

**Exploring Educational Leadership and the Creation of a Culture of Care for Post-primary
Teachers in the Republic of Ireland**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is a presentation of my original research work.

Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly.

The work has not been submitted previously at this or any other educational institution. The work was done under the guidance of Dr. Julie Uí Choistealbha at the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. I agree that the Library may lend or copy this dissertation upon request.

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Abstract

Post-primary teachers have been faced with numerous changes and reforms in recent decades. Research has shown that an ethic of care is important to support teachers' well-being when teachers feel overworked, under-appreciated, stressed and their work-life balance is poor. This study aims to explore the experience of educational leadership and the culture of care for post-primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland.

Based on a review of the literature on care, teachers and change, leadership and school culture, interviews were carried out with six post-primary school teachers. Analysis of the responses demonstrated that teachers need to be cared for and have positive relationships and proactive leadership with senior management in a school to face the challenges and reform that will continue to be part of teachers' lives. The results indicate that relationship building is central to an ethic and culture of care. On this basis, it is recommended that teachers' needs be identified and care meetings carried out to respond and support those in need. Further research is needed to identify established senior management's perspective regarding teachers' care needs.

Keywords: care, change, culture, relationship, leadership,

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Acronyms

AP	Assistant Principal
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
ICT	Information and Computing Technologies
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NQTs	Newly Qualified Teachers
PDST	Professional Development of Service for Teachers
PST	Professional Support Team
RACE	Reasonable Accommodation of Certificate Examinations
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SSE	School Self-evaluation
TC	Teaching Council

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Christian leadership is in accord with the teachings of Jesus. Christian leaders inherit from Jesus a foundational principle for all leadership roles: “This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Christian leadership is anchored in core values that respect the dignity of every person and aligned to gospel values.

Fisher and Tronto (1990, p. 41) consider the concept of care as inclusive of “everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web”. Fisher and Tronto present a care ethics based on the realities of interdependency: the understanding that we are all receivers of care as well as care providers (Noddings, 1984). This relational framing of care places care at the heart of education. The emotive aspects of school life draw attention to the need for quality communication between the senior management team, middle management team, teachers and all staff. A whole school approach to an ethic of care benefits the whole school community, not only those who are experiencing difficulties. It may be challenging to create an ethic of care as a whole school if individual value systems are at variance with each other. In the current educational climate in Ireland, principals and senior management teams need to be immensely principled to resist emphasising academic success as the most important goal of practice in the school. A culture of shared values, with an emphasis on relationships, is at the centre of a whole school approach to an ethos of care (Warin, 2017).

Educational researchers have recognised the challenges, anxieties and difficulties experienced by teachers. Educational reform, curricular changes, increased performance expectations, ICT (Information and Computing Technologies), special educational needs and student diversity means that teaching has become increasingly complex and challenging (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Teachers working in an environment that is embedded in a caring, supportive and democratic school culture with positive relationships appear better able

to manage stress and balance work and non-work roles through the development of resilience. School principals should focus on fostering positive school cultures that lend themselves to teacher resilience (Johnson et al., 2014) and to the development of environments that help teachers to more effectively cope with the challenges of teaching and do their work more effectively. After all, teaching is a profession that shoulders much responsibility.

Research Aims

This study aims to explore educational leadership and the creation of a culture of care for post-primary school teachers. An ethic and culture of care will be explored theoretically; care will also be examined in terms of teachers' lived understanding and experience of care in the educational setting. Relationships between teachers, management and students will be assessed in terms of lived experience of the teacher interviewees. Values guiding the participants' teaching will be probed. The style of leadership being employed in the schools of the participants will be assessed alongside the presence or absence of care in that style. Some of the challenges in education for teachers will be assessed.

Research Background and Rationale for the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore educational leadership in the creation of a culture of care for post-primary teachers. This study evaluates the perception and experiences of six post-primary teachers at different stages in their career. The study aims to ascertain their experience of care in respect to leadership.

Numerous changes have taken place in recent years in post-primary teaching. Some of these have included Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) of 2004; the action plan for educational inclusion - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) – was launched in 2005; in 2006 The Teaching Council (TC) was established; in 2010 the Professional Development of Service for Teachers (PDST) was established; in 2012 School Self-

evaluation began; the Junior Cycle Programme began on a phased basis in September 2014; a review of Senior Cycle education began in 2016 by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Digital Strategy for Schools (DSS) 2015-2020 was initiated to embed technology and digital learning. In the context of a multitude of changes in the Irish educational system where teachers are expected to embed a plethora of strategies into the business of learning and teaching, are teachers cared for and supported throughout the journey of their career?

Research Question

The aim of this study is to answer the following research question:

What is the experience of educational leadership and the culture of care for post-primary teachers?

This involved identifying an understanding of an ethic of care and a culture of care, exploring relationships, investigating leadership and highlighting some challenges in education faced by post-primary teachers.

Research Methodology

This study used qualitative research in the form of interviews to explore the experiences of the post-primary school teachers. An analysis and interpretation of the relevant data extracted from the participants was explored and presented in response to the questions. The research also sought to explore implications and recommendations considering the relevant findings.

Research Structure

This research study on educational leadership and the creation of a culture of care is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 briefly introduces the research topic, research background and rationale for the study, research question and chosen methodology for the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature in the areas of care, change, leadership, school culture and relationships between teacher and leaders. Chapter 3 explores qualitative research in terms of the framework and approach adopted, the data collection is in the form of interviews as the chosen methodology for this study. An overview of the methodology is presented. Chapter 4 aims to answer the research question through a critical analysis and interpretation of the data extracted from the participants' feedback. The emerging themes of the analysis are explored. Chapter 5 explores the significance of the findings and offers recommendations for the creation of a culture of care. It concludes by addressing limitations of the study, suggestions for future research and some considerations of the researcher.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are fundamental themes that characterise what Christian leadership is. For example, leadership is other-centred. Leadership is not an exercise in ego inflation, but a creative endeavour to use the gifts of the Spirit in the community that one is leading (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Leadership is relational in that it honours the dignity of each person.

A multitude of changes have taken place within the Irish educational system within the last 20 years. These have included educational policy changes aimed at improving standards of school governance, teaching, learning and achievement that have had an influence on the contexts in which teachers work. Schools have become subject to demands for more transparency and accountability. These have led to an increase in bureaucracy such that teachers' work has become more intensified and their roles more diverse. (Day and Kington, 2008).

The lived reality of post-primary teachers through this reform and the culture of care they experienced dominates the research. Teachers are expected to embed a plethora of strategies into the business of learning and teaching. How have teachers been cared for and supported during these changes? What experience did they have of their emotional well-being being attended to?

Teaching is a challenging profession. This is supported by international literature on education that reports on how the work environment, unreasonable expectations of school communities and the socio-economic challenges of society are creating the potential for emotional illness amongst teachers (Daniels and Strauss, 2010). Of concern is that extensive exposure to work-linked stressors could negatively affect teachers' personal well-being as well as that of the organisational culture.

Mckenzie and Blenkinsop (2006, p. 102) assert that using Nodding's (2005) components of modelling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation to organise curriculum around the centres of care for self, others and the natural world, offers a framework for putting an

ethic of care into practice for organisations that are centrally concerned with compassion and care and which take their social and environmental commitments seriously.

When we consider the many stakeholders in education, the author seeks to honour the teacher voice; if we have a culture of care of and for our teachers, they are then better positioned to care for students. As teachers endeavour to undertake the different ways of approaching numeracy; literacy; the new framework for Junior Cycle and ICT etc, are they trained and coached in how to implement the latest strategy etc. only? When they return to their educational settings, are post-primary teachers supported in adapting to and adopting the many changes? Is there a culture of care, led by the principal and senior management team, awaiting the teachers' return to take the practical, relational and emotional element of change into consideration?

Care

Ethic of Care. Gordon, Brenner and Noddings (Swart and Oswald, 2012, p. 551) define caring as “a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realisation, growth, development, protection, empowerment, and human community, culture, and possibility”. This definition emphasises that caring occurs within connection and relationships (Owens and Ennis, 2005). The construct caring refers to is an act that is interactive and multidimensional (Swart and Oswald, 2012).

Owens and Ennis (2005) believe that caring should be at the heart of the educational system and that this concept serves as the foundation for the theoretical framework of the ethic of care in education. Like Noddings (1986, 2006), they suggest that the professional and personal responsibilities of the caring teacher are met through modelling, dialogue, practice and confirmation.

Rogers and Webb (1991) purport that an ethic of caring is necessary to the definition of effective teaching and suggest the need to give caring a central place in the teacher education curriculum.

Noddings (2005) explains that “[A]n ethic of care embodies a relational view of caring; that is, when I speak of caring, my emphasis is on the relation containing carer and cared-for” (p. xv). Reciprocity, egalitarianism, openness, honesty, fairness, collaboration, reflection; these and other characteristics are the descriptors of Noddings' school built on care. Heid and Kelehear (2007, p. 413) believe that these are the attributes that can and ought to be a part of all curriculum components. For Noddings (2005), the joining of curriculum and instruction development with care theory provides the foundation for substantive and powerful change in today's schools. It is a theory grounded in the ethics of fairness, kindness, social justice, equity, openness and not a practice that seeks power at the expense of what matters most - the students.

Smit and Scherman (2016) attend to a theoretical exposition of relational leadership and ethics care as complementary approaches to educational leadership in counteracting bullying at schools. They purport that the moral standing of a school principal is central to creating such an educational landscape; school principals have a duty to care for and take responsibility for their teachers and learners (Smit and Scherman, 2016, p. 3). An ethics of care appeals to the desire to do the right thing, especially for those who are concerned about people. It is fundamental to caring that principals understand their teachers as individuals, and that they do not treat them as a collective, homogeneous entity. Principals are tasked with trying to understand the problems experienced by their teachers and their learners (Smit and Scherman, 2016, p. 4). An ethics of care starts from the premise that as humans, school principals act as role models and mentors. Noddings (2009) refines this point by suggesting that principals model ideal behaviour by demonstrating caring in their relations with their colleagues and their learners.

Doyle and Doyle (2003, p. 260) reflect Noddings' (1995) belief that there is a need to connect everyone's caring to create a school culture of care and that “caring communities

empower groups through shared decision making by teachers, management, parents and community members”.

Care in Schools

Caring – Emotions and Resilience. Zemblyas et al. (2014) reviewed several articles on teachers and emotions and their findings illustrate teachers' experiences of caring. The teachers saw caring as a professional choice that was necessary to their work and as integral part of their professional identity and understood caring as a motivation to continue teaching, but also an exhausting professional demand.

Teachers experienced several different scenarios that challenged their abilities to sustain their commitment, i.e., to remain resilient (Day and Kington, 2008). They explored how these scenarios impacted, positively and negatively, on teachers' capacities for sustaining their initial commitment and associations between identity, well-being and effectiveness. Teachers have experienced increased workload pressures, focus on raising standards and changing conditions. Teachers need to be resilient and supported emotionally during these periods in order that these may be managed in ways that build or sustain positive identities and existing effectiveness (Day and Kington, 2008, p. 22). There are implications for school leaders regarding teachers' experiences of their sense of well-being, commitment and resilience, and the associations between these and their abilities to sustain effectiveness.

Caring - Well-being and Support Systems. Schussler et al. (2016) understand that the heavy demands of teaching result in many teachers becoming alienated or burned out. According to Jennings et al. (2017), understanding teachers' stress is of critical importance to address the challenges in today's educational climate. It is therefore imperative to identify ways to support teachers' internal capacities for managing stress and promoting well-being.

Meiklejohn et al. (2012) reviewed research and curricula pertaining to the integration of mindfulness training into K-12 education in the United States, both indirectly by training

teachers and through direct teaching of students. The research purports that K-12 teachers need and deserve supports to flourish, professionally and personally. In an educational era of increased pressures, educators all too often encounter a plethora of stressors and warrant interventions that support their resilience and social–emotional competencies. Such interventions can lower the “risk of professional languishing and/or burnout due to emotional exhaustion” (p. 292).

