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THE ROLE OF RESEARCH CAPACITY-BUILDING IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION (ITE) IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF IRELAND: A BASELINE AND COMPARATIVE STUDY

Understanding the role and potential for research capacity-building in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes

North-South Ireland:

A baseline and comparative study
Understanding the role and potential for research capacity-building in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes
North and South Ireland: A baseline and comparative study.

Standing Conference on Teacher Education
North and South (SCoTENS)

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With Robin McRoberts, Gr8 Consultancy
Acknowledgments

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**Glossary of Terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills (R/I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEL</td>
<td>Department for Employment and Learning</td>
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<td>RAE</td>
<td>Research Assessment Exercise</td>
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<td>REF</td>
<td>Research Excellence Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSDA</td>
<td>Learning and Skills Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISS</td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills (UK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTCNI</td>
<td>General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMMS</td>
<td>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIRLS</td>
<td>Progress in International Reading Literacy Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BERA</td>
<td>British Educational Research Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITE</td>
<td>Initial Teacher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLRP</td>
<td>Teaching and Learning Research Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD-CERI</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Centre for Educational Research and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEA</td>
<td>Institute of Economic Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIERF</td>
<td>Northern Ireland Educational Research Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARRTS</td>
<td>Access to Research Resources for Teachers Space</td>
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<td>SFRE</td>
<td>Strategic Forum for Research in Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>AERS</td>
<td>Applied Educational Research Scheme</td>
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<td>WERN</td>
<td>Welsh Educational Research Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>NISRA</td>
<td>Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>UoA</td>
<td>Unit of Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEFCE</td>
<td>Higher Education Funding Council for England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETI</td>
<td>Education and Training Inspectorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESAR</td>
<td>Educational Studies Association of Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEA</td>
<td>Higher Education Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRCHSS</td>
<td>Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCET</td>
<td>Universities Council for Teacher Education++</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTRP</td>
<td>National Teacher Research Panel</td>
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<tr>
<td>TERN</td>
<td>Teacher Education Research Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IoERA</td>
<td>Institute of Educational Research of Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>SERA</td>
<td>Scottish Educational Research Association</td>
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Executive Summary

1. The aims of this study of research capacity building in initial teacher education programmes in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (RoI) were two-fold:
   (i) to provide an analysis of the experience, perspectives and resources of teacher educators with regard to the factors that support and/or inhibit research capacity-building in the initial phase of teacher education programmes in order to determine future directions;
   (ii) to create a comprehensive baseline understanding of how research awareness, understanding and skills are incorporated and developed during the initial stages of teacher education.

2. The study understands research capacity-building to embrace all attempts to enhance individual and collective research expertise in pre-service teachers through any number of the following: critical understanding of educational research purposes, methods, skills and application and the capacity of educators to critically inquire into practice.

3. The study comprises three inter-related phases which combine both quantitative and qualitative data sets. In Phase 1 exploratory interviews were undertaken with four ITE course directors (CDs) in NI and the RoI; Phase 2 involved the design of an online survey and its dissemination to teacher educators in both jurisdictions; Phase 3 developed emerging themes with subsamples of NI (n=4) and RoI (n=4) participant volunteers through in-depth interviews.

4. The online questionnaire-based survey was disseminated to 437 professional ITE colleagues located in 25 ITE institutions throughout NI and the RoI.

5. The number of responses received to the online invitation to complete the survey was 267 (61.1%). Response rates were RoI (72%) and NI (27%). Overall 89% of respondents were from the RoI and 11% from NI. 62% of respondents were female, 38% male.

6. Teacher education staffing levels are more generous in Northern Ireland while the numbers being accepted on to teacher education programmes are generally smaller in that jurisdiction. The majority of survey respondents in both jurisdictions have teaching experience at primary and/or post-primary.

7. The vast majority of respondents (100% in NI) felt that it is ‘very important’ or ‘important’ to develop the research capacity of their students, particularly in areas such as practitioner action research, literature searching, the interpretation of reports/evidence and knowledge of research methods. However many teacher educators were sceptical regarding the feasibility of engaging student teachers more formally in research activity and the relevance of much published research to student teachers.

8. The vast majority of survey respondents as well as interviewees in both jurisdictions viewed reflective practice as a form of research. Indeed they regarded reflective practice, preparation for teaching and specialist subject methods as the most important research activities for student teachers (rather than e.g. policy or foundations). Interviewees felt that the relationship between action research and other forms of research was in need of development in the context of ITE.

9. Survey respondents called for the mainstreaming of research in ITE programmes. Interviewees felt that student teachers should be enabled to become critical thinkers and reflective practitioners and to engage critically with current policy developments and challenge existing beliefs and practices in the education environment.

10. Most respondents, particularly in RoI, feel that student teachers are not either ‘very well’ or ‘well’ prepared to undertake a range of research activities. While opportunities for such research training have been
very limited in RoI up to now, NI interviewees indicated that their ITE programmes have been addressing research capacity building for some time but in a fragmented manner.

11. While two-thirds of all respondents viewed educational research as either very valuable or valuable for teachers in schools, there was also a general sense that practicing teachers are rather sceptical about the relevance of educational research. This is being addressed in NI through the involvement of teachers in research advisory boards and in dissemination and impact activities.

