcher did direct some questions to them so as to include them in the process. The other two participants were forthcoming and gave lots of detail in their answers.

Appendix D: Sample coding and text extracts

How do students experience the role of interaction in the classroom?

- What do you understand by the term teaching?

  RH: Helping students understand a certain method of doing things **Teacher-centered**

  SD: One person explaining concepts or ideas to the students **Teacher-centered**

  EOD: Guiding you through questions and helping you understand questions **Transmissive**

  CB: Getting the point across **Transmissive**

- What do you understand by the term student engagement?

  SD: Students reacting to the teacher **Transmissive**

  RH: Students taking part in the class putting forward ideas **Participative**

  EOD: Be able to ask Q's if you don't understand it fully, having them using different approaches **Constructing knowledge**

  MN: The teacher being able to assess how his class are, understanding, being

	able to adapt his methods of teaching to help a class work and how they understand together and individually	**Constructing knowledge supported by teacher**
Can you describe characteristics of your favourite teacher?	IOK: Most of the lecturers would help you they are friendly as well, pass you on the corridor they would say well in class if you are stuck they will come down and help you not just say figure it out ask someone else, they will come down and show you how to do it themselves (friendly and helpful).	**Helpful, friendly, acknowledgement**
	AC: approachable	
	NB: They joke with you they don't just look at you they have a laugh with you	**Approachable**
	RD: They don't get angry easily	**Humour**
		No anger
Can you describe characteristics of your least favourite teacher?	NB: The way they teach the class they are flying through the presentations they are not teaching it they are just going through it they are not asking questions they are giving you the answers and expecting you to know it	**Rush approach** **Didactic teaching**
	NP: If you ask a question they wouldn't really get angry but they kinda, 'what are you asking that for'?	
	RD: make you feel stupid	**Teacher focused, dismissive of SE**

	MC: Not helpful wouldn't put up solutions to questions if you are after doing questions and want to check your answers they have no solutions	**inferior**
	NB: No I wouldn't go to their lecturers if you are going in there you are not concentrating your mind is elsewhere	**not helpful**
		Non- attendance if don't like lecturer
Does your teacher use praise	NP: Yea they would when you are doing your assignments overall she would say that is very good	**Praise**
Are they encouraging, understanding, motivational	RD: most of them	
	MC: The accounting ones in particular they always say you have to get your 70% for the big four firms, he tries to tell you nobody should be failing, aim for the 70% or more	**Encouraging, motivating for your future**

Does your teacher show respect and care for students? How important is this to you?	NB: The accounting lecturers definitely show respect they care if you get it right AC: You are more likely to respect the lecturer if he/she respects you [all agree]	**Respect and care** **Mutual respect**
Do they give positive feedback?	MC: Yes I think so because even if you do something wrong he will say you are after getting that part right, your approach is very good but you are just missing out on this figure and the other lecturer if you are after doing something really good she will pick it up and show it to the rest of the class as an example and that's good feedback	**Feedback positive, helping students learn to think, take risks**

Appendix E: Extract of themes, sub-themes and text extracts

Theme 1: Students conceptualisation of the role of interaction in classroom engagement
- *Sub Theme*: **Student engagement**

Codes	Sub codes	Utterances
Interaction	Teacher-led	**MB:** Generally the teacher is the best person to initiate the students engagement, they try and interact and not just talk in the class
		DR: If the teacher is waffling on for 40 minutes, students day dream off or go on their phone but if you are kept on your toes you will be thinking the whole time and find it more enjoyable and you learn more
		PM: Hands on approach is a better way of teaching that makes the student have to interact with the teacher
	Hands-on	**MC**: Asking questions, asking for help, taking part in class doing homework
		AC: that is a very important aspect of teaching because if the lecturer is coming in flying through a powerpoint presentation and barely asking any questions of students the students aren't going to learn anything they are
	Questions	going to be glazing over what is going on

BOS: The students asking questions and maybe a degree of the teacher asking questions of the students, you need both ways. I think it comes down to the individual as well some people are suited to listening sitting and taking in the information and other people aren't so I think you need a bit of both.

SR: Otherwise you are sitting there looking at people who have no interest and you are always going to have people who have no interest but at least if you are engaging with them maybe they will tell you they don't have any interest, that they are struggling, as a lecturer you can't get any feedback unless you ask the students how they are feeling and interact, I think it works better too when people are asking and you are not afraid to say I can't do this I do like, I do like that you have to, you have to talk, a lecturer has to be approachable, definitely

Codes	Sub-codes	Utterances
Involvement	Listening Active Interest	**RB:** Students getting involved in the class rather than the teacher just standing at the top of the class telling you what to do and how to do it and the student is coming up with different ways that they can engage in class to figure out for themselves, how to figure out the problem **ND:** It is important for the students to engage because if you are actually doing something you are more likely to take an interest rather than if you are just sitting there **NP:** It's important because when the student takes part they learn more. It's for their own benefit. It's important for the teacher for them to take part as they are doing their job properly

EUN: Yea definitely some lecturers just talk, I think what's really effective in Accounting is when they give us problems to do, give us a minute to do them yourself before they go through it to see if you understand what's going on or not and I find that really helpful rather than if they are just reading off slides especially for A/c it can be really difficult to engage with it. When they give you a problem because it such a physical subject anyway I like when they do that

Class size	Attention	**EUN**: When the teacher gets the attention of the students in the class. We have really big lecture theatres so like there could be 500 people in them, they could be on phones, laptops to get the people's attention and actually focus them on what is being taught
	Attending	**SR:** That we are attending our lectures is the main thing because being older than other students in the class there is nothing worse if you have attended your lectures all week and somebody saunters in on the 4th hour and the lecturer is expected to go back over what he/she has done with all of us
		GK: Our part of the duty what we should do, going to class, prepare all your material, prepare for tutorials