Gu and Li (2013, p. 288) purport that “[T]o teach, and to teach at one’s best over time, has always required resilience and commitment”. They contend that the educational literature suggests that in-school management support for teachers’ learning and development, leadership trust and positive feedback from parents and students are key positive influences on their motivation and resilience.

Research (Kyriacou, 2001, p. 41) has identified several ways to prevent low levels of satisfaction and high occupational stress. These include creating a positive and supportive school climate/ethos, an effective approach to management, good communication and sense of collegiality among staff, whole school policies in place on various issues, and adequate school facilities and resources. Findings from this study indicate the importance of these factors in the Irish context, pointing to potential ways to improve levels of job satisfaction and reduce occupational stress levels among teachers and principals. Similarly, Swart and Oswald (2012) emphasised the four critical building blocks of collaborating, accessing, relationship-building and enabling (CARE) for developing an ethic of care in school communities to combat alienation, being burned out or being affected by stressed.

Teacher stress and burnout is a critical issue in today’s educational landscape, and only limited attention in policy and teacher training programmes has been given to the matter (Jennings et al., 2016). The results suggest that efforts to foster teachers’ social and emotional competencies may have significant impacts on both the cost and quality of education. In the long term, reducing teacher stress and burnout may reduce costs associated with teacher

absenteeism, turnover, and health care, as well as lead to gains in classroom interaction quality and supportive teacher-student relationships that promote student positive social and emotional and academic development.

Why do we Need Care in Schools?

Occupational Stress. Ennis (2019) concluded occupational stress (OS) as being one of the most pressing challenges for teachers today and has significant negative influences on a teacher's performance and job satisfaction. According to Kyriacou (2001, p. 28), "teacher stress may be defined as the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher". Kyriacou (2001) and Richards et al. (2018) recognise that the main sources of stress facing teachers included teaching students who lack motivation, maintaining discipline, time pressures and workload, coping with change, being evaluated by others, dealings with colleagues, self-esteem and status, administration and management, role conflict and ambiguity and poor working conditions. Camacho et al., (2018) state that teachers in urban schools experience significant stressors that can impact their effectiveness, well-being, retention, and ability to meet the needs of their students and that the amount of professional and social-emotional support teachers received predicted a greater prevalence of productive thoughts and fewer negative emotions.

Ennis (2019) carried out a study to establish the prevalence of OS among the profession while identifying the causes and manifestations of stress that Post-primary Teachers (PPTs) in Ireland experience within their working environment. The main findings of the study revealed 71% of PPTs in Ireland experience OS up to three times per week, with 39% of those experiencing OS daily. Female teachers are 9% more likely to experience OS up to three times per week, and 8% more likely to experience OS on a daily basis compared to their male counterparts.

Ennis (2019) suggests that supports and interventions, the lack of prioritising and promoting the mental health and well-being of PPTs, both in the schools and in the staffrooms is concerning and the lack of supports for teachers to discuss and resolve work related stress is also a cause for concern. The lack of in-school supports available for teachers, may add to the prevalence and frequency of OS experienced and therefore, adequate in-school supports/interventions need to be developed/implemented to help alleviate the prevalence of OS experienced by PPTs across Ireland.

Richards et al. (2018) state that teaching has been characterised as a stressful profession that is prone to burnout. The stress experienced by teachers has been traced to “reduced feelings of job satisfaction, demoralisation that occurs when their vision of good teaching conflicts with policies, reform mandates, and school practice and increased burnout” (Richards et al., p. 768). They aimed to qualitatively understand how teachers who perceive high and low levels of burnout characterise their lived experiences in school environments. Teachers perceived a sense of community when they had positive relationships with colleagues, principals who were engaged, and structures in place to promote collaboration. For many teachers, a common philosophy was a facilitator of a positive sense of community. In addition to relationships with colleagues, teachers perceived an affirmative school culture when administrators were engaged and attentive.

By contrasting the experiences of high- and low-burnout teachers, the primary contribution of their study is that, while all teachers may encounter stress, those who work in schools that have nurturing, supportive cultures appear better able to manage that stress and balance work and non-work roles through the development of resilience (Richards et al., 2018, p. 784).

Teachers and Change

A living faith as the balanced integration of head, heart and hand faith is the best model for Catholic teachers because a living faith is strongly associated with not only

commitment to mission, but also commitment to the school, teaching and students (Cho, Y. (2012). The landscape of the teaching profession has changed greatly in Ireland in the last two decades and teachers are faced with an increasingly challenging working environment. Change can contribute to stress which may lead to ill-health and might negatively impact the workforce and the overall well-being of teachers.

Teacher Leadership and Mindset. Cherkowski (2018) suggests that teacher leadership may have a role to play in cultivating school cultures that foster well-being for all. In this way, teacher leadership is assumed to be a mindset, a way of seeing the work of leadership as an opportunity to build collective capacity for growing well-being as central to school improvement work. Teacher leadership is understood as the “roles and responsibilities teachers take on with students in their classrooms and with colleagues outside of their classroom toward school improvement efforts” (p. 64).

Recent descriptions and reports of teaching show that many teachers are suffering from exhaustion, uncertainty, anxiety, isolation, and stress. In flourishing schools, educators make the time and the space to collaborate in meaningful ways, they work hard to maintain caring relationships that encourage each other and model for their students an ongoing attention to compassionately supporting risk-taking, failing and then persevering in their ongoing efforts to continuously improve their teaching and learning (Cherkowski, 2018, p. 66). Principals who facilitate, fight for, and join in the daily life of these environments are prized by their staff, and they feel a sense of flourishing in their own work. Cherkowski (2018, p. 71) references a study of principal leadership development in Britain that found school leaders desire opportunities for reflecting with their colleagues about matters of the heart and soul of their work, aspects that they are not often afforded the time, space or encouragement to discuss.

The Meaning of Educational Change for Teachers. Fullan (2007) explores educational change; all real change involves loss, anxiety and struggle. New experiences are always

initially reacted to in the context of some familiar, reliable construction of reality in which people must be able to attach personal meaning to experiences. Real change, whether desired or not, represents a serious personal or collective experience characterised by ambivalence and uncertainty; and if change works out it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment and personal growth.

Hargreaves (2005) confirmed that many of the findings in the classic studies of how age and career stage affect teachers' responses to educational change. In early career, young teachers are enthusiastic and largely optimistic, who have learned to be adaptable for their generational survival. In between in the middle years of teaching, teachers retain but also pull back some of their enthusiasm and with growing confidence, competence and a sense of being established, feel able to remain open yet also selective about the change initiatives they adopt. Towards the end of their careers, teachers' experiences of repetitive education wears them down, and impending retirement lessens the grip others have over them, most teachers become resistant to and resilient toward change efforts outside the classroom, and concentrate their energies on a more relaxed sense of accomplishment.

The Impact of Mandated Educational Change on Teachers. Clement (2014) explored perspectives on the management of mandated educational change to understand how it may be managed more effectively. The questions considered were: How does the way change is introduced to schools affect teachers' responses to it? And, are there better ways to work with mandated change? A case study (Clement, 2014) of teachers' responses to the introduction of a quality teaching initiative found that while some teachers described the strong negative impact of this externally initiated approach, others had taken charge of the required change and worked creatively with it. This suggests that it is possible for mandated change to be managed in positive ways, and an alternative approach is explored.

Mandated change is change initiated at the government or bureaucratic level and transmitted to schools, where it is adopted by the administration and communicated to

teachers, who will probably attempt to implement it with varying degrees of enthusiasm and success (Clement, 2014, p. 40). It is important to note that often teachers are not opposed to the change itself, but their response to it is affected by the way the change is implemented. Teachers' views of the conventional approach to managing mandated change indicate that it is damaging to teachers' morale and their sense of professionalism and inadequate for bringing sustainable change in education.

Hargreaves (2004) reflects on educational change and its impact upon teachers. Drawing on individual interview and focus groups, he analyses teacher's emotional responses to educational change. He finds that while teachers report having largely positive emotional experiences of self-initiated change and predominantly negative ones concerning mandated change, almost half the examples of self-initiated change that are cited have a legislated, mandated origin. This points to the importance for the experience and management of change to being inclusive in design and conduct.

Change and Sustainability. Datnow (2005) explores why reforms sustain in some schools and not in others and how changing state and district contexts influence reform sustainability in schools in a 'turbulent district and state context' (p. 121). Datnow suggests that if a school is not planning on sticking with a reform for long, it is perhaps best not to start at all as teachers become frustrated with the endless cycle of reforms that progress through schools and, over time, become increasingly sceptical of them. Teachers need to work hard toward the institutionalisation of a reform.

Leaders, Leadership and Caring

Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes (Bush and Glover, 2014, Amanchukwu, Stanley, and Ololube, 2015). Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards

the achievement of this shared vision. According to Noddings (2006), an educational leader should have a defensible position on the aims of education, on a theory of motivation and on what constitutes ethical practice. Beck (1992, p. 487) quotes Starratt who argues that the ethical practice of educational administration demands “a multidimensional construct that offers practicing administrators a way to think about their work and workplace” who recommends “the joining of three ethics: the ethic of critique, the ethic of justice, and the ethic of caring”. Such an ethic postulates a level of caring that honours the dignity of each person and desires to see that person enjoy a fully human life.

Instructional Leadership. The increasing focus on managing teaching and learning as the core activities of educational institutions has led to instructional leadership. Instructional leadership, and leadership for learning, focus primarily on the direction and purpose of leaders’ influence; targeted at student learning via teachers. There is much less emphasis on the influence process itself (Bush and Glover, 2014).

Transformation Leadership. Transformational leadership focuses on models that address ‘how’ to lead, not the purpose of leadership. This form of leadership assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organisational members (Bush & Glover, 2014). Successful leaders are expected to engage with staff and other stakeholders to produce higher levels of commitment to achieving the goals of the organisation which, in turn, are linked to the vision.

Leithwood (1994) highlights ‘people effects’ as a cornerstone of the transformational leadership model. Within the model proposed by Leithwood and colleagues, many of the outcomes of interest in terms of restructuring schools are teacher effects (e.g. changes of behaviour, adoption of new programmes, teaching techniques). The principal’s efforts become apparent in the school conditions that produce changes in people rather than in promoting specific instructional practices. In these schools, principals were better at supporting staff, providing recognition, knowing the problems of school, were more

approachable, following through, seeking new ideas, and spending considerable time developing human resources.

Servant Leadership. Given today's challenging and complex climate, people are becoming increasingly aware that traditional autocratic modes of leadership no longer guarantee social benefits for organisations (Qiu & Dooley, 2019). According to Van Dierendonck and Nuijten, as cited by Qiu and Dooley (2019), a call has been constantly made that the old leadership paradigms need to be replaced and emphasis should be shifted to a new mode of leadership which will enhance trust, encourage a strong moral compass, and social responsibility to secure success and profit in today's organisations.

Chapter 13 of John's gospel records how Jesus moved from the status position as head of the table, knelt down, and washed his disciples' feet as a sign of servant leadership. The phrase 'Servant Leadership' was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay that he first published in 1970. In that essay, he said, "The servant-leader *is* servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 7).

Servant Leadership is not about a personal quest for power, prestige, or material rewards (McGee-Cooper, A. and Trammell, D., 2002, p. 144). Instead, from this perspective, leadership begins with a true motivation to serve others. The focus of Servant Leadership is on sharing information, building a common vision, self-management, high levels of interdependence, learning from mistakes, encouraging creative input and questioning present assumptions and mental models. It is a long-term, transformational approach to life and work – in essence, a way of being – which has the potential for creating positive change throughout our school communities. The Christian servant leader is Christ-centred, committed to serve, courageous to lead, consistently developing others into servant leaders and continually inviting feedback. Servant leadership is more about being than doing.

Distributed Leadership. Distributed leadership has become the normatively preferred leadership model in the twenty-first century (Gronn, 2010, p. 70). Bush and Glover (2014, p. 560) quote Harris; “distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or role”. It can be differentiated from several other models by its focus on collective, rather than singular, leadership. Promoting teacher leadership provides greater leadership capacity and capability. O’Donovan (2015) explores the challenges and opportunities in relation to developing distributed leadership practice in Irish post-primary schools. O’Donovan quotes Harris and Muijs and states that in essence “leadership from the distributed perspective is premised on capacity-building in the school organisation, with the engagement of many people being at the core of distributed leadership in action” (p. 243).

School Culture

Catholic schools are caring and inclusive schools that are committed to the development of the whole person – intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually. Within this context the school community strives to promote and uphold Christian values and to foster and applaud the talents and potential of each student. The vision that underpins Catholic education is rooted in the life of Jesus Christ.

An ethic of care and a school culture that recognises and values the contribution of all individuals are important. A culture of learning and achievement is possible in a highly supportive and challenging environment that places high expectations on teachers and students (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006, p. 6). A traditional ethos of care and nurture, underpinned by values of respect, inclusion, openness and approachability has framed educational leadership in Ireland (O’Donovan, 2015, p. 249). The empirical evidence from O’Donovan’s case-study research indicates that leadership, as practised in Irish post-primary schools, is embedded in an ethos of care.

Transforming Culture. Components that characterise leaders in the knowledge society are moral purpose, an understanding of the change process, the ability to improve relationships, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making (Fullan, 2002, p. 17). The cultural change principal treats students, teachers, parents, and others in the school well and must be attuned to the big picture and be a sophisticated conceptual thinker who transforms the organisation through people and teams. Fullan (2002, p. 18) writes about understanding change and states that ‘reculturing is the name of the game’ and that much change is structural and superficial. Transforming culture – changing what people in the organisation value and how they work together to accomplish it – leads to deep, lasting change.

Establishing Cultures of Well-being, Flourishing and Care. Cherkowski (2018, p.63) suggests “teacher leadership may have a role to play in cultivating school cultures that foster well-being for all”. Given teacher’s influence as agents of change for, and with, students and colleagues, positive teacher leadership means working with others to build cultures of collective leadership for well-being, whether through formally designated leadership positions or informally determined as a deliberate intention to work with others toward positive change.

Central to establishing a culture in which a learning community might grow and flourish, the principal is central to establishing a culture that ensures conditions in which trust and respect are high and teachers are empowered to share in leadership and a supportive and caring environment is established for all individuals within the community (Cherkowski, 2012, p. 61).

Smylie and Murphy (2016) reflect on the conditions of school climate and culture, the social organisation of the school and organisational politics that are necessary for leader caring. Leader caring refers to the caring nature of principals’ actions and interactions, from one-to-one interactions to the exercise of their general roles and responsibilities and involves

cultivating caring communities in schools for students. Caring school leadership has three main elements: leader caring, cultivating caring communities in schools, and developing caring beyond school (p. 18). Principals are called upon to strengthen those aspects of school organisation that support the school culture of caring and reduce the influence of those aspects that constrain or damage it. These conditions include structures that create opportunities for students, teachers, and principals to interact, to learn about and understand each other, and to engage in caring actions and interactions.

Näsman (2018, p. 518) holds that a humanistic ethos of love, trust and forgiveness shapes the culture of the educational organisation in the model of a caritative leadership in education, that is a comprehensive view of the edification of life, personal growth and maturity as an ultimate goal of education. Näsman (2018, p. 524) proposes that a caring leader, for example a school leader, strives to create a caring culture. The caring leader tries to communicate, in as many ways as possible, the worth and potential of his or her co-workers in order to make the co-workers see the worth and potential in themselves.

Collegial Culture and Positive Learning.

Hauserman and Stick (2013, p. 189) cite the work of Kurland, Peretz and Hertz-Lazarowitz (2010) who explored the influence of leadership on vision in schools as learning organisations and found that high-functioning schools were found to have transformational principals who shaped the school vision and learning processes within the organisation, thus creating a positive learning culture. These findings reinforced Skalbeck's (1991) earlier conclusions as cited by Hauserman and Stick (2013, p. 189) that a principal's vision and the establishment of a collegial culture fostered teacher empowerment.

Learning Community Flourishing. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) asserted that "the ultimate goal for sustainable leadership in a complex, knowledge-sharing society is for schools to become professional learning communities" (p.125). They described four pillars that support sustainable communities: Learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and

learning to live together. For the most part, schools have excelled in creating opportunities for students to know and to do.

More opportunities are needed for eliciting how to learn to be and to live well together. The principal is a central, though not solitary, agent in establishing a culture in which a learning community might grow and flourish.

Relationship between Teacher and Leaders

Teachers' Constructions of Desirable Educational Leadership. Ekinici (2015, p. 355) states that "a leadership approach by school principals that is enveloping and service-oriented for their employees can be recommended". As Greenleaf (1970) emphasised, it is possible to state that an approach with appeal to the hearts of employees and a service basis will serve an important function in this context.

Oplatka and Tako (2009) found major commonalities among schoolteachers at three different career stages regarding emotional, moral, participative and structural constructions of educational leadership. Specifically, with emotional leadership, schoolteachers strove for some sort of personal attachment, respect, and empathy with their needs.

Hauserman and Stick (2013) examined teacher perceptions of transformational leadership qualities among principals. In this study, Philbin (1997) purported that teacher perceptions of highly transformational principals resulted in teachers being happier with the school leadership and more willing to put greater effort into their jobs. Teachers characterised principals being transformational as having "idealized influence and highlighted behaviours such as leading by example, mentoring, showing consistent fairness, making ethical decisions, and building leadership capacity" (p. 196). Additionally, having individual consideration resulted in behaviours including collaborating on decisions, listening and caring, consulting involved parties, being consistent, and making decisions that were best for children.

Similarly, O'Donovan (2015) explored teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership practices and identified the importance of transformational models of leadership practice as

being significant in mediating complex situations. O'Donovan's findings reveal that leadership is multidimensional with transformational, moral and shared dimensions (p. 251).

Additionally, leading and managing are not static activities, the whole process is relational and grounded in emotional subjectivities and organisational connectedness. A distributed leadership perspective suggests that the development of leadership needs to give careful attention to the school situation, including tools, routines and other aspects. O'Donovan's findings show how any enactment of leadership practice, in the case-study schools, is underpinned by and embedded in an ethos of care, nurture and higher-order values. Ethical leadership included consistency, humility, value and belief in teachers, transparency, and courage. (MacTaggart & Lynham, 2019, p. 90).

Relational Leadership for Sustainability and Ethics of Care. Nicholson and Kurucz (2019) propose that the practice of relational leadership is essential for dealing with the increasingly urgent and complex social, economic and environmental issues that characterise sustainability. They conceptually explored how the moral theory of 'ethics of care' can help to illuminate the ethical dimensions of relational leadership for sustainability. A particular strength of ethics of care is its sensitivity to context, whether that be organisational or cultural; this makes it particularly useful as an ethical framework for leadership for sustainability.

Fullan (2005) claims that sustainability is "an adaptive challenge par excellence" (p. 13) and understands that the new work of leaders entails leaders immersing themselves in at least eight elements of sustainability (ps. 13-27). He states that "agents of transformation are leaders who act in ways that produce others who act similarly" (p. 50).

Amanchukwu et al. (2015) purport that sustainable leadership needs to become a commitment of all school leaders. To sustain effective educational leadership, Hargreaves and Fink (2004, 8–13) presented seven principles of sustainable leadership. Leaders develop

sustainability by how they approach, commit to and protect deep learning in their schools; by how they sustain themselves and others around them to promote and support that learning. If change is to matter, spread and last, sustainable leadership must also be a fundamental priority of the systems in which leaders do their work. Educational managers know that leadership requires a number of judgments each day that requires sensitivity and understanding of various leadership strategies (Amanchukwu et al., 2015, p. 13). The results of the effective educational leadership style applications are feasible for a number of purposes, which include improve administrative performance, team-building, and enhanced individual and school innovation in teaching and learning.

Cherkowski's (2012) findings from a qualitative case study reveal how a principal's demonstration of compassion and deep care towards his teachers was influential in the participants' renewed desire for a greater commitment to and improvement of their craft. Understanding how school leaders can nourish and sustain passion and commitment is an essential area of research on learning communities. Exploring the impact of emotions in leadership is highlighted as an important consideration for fostering conditions for sustainable learning communities.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 65) quote Wheatley and state that we need an understanding of leadership that embraces the messiness of being human and that reflects "a full appreciation of the expansive capacities of us as humans".

Conclusion

Relationship-building characterised by receptiveness and reciprocity can be a core element of an ethic of care in the work in schools. Collaborating, shared problem-solving, shared decision-making, shared resources, a common goal, dialogue and compassion are further elements when working from an ethic of care. Swart and Oswald (2012) observed that participatory relationships built on an ethic of care require time, commitment, considerable effort and deep dialogue.

Teachers saw caring as a professional choice that was necessary in their work and as an integral part of their professional identity (O'Connor, 2008). Caring was a motivation to continue teaching, but also an exhausting professional demand. O'Connor's study showed that caring was present while the teachers negotiated the institutional and professional demands placed upon them in different situated contexts.

In education, an ideal to aspire to is sustainable change. The cultural change principal (Fullan, 2002) must be cognisant of the context and their ability to be transformational in terms of people in the organisation. The cultural change principal is characterised by moral purpose, an understanding of the change process, the ability to improve relationships, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. From a transformational leadership perspective, the principal's efforts become apparent in the school conditions that produce changes in people rather than in promoting specific instructional practices (Hallinger, 2003). In these schools, principals were better at supporting staff, providing recognition, knowing the problems of school, following through, seeking new ideas, were more approachable and spent considerable time developing human resources.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Teachers' actions and beliefs, their reactions to change and reform are influenced and shaped by their personal experience of leadership and the culture of care in their respective settings. The qualitative research carried out seeks to gain access to subjectively lived experiences by talking with and listening to the participants (Malterud, 2001). The research is based on grounded theory and seeks to place an ethic and culture of care at the centre of educational leadership. The qualitative technique of in-depth interviewing was used in this method as it sought to generate the experiences and responses of six post-primary school teachers to care, change and leadership in the school setting in the past and to examine current interactions with reform and leadership.

This chapter outlines the research framework and approach, participants' selection, data collection and analysis employed in researching this topic. Ethical considerations in relation to this research are also explored.

Research Framework

Phenomenology holds that any attempt to understand social reality must be grounded in people's experiences of that social reality (Gray, 2014, p. 24). The key is gaining the subjective experience of the subject, sometimes by trying to put oneself in the place of the subject. Hence, phenomenology becomes an exploration, via personal experience, of prevailing cultural understandings. Far from using a theoretical model that imposes an external logic on a phenomenon, this inductive approach seeks to find the internal logic of the subject.

The main purpose of this study was to explore teachers' experience of a culture of care as created by their leaders. The grounded theory perspective provides the underlying theoretical framework of this research.

Grounded theory's methodological emphasis is on actors' own emergent interpretations and meanings, with minimal researcher intervention. Through constant

comparison, coding and analysis of interview and observational data, theory that is grounded in these data emerges. What is pertinent to social research, through grounded theory, is that it seeks to approximate to the context of that being studied, that is, for example; an organisation, its managers and other actors, their interactions and interrelationships; thus conveying a conceptual understanding of issues that make up their world (Douglas, 2003). In grounded theory the researcher is *not* focused on testing hypotheses taken from existing theoretical frameworks, but rather develops a new 'theory' grounded in empirical data collected in the field (Dunne, 2011).