Theme 2: Teacher traits

- **Sub-theme 2: least desirable traits**

Codes	Sub codes	Utterances
Exclusion	• No care	**DR:** Mixed bag wouldn't know what you are going to get you feel some of them are there, cos they are getting paid they don't care at all [all laugh] **DR:** recognise you, if you ask a question they recognise you **PM:** if they know your name it makes you feel like they care **ND&RB:** acknowledge you when you walk down the corridor
Lack of Knowledge	Teaching methods • Incompetent	NB: The way they teach the class they are flying through the presentations they are not teaching it they are just going through it they are not asking questions they are giving you the answers and expecting you to know it EUN: it is really hard to concentrate not confident in themselves SR: Disorganised, didn't seem to know what they were doing, playing music in classrooms when you should have been learning totally scatty, unapproachable well I wouldn't have

		approached that person anyway because I didn't feel they had the necessary skills to warrant an answer to my questions
	• Boring	**SR**: Nothing worse than being a lecturer where somebody comes in and who doesn't know what they are doing, or what they did yesterday, it's like they don't even remember teaching us, there is nothing worse than that.
		BOS: Mundane, non-engaging
Unapproachable	• Condescending	**RB:** unapproachable, they seem angry if ask them question they could just snap
		PM: comes 10 mins late and leaves 10 mins early standing at the top doesn't know any names
		NP: If you ask a question they wouldn't really get angry but they kinda, 'what are you asking that for'?
		RD: make you feel stupid
	• Not helpful	MC: Not helpful wouldn't put up solutions to questions if you are after doing questions and want to check your answers they have no solutions
		MB: kind of intimidation factor, some of them you get the sense don't approach me if you have a question figure it out yourself

Theme 3: Instructional activities in the classroom

- *Sub Theme*: **Active environment**

Codes	Sub codes	Utterances
Active environment	• Breaking down knowledge	**PM:** Anything we are given outside we have done in class first beforehand, go through it step by step
		ND: she gives similar one to do the for the next day and go through it and if there was one everyone was stuck on, put it up and make sure everyone got it
		PM: everything is step by step
		MB: Makes sure everyone is coming along with her that everyone understands where she is getting things from
		PM: going back to adjustments, do couple of examples of each and then do all together
		RB: looked over it first, looked at questions go through individual parts rather than learn the whole thing
		PM: Break it down into smallest margin of where you went wrong

Codes	Sub-codes	Utterances
	• Different strategies	**MC:** Both accounting classes use textbooks for questions and they have their own notes up on moodle
		NB: Would have group assignments
		EUN: I'm not sure I'd say she is quite set in her ways, kind of thing it is quite good I wouldn't really have much of a problem with the way she teaches but I don't know that she would change it that much or know how to
		DR: It depends on the class, if you have a class that's working well and doing well not going to change something that's working, it depends on the class

Codes	Sub-codes	Utterances
	• Facilitator	**ND:** Financial statements of companies, compare year on year getting to grips with it I'm never going to be able to do that but look at it later and you can
		RD: if people keep asking questions they will keep explaining for as long as they have to
		DR: Finds out what you don't understand about the question and tries to explain to the best of their ability

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Theme 4: Students transitional experiences of their classroom environment at PP to HE

- *Sub Theme*: **Easing the transition**

Codes	Sub codes	Utterances
Collaboration between divides	• Responsibility • Integration to HE	**DR:** was a big jump get 6th year try to integrate some of college techniques the way it works in college so that it might not as big a jump when you go into first year college **MB:** very straightforward kind of babied along at secondary school at HE thrown in **NP**: In college there is a lot of group work interacting in secondary school you work on your own **EUN:** I guess just even one class explaining the differences going through self-directed learning. **GK**: If did like workshops at start of module in each course on how to integrate into college, note – taking, organising your time GK: Yea you are handed a lot of information, if they started taking elements of what a lecturer does, lecturing you more, **BOS:** you always see the people that are getting the best results at the end of the day are the people who do work independently rather than the people who are spoon fed the people that are spoon fed

will get an average to below average results, towards the people who work on their own will get higher results

- Independent learner

EUN: Definitely teachers at pp definitely. They oversee everything you are doing. My lecturers wouldn't have any idea who I am.

BOS: Post-primary definitely, maybe it is to do with the smaller classes but I definitely would have received more support from teachers at that level.

SR: More support here [HE], I've been very lucky here, school very strict, not allowed to express yourself not allowed to give opinions,

MC: Way more support in secondary school

NP: Secondary school teacher stays back gives extra classes some lecturers ask them to do a tutorial to explain and they wouldn't

- Supportive environment

IOK: Same, in secondary school teacher would stay back to practice whereas here one of the lecturers didn't want to give any extra

AC: There was much more active offer of support in secondary school. My accounting teacher if you had practised questions yourself at home she had a very open door policy that she would

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correct them and give them back to you

Mismatch of learning Environment	• Exam driven • Cultivating understanding at HE • Little monitoring at HE	**NB:** Teachers are more concentrated on exams concerned about you passing but the lecturers want you to learn the stuff, more than being concerned about the exam as you need to learn the material to be able to progress on to the next level semester **NP**: School is just get you through your exams to get you to college **AC:** There is much more of a focus on the understanding in 3rd level as opposed to 2nd level **BOS**: Post-primary teachers would take on role of constantly monitoring you, the teacher would know how well you are getting on in class tests so they would always have an idea of how well you were doing, they would always know you personally. In 3rd level you are a number to them really they