By using a combination of grounded theory and interpretivism, it allows for greater insight and an expansion of understanding to the participants' views. According to Hallberg, 2006, p. 141:

Qualitative researchers study phenomena and processes in their natural settings and intend to make sense of those matters in terms of the meanings people bring to them ... Through detailed interviewing, participant observations, and rich descriptions of the social world, qualitative researchers hope to come close to the actor's perspective and try to capture his or her point of view or lived experience.

Denscombe (2010) outlines a number of premises for grounded theory that have become established as accepted practice across a spectrum of qualitative approaches, beyond the particular scope of grounded theory for which they were intended (p. 214-215). These premises include Glaser and Strauss's approach to the analysis of qualitative data and is broadly speaking a pragmatic one. A second premise is that the analysis of qualitative data should be geared towards generating new concepts and theories. A third premise is that these theories should be grounded in empirical reality. Another premise is that the qualitative social researchers should start out with an open mind. Finally, the selection of people, instances, etc. to be included reflects the developing nature of the research and cannot be predicted at the start.

The interpretivist tradition on which qualitative research is based tries to understand what it means to be human and asks questions about the meaning of social phenomena, how things work, and how people's perceptions influence their lives. Interpretivism lends itself well to attempting to understand why or how somebody feels or behaves which cannot be achieved through the analysis of numbers. Instead it requires in-depth assessment of words, actions and behaviours. An interpretivist researcher concentrates on the meanings that people bring to situations and the ways that they use behaviour to interpret the world. What is more, is that an interpretivist researcher believes that reality and the individual who observes it are inseparable. This is because a person's views of the world are inextricably linked to their life experiences.

An interpretivist point of view was adopted to allow the researcher to understand the subjective experiences of the participants and how they think, feel and act in their natural contexts via an interview. The purpose of this research was to create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts of the participants by extracting such data through a new lens of the interview. According to Saunders et al. (2009) interpretivism focus is directed 'upon the details of a situation, a reality behind these details and subjective meanings motivating actions' (p. 119). The epistemological stance is of significance as the participants in the research are individuals who view the world differently.

As a pragmatist, the aim is to conclude this research study by contributing practical solutions that inform future leadership and management teams in attending to/delivering an effective culture of care in their post-primary educational settings (Saunders et al, 2009).

Research Approach

Qualitative research encompasses a diverse range of theoretical and philosophical traditions that, in general, stem from an interpretivist view of the world. Qualitative research seeks to explain or understand how certain people experience and interpret their lives. Qualitative research was used to make sense of such phenomena in terms of what they mean

to people or how people make sense of such experiences (Hallberg, 2006). Using detailed interviewing, qualitative researchers try to gain insight into the actor's perspective and capture his or her point of view or lived experience. Denscombe (2010) states that qualitative data are the product of a process of interpretation and that the researcher's self plays a significant role in the production and interpretation of qualitative data.

Seidman (2013) purports that at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. He states that interviewing is a powerful way to gain insight into educational and other important social issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues. Seidman explores four themes in a phenomenological approach to interviewing and these were used in the research. In the first theme, phenomenology stresses the transitory nature of human experience while focusing on human experience and its meaning. The second theme concerns the goal of researchers as "using a phenomenological approach to interviewing would be to come as close as possible to understanding our participants' experience from their subjective point of view" (p. 18). The third theme envelops lived experience as the foundation of 'phenomena' or a reconstruction of that experience (p. 18). In the fourth theme, the emphasis is on meaning and meaning in context. By asking participants to reconstruct their experience and then reflect on its meaning, interviewers encourage participants to engage in that 'act of attention' that then allows them to consider the meaning of a lived experience (p. 19).

According to Berg (2007, p. 96), a value of interviewing is that it enables interviewees to "speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings". As interviews are interactive, interviewers can press for complete, clear answers and can probe into any emerging topics. Hence, interviewing is expected to broaden the scope of understanding investigated phenomena, as it is a more naturalistic and less structured data collection tool (Alshenqeti, 2014). Kvale (1996, p. 174) contends that an interview is "a conversation, whose

purpose is to gather descriptions of the [life-world] of the interviewee” with respect to interpretation of the meanings of the “described phenomena”. Similarly, Alshenqeeti references Schostak (2006) as an interview being a conversation between partners that aims at having an “in-depth information” about a certain topic or subject, and through which a phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the meanings interviewees bring to it.

The interview type used in this research is the semi-structured interview, which is a more flexible version of the structured interview as “it allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 88). When undertaking such interviews, researchers recommend using a basic checklist that would help cover all relevant areas (i.e. research questions). The advantage of such a checklist is that it “allows for in-depth probing while permitting the interviewer to keep the interview within the parameters traced out by the aim of the study” (Berg, 2007, p. 9).

Creswell (2009) and Seidman (2013) suggest it would be beneficial for researchers to have a piloting session before carrying out their interviews as this will not just refine the interview content, but also determine its feasibility and usefulness as a research instrument. A pilot interview was carried out with a teacher in the later stages of her career who has been deeply immersed in pastoral care. The interview was carried out as a semi-structured interview and took just under an hour to complete. A conversation took place after the pilot interview and the teacher understood the questions asked and believed they were pertinent to the thesis question. She was satisfied with the pace and space given to respond to the questions.

After the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed, analysis of the interview data was done through coding. Two steps of coding were utilised: a) generating meaningful data units and b) classifying and ordering these units (Alsheqeeti, 2014). Creswell (2009) notes that the analysis process should also be reflexive, i.e. including the researcher's interactional

experience with interviews. Reflexivity refers to the way that a researcher's background and assumptions affect what questions are being asked, who the target population is for the study, how the questions are asked, and how the analysis is conducted. The qualitative researcher understands that he or she is not a neutral observer of social life (Haraway, 1991) and that what he or she sees is, in part, determined by his or her assumptions and background.

Selection of Participants for the Research

Selecting participants to interview was one of the first tasks in designing the study. This study is concerned with the experience of a culture of care over the extended period that each of the post-primary teachers have been working in education. Initially, six teachers were identified as potential participants. A purposive sample of six participants were interviewed and this allowed the research to focus on teachers with a range of teaching qualifications, varying amounts of experience teaching in different roles and in different school contexts. Teachers were chosen to expose their experience of a culture of care at different points in their career; these different age groups may expose a varying shaping of their actions and responses to the research area. The six teachers who participated in the research phase are fully qualified teachers with contracts varying from permanent to fixed-term contracts. All participants work in catholic schools.

The participants were provided with information about the research in order to allow them to give their fully informed consent. Participants were given sufficient detail about the nature of the research and the procedures involved, including the objectives of the study by being provided with a plain language statement and consent form (Appendix 1 and 2). Voluntariness was underscored and consent highlighted as freely given with the option of withdrawing at any time. Voluntary participation implied that participants made an informed choice while informed consent assumes that the information given is accurate. Both principles are underpinned by the principle that the participant understands what it is they are being asked to participate in.

Carrying Out the Research

Data Collection: Interviews. Interviewing participants creates an in-depth profile of the teacher's life experiences relative to the research issues being investigated (Labaree, 2006). A draft semi-structured interview schedule, which outlined prompt questions to stimulate the conversation, was formulated and overviewed by a colleague. The interview protocol was further refined after it was piloted with a colleague and additional questions included to ensure that participants' perspectives of care; teachers and change; leaders, leadership and caring; school culture and the relationship between teachers and leaders during their teaching careers were explored. Participants were interviewed once and as far as possible, were asked open-ended questions in order to elicit each participant's interpretation of his or her experience (Charmaz, 2006).

Interviews were approximately one hour long and were conducted in a location of the participant's choice. The interviews were largely conversational in style. The interviews began with introductions and the researcher explained the rationale for the research and the methodology involved. The researcher then asked the participants a short series of factual questions which were designed to put the participants at ease and to establish communication and rapport. Interviews also focused on experiences of care within their career; experience of change within their career; participants' views on leaders, leadership and caring; school culture and the relationship between teachers and leaders.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim in Word documents. Electronic files were saved so that each participant's identity remained confidential but coded so that the participant's comments could be identified by the researcher. One of the central obligations that field researchers have is to assure the confidentiality and guarantee the privacy of participants so that their real names or places are not used in the research but are substituted

by pseudonyms (Lofland et al., 2006, p. 51). The process of gathering and analysing evidence was undertaken simultaneously, as recommended by Boyzatis (1998).

The data analysis was conducted in two phases and was informed by the grounded theory approach. Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed this approach to develop theory from systematically gathered data. In the first phase of data analysis, the data were coded using open coding. This method relies on the researcher's ability to analyse the interviews and to generate codes. The process began with the researcher re-reading the interviews to identify the core elements of the interviews. This was followed by line-by-line coding of the data to identify substantive codes emerging within the data. The data were coded into meaningful analytical units (Creswell, 1998). In the second phase common patterns and processes that recurred across the different cases were interrogated. Categories and code names were changed and amended as the transcripts of interviews were read and re-read and examined. In subsequent rounds of coding, other categories emerged and some codes were merged for ease of analysis.

The codes identified reflect the researcher's understanding of what was described in the experiences and issues discussed by the participants. As the themes emerged, the research literature relevant to the key themes was consulted. A small number of significant and recurring themes were identified through a systematic analysis of the interview data. The final analytical step was to arrange the codes into broad themes. The themes of care, relationships, leadership and challenges in education were identified.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues must be taken into consideration in all forms of research. Ethical decisions "are concerned with what is right or just, in the interests of not only the project ... but also others who are participants in the research" (May, 2001, p. 59). Bond (2015), identified three components to consider in developing an ethical approach to research: risk

assessment, participants being fully informed in relation to the research aims and processes and finally to gain informed consent.

The ethical procedures of the Research Ethics Committee of Marino Institute of Education (MIE) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD) were strictly adhered to. In compliance with MIE and TCD ethical requirements a plain language statement and participant consent form were provided to participants (Appendix 1 and 2). The main function of these forms is to provide the participants with information about the research and to highlight its main aims. Participants were also provided with an informed consent form that informed participants of their right to leave the research at any time (Appendix 2). In the case of any adverse or unexpected outcomes, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Ethics in research refers to upholding participants anonymity, providing confidentiality, being trustworthy, honest, and having integrity. It is important to consider the research from the participant's point of view including showing respect which includes gaining full consent from all participants.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

Confidentiality was an important issue and was respected at all stages of the research project. Participants' identity will not be revealed or published. In the transcription of the interviews, the researcher uses pseudonyms. All information will be stored in a secure file and saved on a password protected laptop. Data will be stored up to 12 months following completion of the project and then will then be destroyed by the principal investigator.

Validity and Reliability

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290) believe a piece of research is dependable if 'it can persuade his or her audience that the research findings of any inquiry are worth paying attention to'. They contend that while the terms reliability and validity are an essential condition for quality in quantitative studies, the terms credibility, neutrality or conformability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability are the main criteria for quality

in qualitative research. In qualitative research precision (Winter, 2000) is a concern and credibility and transferability (Hoepfl, 1997) are the lenses for which qualitative research should be viewed. Joppe (2000) believes that if the research is measuring what it is supposed to measure and if the results are truthful then it is valid.

Rather than viewing reflexivity as a limitation on the reliability or validity of research, it is viewed as a commitment to acknowledging and questioning the role of the researcher in collecting and analysing data. Reflexivity does not ignore the potential for bias in the researcher's account of social life; it acknowledges the existence of any bias and makes that acknowledgement visible in his or her account of the research process (Haraway, 1991).

Limitations

Alsaawi (2014) asserts that interviews are time consuming. The researcher needs to go through a long process, starting from establishing access to making contact with participants, conducting the interview followed by transcribing the data and making use of it (Seidman, 2013, Dörnyei, 2007).

Another limitation of interviewing is that the construction of the written transcript is the researcher's responsibility. The researcher might therefore miss-convey what the interviewee meant (Alsaawi, 2014). Another factor which might influence the interview outcome is the ideology and theoretical standpoint of the researcher; interviews need to be prepared carefully and appointments conveniently scheduled (Robson, 2011).

Conclusion

The chapter presented the research methodology employed to answer the research question. The justification for using a phenomenological approach and grounded theory was developed. Employing qualitative research of in-depth interviewing was elaborated on. An overview of the data analysis was provided.

Ethical considerations were discussed and limitations were presented.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

In this chapter, the research findings based upon post-primary teachers' experiences of care and educational leadership are presented and discussed. The researcher wanted to establish a means to explore the teachers' experiences of care over the span of their respective careers. The research population and context are reviewed and information is provided about the post-primary teachers who participated in the interviews. Qualitative research was employed to conduct research in relation to this topic. The data sources were interviews and relevant researched literature is identified and discussed in Chapter Two. Once collected, the data was analysed using themed analysis to identify recurring themes relevant to the research question. This study looked to explore emerging themes based on the personal descriptions and experiences of post-primary teachers. The main findings are discussed, examined and supported by relevant literature.

The responses of the teachers in semi-structured interviews were examined. These included their views on what care looks like in schools and why we need it, relationships in the educational setting, style of leadership and care, and relationships in an educational setting.

Data Collection Process

Denscombe (2010), suggests that in qualitative research, the researcher needs "to come to terms quickly with the fact that it is not feasible for them to present all their data" (p.295). The author recognises this and therefore used logic while presenting findings and analysing data and has given priority to certain data. To interpret this data Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that the thematic analysis is a useful and flexible method of content analysis for qualitative research using human subjects as a primary data source.

Audio recorded data was transcribed verbatim and a thematic analysis was chosen as a method of data analysis. After the data were organised, the data were read through to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning (Creswell, 2009). Transcribing the interviews added to this general understanding of the data. In

addition, reading over the interviews with the interviewees was also helpful in understanding the lived descriptions.

The next step in the data analysis is the coding process (Creswell, 2009). Interviews were segmented into different statements by highlighting some statements in the digital transcripts. At this stage, the interview data are presented in table format with the themes in one column and supporting quotations in the respective six columns and represents a compilation of the data from the interviews with all six participants. The themes included in the data analysis are care, relationships, leadership, and challenges in education.

Research Population and Context

The data obtained for the research were derived from six post-primary school teachers in two urban school settings. A total of three male and three female teachers participated in hour long interviews to gauge their individual experiences of care in their respective schools. These included a female and male in early stage career, mid stage career and later stage career. Their teaching experience ranged from three to thirty-five years in numerous schools teaching eleven subjects in mainstream Junior Cycle, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied, students with additional educational needs and Transition Year. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, there is not a full description of each interviewee and no names are used.

Analysis of Data

This chapter presents and interprets the data based on four themes that emerged from the data analysis. The chapter shows connections and disparities between this research and previous research discussed in the literature review. The four themes and sub-themes are as follows:

Theme 1: Care	
1.1	What does care in schools look like?
1.2	What does care of teachers look like?
1.3	Culture of care
1.4	Why do we need care of teachers?
1.5	Who would you turn to if you needed support?

Theme 2: Relationships	
2.1	The lived values of teachers
2.2	Important learning experiences as a teacher
2.3	Atmosphere in the school
2.4	Teachers and students
2.5	Management and teachers

Theme 3: Leadership	
3.1	Style of leadership
3.2	Desirable leadership
3.3	Care in leadership

Theme 4: Challenges in Education	
4.1	Advice to a teacher starting their career
4.2	Behaviour
4.3	Time pressures and workload
4.4	Impact of work on personal life
4.5	Who would you turn to if you needed support?

Theme 1: Care

Care is at the heart of education for the participants in this research. Care was alluded to in many responses by the participants where care was not in the phrasing of the question.

What does Care in Schools look like? An open question regarding what they understood by caring in schools was posed in the interview. Most responses concerned students; “taking each individual student for who they are. ... providing a safe environment is a very important element of that” (Teacher B) and “[t]aking time out to talk to the students and teachers.” (Teacher D). Another answer related to the structures of a student support team who met weekly and to the engagement of restorative practice. Mention was also made of supervision in the canteen, students and teachers having a laugh in the corridor and an upset student being steered somewhere quiet to have a conversation and lending a student money for their lunch. It was cited by a teacher that the fundamental tenet was “caring is doing for them (the students) what needs to be done and respecting the dignity of the person” (Teacher F). These beliefs concur with Noddings (2005) who explains that [a]n ethic of care embodies a relational view of caring”.

Two participants understood caring in school as support among the teachers; “there’s so many things put in place for caring for students. ... But I think in order to care for students, we have to care for the people who are caring for the students” (Teacher C).

What does Care of Teachers look like? The experience of care of teachers was understood as teachers and colleagues being approachable as “it’s the experienced teachers who I would go to for any sort of support that I’ve required. I do feel like the care would be there for me and they’re looking out for you” (Teacher B) and that “colleagues will look out for each other” (Teacher F).

The four remaining participants alluded to management being a part of what care of teachers looks like. It is “someone to talk to” (year heads and senior management) (Teacher A), “management listening to you if you had a problem and actively trying to do something

about it" (Teacher E) and "having a strong support base" (Teacher D). Teacher C understood care as being "affirmed by your management when you do something well and been given the opportunity to socialise with your staff". All responses reflected Swart and Oswald's definition of caring as "a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realisation, growth, development, protection, empowerment, and human community, culture and possibility" (Swart and Oswald, 2012, p. 551).

Participants were invited to share their witness of care of teachers. Three teachers recollected how they had issues with behaviour in the classroom and had to deal with a parent of the respective students; they felt supported by year heads, deputy principals and principals who listened and gave constructive advice. Other examples of care included praise from a principal after organising a flag day for the school; a teacher feeling overwhelmed and the deputy principal suggested they take a personal day, being "able to go (to management) and get well without feeling guilty" (Teacher E) and been taken for a day of fun activities and food after staff put huge effort into a project.

Culture of Care. Näsman (2018) proposes that a caring leader strives to create a caring culture. Participants deliberated on what an individual would see in the school in terms of care in the post-primary setting. Response mirrored Doyle and Doyle's (2003) belief that there is a need to connect everyone's caring to create a school culture of care. The first aspect that was evident was the relational element. The "[a]dministrative staff welcoming you." (Teacher A) and "[i]mmediately as you come through the front door, you would see engagement between teachers and the students. You'll see, em, enjoyment in the corridors, enjoyment in the canteen" (Teacher B). Teacher C mentioned that "the majority of teachers would greet each other, they'd greet the students by name ... There's a rapport there."

Teacher E reflected that "[o]n the walls in the schools, students are recognised for all different kinds of achievements: academic and extra-curricular in many different areas".

There was one mention of a structural approach to a culture of care which was carried out by a teacher who had a Post of Responsibility (POR) in mentoring new members of staff. This involved new members of staff being welcomed by the individual teacher and “an email is sent to all teaching staff to make the new member of staff welcome”. The approach in this instance did not extend beyond these initial moments.

Why do we need Care of Teachers? In the interviews, participants were asked why care is needed in our schools. Teacher F responded; “If we didn’t feel that we were cared about, we obviously wouldn’t feel valued or that you were worth that much” and “if you have a happy staff, they’d be more productive”. Teacher A believes that “everyone needs care... it's not a nice place to be if there's no care and if there was no one actually to support you, you can't do everything on your own.” Another participant reflected that “I'm linking back to the social perspective for engagement with people. ... that feeling of belonging is very important” (Teacher B). Ponderings from Teacher C included: “I think if you don't care, it's very hard to get teachers to care about what they're doing because it is such a mentally and physically draining job. And I think if you don't care for your teachers, you're going to kind of build-up a very negative attitude from your staff and they won't be bothered”. Teacher D was concerned with mental health: “because there is such a thing as being burnt out! ... It’s (mental health issues) so strong and you never know who has what going on” and “people do need to be kind to teachers for the benefit of our future generations”. “We deal with a lot on any given day. We are a lot of different things to different children. We give a lot of ourselves. But I think we deserve a bit of that” reflected Teacher E. These musings reflect Ennis’ (2019) concern regarding the lack of prioritising and promoting the mental health and well-being of post-primary school teachers in terms of supports and interventions.

Who would you turn to if you needed Support? All participants vocalised that they would go to a colleague on staff should they need support. “Go to my mentor teacher that I had for the Droichead Programme for support. She would take the time to listen and give me

advice on whatever I should do next” was mentioned by Teacher A and “a colleague” was Teacher C’s response. Teacher D declared that he would go to “friends on the staff – none of which are management or career guidance teachers”. “There's a couple of people who are very kind and whose judgement is good, but that will be a personal thing as opposed to a structural thing. ... I think primarily you're looking at friendships, you know and if you have friendships” was shared by Teacher F. Teacher E was the only teacher to cite management: “I know I could go to the vice-principal and principal if I needed to if it was slightly more serious”. These opinions reflect Kyriacou’s (2001) research on preventing low levels of satisfaction and high occupational stress; these include good communication and sense of collegiality among staff.

Theme 2: Relationships

Relationships are a central tenet of the responses of participants in their interviews and form the basis of many teachers’ experiences as they navigate the school day, week and year. These relational practices emphasise the caring that occurs within connection and relationships (Owens and Ennis, 2005)

The Lived Values of Teachers. Participants pondered on their understanding of care by reflecting on values that guided their teaching. In the classroom, the teachers supported and accepted the humanity of the student and teacher in the endeavour of educating and human flourishing occurring in a safe space; “[t]he idea of seeing each student as an individual. To create this atmosphere for them to feel safe and to give their opinion maybe on different things. Making the room ... a wholesome place for students.” (Teacher B) and “[s]tudents learn how to be happy in themselves and that they can see a future for themselves” (Teacher E). Listening to the student and understanding what they are going through was important; this needed to take place before teaching and learning can; “[t]o make the right judgement as opposed to a quick judgement. Students won’t remember what you taught, they’ll remember what you did for them.” (Teacher D)

Many participants recollected their former teachers' values of engagement and encouragement in a specific activity such as debating, choir and sport. Consideration was given to the strict, fair and firm guidelines applied in the classroom alongside respect, care and understanding where students were coming from.

Important Learning Experiences as a Teacher. Contemplating the most important learning experience as a teacher predominantly concerned being in relationship to others. For example, Teacher B spoke about "how to interact with people of different ages" and "students will learn from your own emotions to how you are within a classroom". Teacher F shared that a former teacher encouraged every student to the best of their ability as he experienced pride, participating and belonging inside and outside of the classroom and "trying to guide me in the right way". Inclusion was an area spoken about by two teachers. "Everybody has different levels of achievement. Everybody achieves their own success. Differentiation ... adapt your expectations as a teacher to the students' needs" (Teacher C). Similarly, Teacher F iterated that "I think it's important to get every child to reach the best of their ability, but it's a very individual thing". All the above necessitates being included in relationships within a group(s) and the structure of the school.

Atmosphere in the School. One teacher reported that there is a "great degree of collegiality" and "the staff are incredibly hardworking" (Teacher F). Another teacher cited that "I would think we would be generally a very friendly staff and I think the vast majority would be very good to the kids" (Teacher E). Teacher A concurred and added that "the staff are friendly. Senior management and the year heads are approachable" and "I feel welcome by senior management". "Within subject departments there is great collaboration ... there's great interaction if you ever have any issue" was mentioned by Teacher B. Cherowski (2018) proposes that [i]n flourishing schools, educators make the time and the space to collaborate in meaningful ways, they work hard to maintain caring relationships that encourage each other".

Contrary to this, a participant explained that “I don't really think that the collegial family community, you know, sort of ethos, as it is portrayed isn't (is?) really there. It's very much on the surface” (Teacher C). Similarly, Teacher D declared that “morale is very low. It's getting to be a place where a lot of people are becoming petty or cynical.” Teacher F remarked that “my cohorts have gone ... I don't have tête-à-têtes or heart to hearts with staff”.

Teachers and Students. Deliberation took place around the relationship of teachers and students. Teacher A believes that “students more respected by the teacher today” and Teacher B holds that “[t]he relationships between teachers and students has become more interpersonal”. “Students are helping teachers with IT a lot more” according to Teacher C and “[w]e're all learning as in students are learning from teachers and teachers are learning from students”. An observation of Teacher E is that “you hear and see laughter, chatting, students with students and with teachers.” “Positive engagement with the students” was commented on as “having an impact on students in terms of giving them direction in life” (Teacher F).

Management and Teachers. For the most part, relationships were positive between management and teachers and concur with Richards et al. (2018) that teachers perceived an affirmative school culture when management were engaged and attentive. Teacher B shared that “there's a brilliant support system there” and Teacher E believes “they get on with each other”. This relationship was described as “very cordial” and “teachers have a very professional or only go to ask questions when they have to” and have a “very respectful sort of distant relationship” (Teacher C). “Preferential treatment by management towards some teachers” was noted by Teacher D.

Theme 3: Leadership

Leadership is explored in terms of the style of leadership understood by the participants in their present school, what contributes to desirable leadership and participants' experience of leadership and care.

Style of Leadership. Three participants described the style of leadership they experienced in their schools positively. “The year heads are very active ... senior management are very approachable” (Teacher A) and Teacher E declared that “there’s a high degree of competence in the management”. Teacher B voiced that “[y]ou’re given the freedom with your own work” and “they take on board everything”.

Contrary to this, Teacher D spoke about “[e]verthing is micro-managed. ... Whoever was given a job or a post (Post of Responsibility) should be allowed to go off and do that job and not be interfered with.” Similarly, Teacher C based in a different school remarked that “[y]ou’re not allowed to take off with something, an idea, a project and there’s no trust and respect to follow through with that” and “I think what’s important is persona and what’s portrayed to the outside world”. Additionally, Teacher E in another school mentioned that her principal tries to micro-manage and wished that her principal “would stand back a little bit and see that we are all professionals and we’re all capable of doing our jobs”. This contradicts Gu and Li’s (2013) assertion that educational literature suggests that in-school management support for teachers’ leadership trust is a key positive influence on their motivation and resilience.

Desirable Leadership. Participants reflected on what contributes to desirable leadership. Teacher E purported that it is “somebody that can seek to serve all the masters in the right proportions to satisfy the needs of the kids in an emotional sense, caring sense, the academic sense, the discipline sense, em, and not to become a slave to one or another”. “Caring, managing students’ behaviour, managing teachers”, being “committed” and “making sure people (staff) were okay” were important qualities for Teacher A. A leader that is “democratic”, “allows and supports creativity” and believes in “fairness” were essential to Teacher B. Teacher C holds that “as a leader you have trust in your staff. You need to be able to ask the hard questions as well and have the difficult conversations”. Another participant remarked that desirable leadership requires being “organised, delegation, admitting you’ve

made a mistake and being non-judgemental ... When change is needed, staff is consulted. Somebody who allows someone to implement a change” (Teacher D). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and Bush and Glover (2014) declare that we need an understanding of leadership that reflects a full appreciation of the commitments and capacities of “organisational members”. This is at odds with Teacher B, “I don't feel that you're 100 percent appreciated all the time for all the effort that may be you put in” and Teacher C, I probably don't feel that I get a clap on the back or thanks for doing that or any affirmation maybe that would spur you on to do something else”.

Care in Leadership. Educational leaders know that leadership requires a few judgments each day that requires sensitivity (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). A question was posed to participants regarding whether care was present in the current style of leadership they were experiencing. Teacher C reflected that “at times there needs to be recognition ... just to give you the motivation to keep going. ... We’re encouraged to give the students positive reinforcement. If you got a little bit of that back from them (students) or even from management”. “I think care can be shown by letting us do our jobs or our given posts or roles, you know as well as we can, or we know we can, because we’re all professional people” commented Teacher E. Similarly, Teacher F stated “every management should care for their staff ... the emphasis every day is to care for the kids I'm not sure whether when they come in every day it's about care for the staff as a priority objective”. On the other hand, Teacher B reported that “[m]anagement are very approachable” and Teacher F concluded that “I would have confidence that if you need them to be there for you, they would be”.

Theme 4: Challenges in Education

The researcher did not set out to examine stress in this research. However, it gives a context as to why care of teachers is necessary in all educational settings. Understanding teachers’ stress is of critical importance to address the challenges in today’s educational climate (Jennings et al, 2017). Participants considered their own experience and stated what

advice they would give to a teacher starting their career. The challenges of classroom behaviour, time constraints, the impact of work on one's personal life and the demand of being inclusive in the classroom were some of the sub themes that emerged as the coding took place.

Advice to a Teacher Starting their Career. Teachers need to be resilient and supported emotionally in order that they can build and sustain positive identities and existing effectiveness (Day and Kington 2008). Participants were invited to share their ruminations on advice they would give to a teacher starting their career. Declarations included "Look after themselves. It is a seriously demanding job with a huge amount of responsibility" (Teacher B) to "there's a lot of work behind the scenes" (Teacher A) and "[y]ou put huge effort into preparing your classes in the early days of teaching" (Teacher C). Of paramount importance to Teacher E was "[l]ook for the good in each child. Respect each child." Teacher F suggested that "I would ask them why they got involved in teaching? And I suggest to teachers if you did demonstrate kindness and consideration, em, and if you're happy with your results, that's a good day".

Teacher B spoke of "giving yourself time to adjust in those early years of teaching" and the need to "be kind to yourself". "You need to take time for yourself, you need to look after yourself and can't always be working" responded Teacher C. "Finding that life balance as well as not overextending yourself and finding time for your own social life" and "it's okay to make mistakes so long as you learn from them" was cited by Teacher A. In contrast, Teacher D assessed the boundary between his public and private life and the necessity of being "more reserved in relation to my posts on social media ... be a bit more private and not give too much away".

Behaviour. Classroom behaviour was observed to be a source of stress by all teachers in the interviews. One of the participants recalled how he "had a tough class last class three times in the week, so those evenings I definitely burnt out. ... I didn't feel like doing anything,

... I need to recuperate here” (Teacher B). While Teacher C recalled how her commitment decreased due to having a “difficult fifth year class in terms of behaviour”.

Time Pressures and Workload. Richards et al. (2018) recognise that the main sources of stress facing teachers included maintaining discipline, time pressures and workload. A SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) concluded that “it gets really stressful when you have to make deadlines such as RACE (Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations)” (Teacher E). In addition, she acknowledged “being pulled at it every opportunity by outside services, phoning outside services and parents”. A teacher in her early career noted “the greatest challenge I feel is staying on top of my work in a sense. Like hitting deadlines (exams), you know department plans, correcting papers, making sure they're back on time ... you want to make sure you have everything done right”. An early stage teacher remarked that “[w]hen I started teaching, I had a job share of 11 hours and I felt on top of my head prepping classes, correcting work and teaching” (Teacher A).

Impact of Work on Personal Life. Richards et al. (2018) purports that the stress experienced by teachers has been traced to reduced feelings of job satisfaction, demoralisation that occurs when their vision of good teaching conflicts with policies, reform mandates and school practice and increased burnout. Teacher D spoke about “feeling worn out ... I was diagnosed with depression. It’s all work related and anxiety. It’s had massive effects on me. I was so bogged down trying to do work. ... The workload has definitely become a lot more challenging and what’s expected of you a lot more challenging”. A teacher in the last stage of their career remarked that “stresses that can happen in your own personal and private life would have a stronger, has had a negative, eh, input into the school rather school stuff per se” (Teacher F). A common sub theme was “finding the balance between personal life and not spending too much time preparing work” (Teacher A) and “I wasn’t making time for myself to do things” (Teacher D).

Inclusive Education. Teacher A described the challenge of “making sure students understand the work” and that it was “difficult to keep struggling and academically able students in the one class on track and interested”. A teacher in mid-career considered the challenge of “not catering to the needs of all of the students in the classroom” and how she had struggled with “going from the rhythm of teaching to learning support and doing team teaching and in class support” (Teacher C). Teacher F shared that his energy levels and “capacity to do it (teach and attend to students with special educational needs) day after day at the same intensity levels diminishes over time”. On a structural level the SENCO thinks it’s “very difficult to get subs at the moment. ... Management will take teachers off me in resource and put them into mainstream and not replace them”; the result of this is that students who are entitled to learning support on a withdrawal level or in team teaching are denied it.

Posts of Responsibility. This issue arose for three participants in the interviews. Teacher D spoke about teaching “becoming a very frustrating job to be in” and “being annoyed about not getting promotion (post of responsibility) because I want something different in my job.” This mid-career teacher wants something different as he feels “as though I’ve just plateaued”. A teacher in her late career spoke about how the “area of APIs (Assistant Principal II) did lead to heartache for some people”. All three teachers who mentioned this are based in two different schools and spoke about how their principals micro-manage and made a distinct correlation between who got the posts of responsibility and their relationship to the principal. Teacher E spoke about some staff feeling overlooked and pulling back from being so involved. On the flip side of this, she witnessed “people being honest and they saw what mattered to them in terms of their careers”.

Conclusion

Smit and Scherman (2016) propose that the term “caring” refers to the relationships between principals and teachers and learners and suggest that it is fundamental to caring that principals understand their teachers as individuals, and that they not treat them as a

collective, homogeneous entity; the teachers in this research concur with this understanding of care. Participants in this study work hard to meet their professional and personal responsibilities and implement the role of care in their respective school settings to achieve student success. Central to this are the communities that educators want to build, the sort of people teachers want to produce and the way interactions take place in our schools (Noddings, 1984).

This chapter presented an analysis of the research data in response to the research question concerning the exploration of the creation of a culture of care for post-primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland. The main themes which emerged were care, relationships, leadership and challenges in education.

Chapter 5: Findings

The aim of this study is to explore post-primary teachers' experience of care and educational leadership. Coupled with this research is an examination of care itself, the relationships involved and the place of leadership in developing a culture of care.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss both the conclusions and implications of the data uncovered throughout this research. It must be noted that the findings unearthed within this research cannot be generalised for all post-primary teachers, however they are worth considering in order to enhance teachers' experience of care going forward.

Findings

Section 1: Care.

Finding 1. This study found that care in schools is based on relationships and mostly concerns students. When asked an open question, most participants immediately responded with an answer concerning care of students. Emphasis was placed on the relational view of caring (Noddings, 2005). Many of these relational experiences took place in the ordinary moments of a school day as a student entered the building and was greeted by name by a teacher or through the multiple casual conversations held on the corridors or in the canteen. Understanding and noticing what is going on in a student's life as an individual was mentioned by three of the participants. In the interviews, acting out behaviour was alluded to in terms of appreciating that life and situations can be difficult for students.

Care of students also took place in a structural way through the weekly Student Support Team meeting, the year team structure comprising of a year head and other teacher members or going to the career guidance counsellor. Some schools ran programmes to support emotional well-being through their SEN department (Teacher C and F).

Finding 2. This study found that care of teachers was understood in two ways - colleague to colleague and management to teacher. Very simply, participants thought that their colleagues are “approachable” (Teacher B) and that they would “look out for each other” (Teacher E). Examples of this were being listened to in the staffroom after a difficult class and being encouraged as a teacher embarked on a new project. There was a casual nature to this experience of care.

On the other hand, four participants spoke about the caring approach of the senior management team or principal as being there to actively listen and support the teacher with putting a plan in place if this was necessary. There were mixed feelings about being recognised and appreciated by the senior management team. There is no precedent for this kind of care; it comes from an ethic of care within the principal and management team and is deeply linked with their value system.

Finding 3. This study found that to create a culture of care there is a need to connect everyone’s caring (Sergiovanni, 1994). A caring community has an “ethic of care” (Starrat, 1994). Participants understood caring as accepting others in the school community for who they were and looking for the good in everyone. Caring was experienced as students and teachers being the best version of themselves. Emphasis on a culture of care in the individual schools is being welcomed by administrative staff, teaching staff and students to visitors. This could be noted as being casual in nature and is simply the way things are done in the schools. Additionally, providing buns at break time was mentioned by participants as being popular in **to** acknowledge the staff’s contribution to school life.

On a formal level, participants spoke of the Droichead programme run in recent years to support Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) with the challenges, anxieties and difficulties experienced during the transitional period from teacher education into the profession. Both teachers in their early careers were the only two of the six participants to experience this and

appreciated the care and listening afforded to them. The value of this programme was recognised by two other teachers. Another formal approach to a culture of care is what is visible in corridors and classrooms. Included in this were achievements of an academic and extra-curricular nature in the form of photographs, prize cabinets, projects and art work displayed on the corridors. The ethos of the schools was mentioned in terms of crosses and prayers being present in every classroom; this links in with the catholic understanding of schools providing a caring, nurturing, safe and supportive environment.

Teachers did perceive a sense of community and care when they had positive relationships with colleagues, principals who were engaged and attentive, and opportunities to experience collaboration (Richards et al., 2018).

Finding 4. This study found that care of teachers is important to sustain their health and sense of purpose. Additionally, teachers' roles in relation to their students depends as much on how they are within themselves as it does on what they teach. Time and energy are invested by teachers in daily efforts to nurture the next generation. Some of the challenges experienced by teachers are developed below in theme four, challenges in education. There are more meetings to attend, more emails to respond to, more tasks to take on; while educators may feel fulfilled and inspired, feeling drained and exhausted is being experienced too. Teaching can be both nourishing and depleting, and if the balance swings towards the latter, sustainability and health can be at risk.

As teachers are working to meet the needs of their students, who is taking care of them? Who is ensuring that teachers have what they need to remain whole and emotionally and psychologically healthy? Teachers' emotional struggles have a direct influence on their practices and interactions with students. Research from the interviews [Interview responses?](#) suggested that care is not dealt with in a systematic way to support the emotional, affective and psychological health of teachers, but rather in an ad hoc manner. Further, this body of research indicates that teachers who work in schools they perceive to have nurturing and

supportive cultures, experience a culture of care. Given that teachers who are more stressed are less effective in the classroom, the development of nurturing environments that help teachers do more effectively cope with stress and do their work more effectively appears paramount (Andrew et al., 2018). Educators may have different needs depending where they are in the cycle of their career. The need for care and support does not end once the initial years of teaching have finished as teachers continue with life-long learning over the trajectory of their career.

Finding 5. This study found that five of the six participants would go to a colleague for support or if it were something more serious, two would go to the principal, deputy principal or year head. One respondent in his late career spoke about not having any friends left on staff with whom he could have an intimate conversation. Similar to the other subthemes of care, is the lack of formality or structure in which care has been experienced by all participants.

Section 2: Relationships

Finding 1. This study found that the values that guided the participants' teaching focused on acceptance, flourishing, inclusion, integrity, safety, honesty and responsibility and that the important learning experiences of the participants reflected the values of being in relationship with others, having high expectations of students, collaboration, participation, belonging and respect. Important learning experiences also included participant's experiences of teachers they had high regard for when they were students at school. The relational nature of values is given significance and meaning in their concrete interpersonal encounters. According to Nias (1996), emotions are fundamentally important for teaching and teachers as teachers' personal and professional identities are often so inseparable that classrooms and schools become sites for their self-esteem, fulfilment and vulnerability, and teachers have profound feelings about their work since they invest so much of themselves in it, particularly

with their values. Teachers' emotions and values were intrinsically linked in the interview data.

Finding 2. This study found that all participants interpreted the atmosphere of their school to have both a relational and a value context. Participants spoke of catering for individual needs, fostering respect for diversity, effective communication within their schools, and between school and home and enhancing self-esteem by having their work affirmed. In examples cited, collegiality, hardworking, friendly, approachable and collaborative were used to describe the teachers, middle management and senior management.

Contrary to this, some participants spoke of the need for greater communication within their schools. In two situations, communication was experienced as a one-way process of the principal providing information rather than communication as a two-way process. Democratic processes not being utilised in staff meetings and appropriate decision making by the principal, were alluded to. Some participants remarked that they did not feel appreciated or recognised for their contribution to school life. Mention was made of a school being cold in the depths of winter and this impacting on the atmosphere of the school.

Finding 3. This study found that teachers appeared to be a powerful and effective means of support and encouragement to their students. Participants mostly conceived of the relationship between teachers and students to be positive and included qualities such as caring, trusting, a safe learning environment that is sometimes fun and understanding. Underpinning these qualities is respect, in the sense of the teacher regarding their students as developing teenagers that are there to learn and grow and expected to make mistakes, then be helped to fix those mistakes and achieve their best. Teachers often showed an interest in their students' lives outside the classroom. Reference was made to students and teachers' rapport inside and outside of the classroom by all participants.

Finding 4. This study found that principals are imperative in establishing quality professional relationships between management and teachers for the goals and vision of the

school to be realised. According to Fullan (2002), well-established relationships are the resource that keeps on giving. For student achievement to prosper, a bond of trust, respect, and mutual support must be present between the principal, the senior and middle management teams and the teachers within a school building. Some participants experienced these qualities in the relationship between teachers and management and believed the relationship was cordial, friendly and professional.

Half of the participants held the opinion that nepotism and cronyism reigned in Assistant Principals appointments in recent years and that some candidates were overlooked for the Posts of Responsibility. Delegation by senior management was noted to have included successful candidates in these recent appointments. These appointments have led to some relationships between management and teachers being strained and trust, respect and support not being experienced.

Section 3: Leadership

The principal is a central, though not solitary, agent in establishing a culture in which a learning community might grow and flourish (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). Post-primary schools are led by the senior management team that is comprised of the principal, deputy principal(s) and the middle management team. This combination lends itself well to the model of distributed leadership whereby the focus of leadership is on the collective and is shared.

Finding 1. This study found that three participants described the style of leadership positively and mentioned senior management and middle management (in terms of year heads) as being approachable and competent.

This study also found that half of the participants spoke of the principal micro-managing in two different school settings. This reflects Bush and Glover's (2012) criticism of instructional leadership focusing too much on the principal as the centre of expertise, power and authority. Additionally, micro-managing lacks the teacher being trusted and given

respect. Participants declared that decisions were frequently made by principals in two different schools and staff were not consulted. Mention was made of numerous committees where the projects do not seem to meet completion. Reports and updates on these projects, involving the newly appointed assistant principals, had been fed back to staff in whole staff meetings. Participants expressed a desire for management to be trusting and allow teachers to do their job or carry out their post of responsibility. Questions around the sustainability of micro-managing remain in terms of it being used in a distributed model; a dissonance exists immediately.

Finding 2. This study found that the interpretation of the data indicated teachers strongly preferred behaviours that aligned with aspects of transformational leadership (Hauserman and Stick, 2013). Among the interviewees, there were commonalities regarding constructions of care, morality and democracy in leadership. Trust and respect were conceived as essential between the principal and teachers if they are going to build positive relationships. Support for staff was understood as principals encouraging, listening, caring and looking out for their teachers during difficult times. Behaviours such as maintaining and creating visibility, leading by example, showing consistent fairness, making ethical decisions, asking questions and challenging the status quo were interpreted as contributing to desirable leadership. Interviewees discerned that collaborating on decisions, making decisions that were best for the student body and building leadership capacity were all tenets of desirable leadership. Each element of desirable leadership as outlined above, were declared at least once by the participants as not being their experience of leadership in their respective school settings.

Finding 3. This study found that human caring and an ethical leadership, based on an explicit set of values, are essential in education (Näsman, 2018). Caring leadership is in its very essence relational, where an ethic of care observes the principle of fairness and social justice (Smit and Scherman, 2016).

A caring principal strives to create a culture of care where teachers' worth and potential are communicated to them. A principal is an important agent in establishing a culture where learning, growth, flourishing, recognition and acknowledgement take place. Being recognised and appreciated by management was experienced by some participants but not by all; the desire for it to happen was strong. Four participants expressed uncertainty about care being present in the current style of leadership operated in their school.

Section 4: Challenges in Education

Finding 1: Behaviour. This study found that all participants recognised that negative behaviour takes its toll on personal well-being. Participants acknowledged that there are many potential influences on student behaviour, and many factors that can lead to behaviour that is challenging for the teacher and perhaps management to deal with – psychological, social and student group dynamics were a few that were alluded to in the interviews. Challenging behaviour was noted by participants as a definite contribution to increasing their stress and personal apathy in their approach to teaching at different junctures in their teaching life. Challenging behaviours include those where students are withdrawn, disruptive, unsafe and socially inappropriate. Behaviour was also understood when a class group were experienced as apathetic and lacking in motivation. This is a complex area that will continue to challenge teachers at times beyond their early years of teaching.

Finding 2: Inclusive Education. This study found that there is an increased onus on teacher collaboration, differentiation and identification of student needs in order to be a truly inclusive school and reported lack of knowledge, confidence and competence regarding inclusive practice. This is affirmed by Travers et al. (2010) who assert that a challenge to inclusion is the difficulty in differentiating planning and teaching. To carry out this practice a lack of teacher collaboration and lack of time was noted by the interviewees. To be truly caring, teachers must believe that difference is accounted for as an essential aspect of human development in any conception of learning. All participants had experience of working with

students with additional educational needs and one teacher is a SENCO with further postgraduate training in inclusive education.

Finding 3: Advice to a teacher starting their career. Time pressures, workload and impact of work on personal life. This study found that the advice teachers would give to a teacher starting their career include being organised as teaching is a demanding job that requires time to plan, prepare, correct and complete the paperwork. In those early years, there is a great deal of learning to be done and new situations to be experienced and assimilated by the teacher in the classroom and in the school. Differentiation is the remit of every class teacher and this can place demands on a new teacher. Educational trends, including the accelerated use of information technology in recent years, and changes in curriculum (the Junior Cycle Programme was the most cited example of the interviewees) add further to the workload. A resounding echo by participants of having balance in one's life is necessary. Early stage career teachers can be consumed by the demands on their time in terms of work; it is vital to recharge the batteries and to "be kind to yourself" (Teacher B).

This study also found that work has had or continues to have an impact on teachers' personal lives. There was agreement regarding early stage career when many aspects of teaching and planning, relationships with teachers, management, students and parents, school procedures etc. were difficult to navigate and time-consuming, despite sometimes not having a full teaching schedule. Consensus lay with much work having to be done outside of school time to keep on top of the workload; this was expressed as true for all stages of career. Workload outside of school did feature as causing internal tension to find a balance between teaching and a personal life free from work. For some participants, workload outside of school did causes tension between teachers and their partners. Two participants spoke about mental health difficulties that they believe have strong connections with the amount of planning and preparing they do for their teaching role and extra-curricular activities with which they are involved.

Conclusion

The findings regarding experience of care by the participants in this study were mostly experienced in an informal manner. This may reflect the inherent ethos and implied virtues of the Catholic schools to which the teachers belonged. Internal value systems were strong and present within each teacher and there was no doubt about the student being first and foremost in how the teachers understood and contributed to education.

The findings found that to the fore of relationships were those of the teacher and student; in all instances they were experienced as being excellent. On the other hand, the experience of the relationship between management and teachers were mixed and ranged from cordial, friendly and professional to teachers describing management as nepotistic and being accused of cronyism.

The findings found that the experience of leadership varied from being competent and approachable to a lack of trust and being micro-managed. The lack of trust was particularly highlighted by recent experiences of assistant principal appointments. There was a high uncertainty if care in leadership did exist in the respective schools. Mention was made of some feeling appreciated and recognised.

The findings found that challenges will always exist in education. Behaviour was cited as one. Workload, time pressures and inclusive education have an impact on personal life and challenged the thin line between the private and public life of the teacher.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore a culture of care for post-primary teachers and the place of educational leadership in that. Coupled with this research was the examination of care in schools and care of teachers and where leadership featured in this and the challenges experienced by post-primary teachers that emerged.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss both the conclusions and the implications of the data uncovered throughout this research. It must be noted that the findings unearthed within this research cannot be generalised for the entire post-primary population, however they could be worth considering in order to enhance the principals' (Misneach) and deputy principals' (Tánaiste) leadership training programmes going forward.

Significance of the Findings

Teachers are grappling with and working through situations where care and support may be needed. More attention needs to be placed on senior management helping teachers through emotionally strenuous conditions and offering methods for improving those conditions. As teachers develop a repository to address their struggles, and structures are put in place, they will be better equipped to support their students and live a more balanced life.

The significance of the findings in relation to care demonstrate that a culture of care existed in a structured and unstructured manner for students. When participants were asked what care in schools looked like, the majority spoke about care of the student. Care of and for teachers happened in a more casual fashion with the exception of the Droichead programme for newly qualified teachers. There was a consensus that if a teacher needed support in school, that they would turn to a colleague and perhaps to a member of the senior management team only if the issue were more serious.

The significance of the findings in relation to relationships illustrated that participants in the research concurred that the relationships between teachers and students were excellent. There was a discrepancy in the relationships experienced between management

and teachers. These ranged from being cordial, friendly and professional to being highly unpleasant as a result of the fallout from the post of responsibility appointments over the last two years where participants believed cronyism to be active with successful candidates. Experiences varied regarding the atmosphere in the respective schools. At one end of the spectrum there was collegiality, hard work, friendliness, approachability and collaboration, and at the opposite end was discomfort with the lack of democracy in terms of decision making.

The significance of the findings in relation to leadership revealed that half of the participants in this study experienced a lack of trust and micro-management from their principal specifically.

All interviewees were very clear of their understanding of desired leadership to include care, morality and democracy.

There was a resounding uncertainty and lack of knowledge as to whether care was present in their experience of leadership in their respective school settings. This might appear to contradict participants' views as to what they understood care in school to look like. Experiences of being appreciated and recognised for the work they do varied among participants from being affirmed to being ignored.

The significance of the findings regarding challenges is that all participants experienced challenges in their workplace. These included behaviour in the classroom, workload and time pressures, being truly inclusive and finding a balance between one's work life and personal life. All participants spoke about stress in the workplace affecting them to different extents. The volume of work being asked and expected of teachers has increased for the participants.

Implications of Findings

Challenges in education will continue to exist. Participants asserted that the workload and the time in which it takes to complete the numerous activities in relation to teaching has

continuously increased. This impinges on their personal time and has an impact on their personal lives. Insufficient time exists for such planning and collaboration. Teachers are experiencing stress which have culminated in mental health issues for some. These strains can impact at any stage in a teacher's career. Continued care is needed to support teachers so that they are not isolated or struggling to cope alone.

Change and reform will continue to be part of education in response to the contemporary world. In this study the participants were accepting of the changes in education they had experienced; change did not pose a challenge to them and it was viewed that they had many changes in their career and change would continue to be integral to education.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, a needs analysis is required. Care in schools need to consider individual teachers' care needs. Newly qualified teachers participate in the Droichead induction programme, newly appointed principals are supported by the Misneach programme and the Tánaiste programme is for newly qualified deputy principals. These programmes have all been devised and researched based on needs in the Irish context. There is a dearth of programmes for those who fall between being newly qualified and those who would like to move into management. The care and well-being of all teachers could be monitored by individual schools so that teachers in that school are cared for throughout their career should the need arise. Resources and best practice may be then be drawn on by principals and deputy principals to respond to these varying needs.

Based on the results of this study, structured care meetings for teachers are necessary to respond to teachers in need of care and support. At present, the care experienced by teachers is of an informal basis. I believe good use should be made of structures that already exist in schools. Firstly, where year teams meet on a weekly basis, a member of the senior management team could schedule to meet with that team several times in the academic year. Secondly, department meetings are another opportunity for senior management to schedule

meeting with all subject departments over the course of the year. Thirdly, the principal could have a check-in meeting with individual teachers at least once a year to touch base at a personal level.

Based on the results of this study, a professional learning network can support and provide care to teachers. The principal objective of a professional learning network is to advance the teaching, learning and/or classroom management skills of post-primary teachers. Strategies of a school professional network could include a whole school approach to mentoring, professional conversations, collective planning, sharing of teaching expertise and resources and where teachers are not working in isolation. Teachers are encouraged in their training to be reflective practitioners. The Droichead induction programme for newly qualified teachers includes reflective practice. A professional learning network can support teachers being reflective in their work and be in a profession in which they can grow and be cared for.

Limitations

The limitations identified in the study include the small size of the interview group. The researcher would have been interested in exploring the research question from a wider sample to include teachers from various post-primary structures. The researcher is aware that any finding cannot be generalisable to all primary school teachers. The sampling was purposive due to the focus of the research. Every effort was made by the researcher to remain objective and unbiased, however the researcher acknowledges that her links to the six participants in the interviews may have resulted in more positive responses.

Future Research

Following on from the presence of induction programmes for newly qualified teachers, newly appointed middle management, newly appointed principals and deputy principals, and, experienced principals there is a dearth of induction programmes for those who fall in between both. Research could be carried out on teachers' needs for those who have no structured programmed to support them in their career.

Another aspect to be researched is looking at school leaders and how their style of leadership impacts on the well-being of their staff.

Further research could include the rich data from established and experienced senior and middle managements' perspective regarding the care needs of their teaching staff. This data could contribute to the induction training programmes for senior management.

Conclusion

The research set out to answer the following research question: what is the experience of educational leadership and the culture of care for post-primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland? In order to do this the context was set out in chapter 1. In chapter 2, the relevant literature under the themes of care, teachers and change, leadership, school culture and relationships were presented. The research methodology, based on grounded theory using an interpretive pragmatic approach, was outlined in chapter 3. An analysis of the themes care, relationships, leadership and challenges in education was proffered in chapter 4.

Chapter 5 presented four key findings in relation to care, relationships, leadership and challenges in education. This study found that care in schools is based on relationships and mostly concerns students. Care of teachers was understood as colleague to colleague and management to teacher. There is need to connect everyone's care to create a culture of care. Care of teachers is important to sustain their health and sense of purpose. Most participants would go to a colleague should they need support.

In this study important learning experiences of the participants reflected the values of being in relationship with others, having high expectations of students, collaboration, participation, belonging and respect. The values that guided participants' teaching focused on acceptance, flourishing, inclusion, integrity, safety, honesty and responsibility. All participants interpreted the atmosphere of their school to have both a relational and a value context. Teachers appeared to be a powerful and effective means of support and encouragement to

their students. Principals are imperative in establishing quality professional relationships between management and teachers for the goals and vision of the school to be realised.

Some participants described the style of leadership as being approachable and competent while others experienced being micro-managed by their respective principals. Participants in the study preferred behaviours that aligned with aspects of transformational leadership. Human caring and an ethical leadership, based on an explicit set of values, are essential in educational leadership.

All participants recognised that negative behaviour takes its toll on personal well-being. Participants reported a lack of knowledge, confidence and competence regarding inclusive practice. Advice teachers would give to a teacher starting their career includes being organised as teaching is a demanding job that is time consuming. The workload has had or continues to have an impact on teachers' personal lives.

Relationship building is a central tenet to an ethic of care in our schools. Collaborating, shared decision making, dialogue, trust and compassion are necessary in a culture of care practised from the senior management, through middle management and teachers. Relationships built on an ethic of care need time, commitment and effort. An ethic of care is a challenge to all stakeholders in an educational setting to ensure that we lay our foundations and continue to build our schools on a culture of care. An ethic of care is a tough ethic and "not just a warm, fuzzy feeling that make people kind and likeable" (Noddings, 1995, p.675).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Plain language statement for teacher participating in the interview

Plain language statement for teacher participating in the interview

Research Study Title: Exploring educational leadership and the creation of a culture of care for post-primary teachers.

What is this project about?

I am currently engaged in a Master in Education Studies (Leadership in Christian Education) in Marino Institute of Education and as part of my studies I am conducting a small-scale research study exploring education leadership and the creation of a culture of care for post-primary teachers. Your participation in this study will involve taking part in an interview which will take approximately 60 minutes in total. This process will take place during the first two weeks of March 2020.

What do you want me to do?

You will also be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. I will record the interview and transcribe the responses so that I can analyse them. Recordings and transcripts will be destroyed after analysis is complete.

Will my Identity be kept confidential?

The teachers involved will not be identified and no real names will be used in the report or in any presentations or publications from it.

What happens to the data?

Data collected will be kept confidential, subject to legal limitations, and all notes and recordings taken will be kept securely under lock and key or password protected and destroyed or deleted after two years. While every effort will be made to protect your identity, the participants may not be anonymous to other people within the school or to people familiar with the school who read the report.

Is my participation in the project voluntary?

Involvement in this research study is voluntary. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me by email

(mcsshaw@maristdunkalk.ie) or by phone (086 6013449). After the research is finished, I will give you a summary of the findings. If you are happy to participate, please complete the consent form and return it to me.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact my thesis supervisor Dr. Julie Uí Choistealbha at Marino Institute of Education.

Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form

Study title: Exploring educational leadership and the creation of a culture of care for post-primary teachers

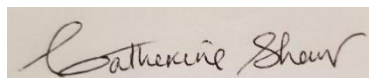
I have understood the information about this research project. It has been fully explained to me and I have been able to ask questions, all of which have been answered to my satisfaction.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I don't have to take part in this study and that I can opt out at any time. I understand that I don't have to give a reason for opting out.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the interview will be carried out in a sensitive and non-stressful manner.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I have the full contact details of the researcher to enable me to make follow-up inquiries.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I have been assured that information about me will be kept private and confidential and that I will be anonymised in the printed thesis.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given a copy of the Information Leaflet and this completed consent form for my records.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Storage and future use of information:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I give my permission for information collected on audio to be stored or electronically processed for the purpose of research. This will be stored safely with access only available to the investigators.		

 Participant Name (Block Capitals) | Participant Signature | Date

To be completed by the Researcher:

I, the undersigned, have taken the time to fully explain to the above participant the nature and purpose of this study in a way that they could understand. I have explained the risks involved as well as the possible benefits. I have invited them to ask questions on any aspect of the study that concerned them.

CATHERINE SHAW



March 2020

 Name (Block Capitals) | Signature | Date
 mscshaw@maristdundalk.ie

Appendix 3: Semi-structured interview questions.

The following questions guided the interviews.

1. What are your memories of attending primary and secondary school?
 - Did you have a favourite teacher? What made them your favourite? How did they treat you? Did they influence you personally or professionally?
2. How would you describe the atmosphere in your school? If I were a visitor to your school, what would I see that would tell me about a culture of care in your school?
3. What values have guided your own teaching? Can you live out your values at school?
4. Have you experienced change and reform in your teaching career?
 - How did these changes impact on your personal life? On your teaching career? Have teachers' working conditions improved or dis-improved since you started teaching?
5. Do you feel your contribution to school is recognised and appreciated? What do you see as the greatest challenges in your work? Were there any periods during your career when your commitment decreased or increased?
6. What does caring in schools look like to you? What does care of teachers look like to you? (Give examples). Why do we need care and care of teachers in our school?
7. If you required support in school, who would you turn to?
8. Describe how teachers and senior management get on with each other in your school? What are the characteristics of desirable leadership to you? If you were school leader for a day, how would you lead?