12. Almost 80% of all respondents considered that ITE students are either ‘not involved at all’ or ‘only involved a little’ in the research culture of their institutions while only 3% felt that students are ‘very involved’.

13. There was identifiable tension between the identity of ITE faculty as ‘teacher educators’ and ‘educational researchers’ with interviewees in both jurisdictions noting the requirement to critically unpack the meaning of ITE-based education research and what it means to be ‘research-active’. They also identified the need for a coherent policy regarding the development of research capacity during ITE.

14. The majority of survey respondents recognised that there was a relationship between levels of research activity on the part of teacher education staff and the likelihood that research would underpin ITE programmes and lead to the development of research capacity.

15. The majority of survey respondents viewed engagement in research as part of their role/brief as teacher educators.

16. A significant minority of ITE staff rated their own research experience as satisfactory or poor. While most had studied research methods, they were considerably more familiar with qualitative and mixed methods and action research than with quantitative methods, while respecting the importance of achieving balance between quantitative and qualitative approaches.

17. Respondents in both jurisdictions would like to have more time to devote to educational research activity. Many teacher educators find having to combine teacher education and research activities stressful, with implications for work-life balance. Teaching and the supervision of research and teaching placement students are the most time-consuming aspects of teacher educators’ workloads north and south. When time spent on administration is factored in, they are left with an average of 15% of their working week to engage in research activities. University-based teacher educators in both jurisdictions were, on average, devoting less time to teaching and teaching related activities and devoting more time to research activity than their non-university-based counterparts. Such sectoral differences were statistically significant in the case of RoI respondents.

18. Teacher educator interviewees in Northern Ireland experienced pressure from within their institutions to be research active (e.g. complete Ed. D, publish) due to the UK research assessment culture. While their RoI counterparts also experienced pressure to publish, this emanated mainly from competitive individualism alongside changing institutional cultures particularly in the universities. Some RoI faculty noted the influence of and the increasing importance being attached to research profiles both for academic appointments and subsequent promotions.

19. Teacher educators’ most common research areas are related to pedagogical aspects of their own subject disciplines, particularly STEM, and literacy (with occasional mentions of numeracy). Other areas of common interest included ICT in education (including e-learning), as well as in the generic areas of curriculum, pedagogy, teaching, learning and assessment. Teacher education and reflective practice were particularly popular areas of research in RoI as well as school improvement/leadership, CPD, education policy, educational disadvantage, cultural integration and pluralism. Areas of general interest in NI included education in divided societies, SEN, Human Rights/Children’s Rights, student voice and student agency.
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North and South Ireland: A baseline and comparative study

20. The most common types of publication were refereed journal papers and reports/briefing documents. Reflecting the prevailing research assessment culture in UK HEIs, ITE faculty in NI had higher proportions of publications in all areas apart from co-authored books. University-based respondents in both jurisdictions had higher mean publication rates for refereed journal papers than those from the non-university sector in both jurisdictions and these differences were statistically significant in RoI.

21. Almost half of RoI respondents had not secured research funding in the past three years either individually or as part of a consortium as compared with one third of NI respondents. When those in receipt of funding are considered, levels of support in both jurisdictions appear to be on a par although the picture is complicated due to the necessary inclusion of sterling and euros in the survey items. University-based researcher respondents in RoI had been awarded much larger grants than non-university based researcher respondents. The converse was found in the case of NI respondents, although the differences were not as great.

22. There was a strong emphasis on collaborative research in NI while RoI respondents were more likely to engage in individual research.

23. Respondents were generally unenthusiastic about the extent of institutional support for a collaborative approach to educational research and access to relevant staff development varied considerably.

24. RoI interviewees felt that the imminent extension of the concurrent primary and the consecutive primary and post-primary programmes will facilitate the building of research capacity in that jurisdiction. Initiatives to enhance research capacity and discourse in NI have been successful but have not been sustained but opportunities through HEI-school partnerships and Area Learning Communities are viewed as having potential for CPD and research as well as a forthcoming review of the teacher competency framework.

25. Interview data reinforced and illuminated patterns of response determined by the survey. They demonstrated that there was no coherent policy or approach to research in ITE and that finding time to publish was problematic along with pressure to publish.

26. Some of the main suggestions for building research capacity in ITE include incorporating research as a core aspect of ITE programmes, increased resources including time and finance and increased levels of collaboration and network building.
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Section 1: Introduction and purposes of the study

The last three decades have witnessed the re-positioning of teacher education nationally and internationally with flows of ideas directed at the reform of school systems and the redesign of teacher education. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2005, Tato, 2007) and the European Union have, for example, asserted increasing influence on national and regional policy on teacher education (Sahlberg, 2012), and in the process, are re-shaping the European ‘policy space’ (Lawn & Grek, 2012) One strand emerging in terms of national and international debates of relevance to this study is the way in which teaching itself is defined as an evidence-/or research-based profession and the role that professional preparation of teachers plays in building understandings of educational research and the role of educational research in the potential transformation of practice.

Systematic engagement with the history of educational research reveals a persistent tension between the professional and academic roles of schools or colleges of initial teacher education and the capacity of teacher educators to create a culture of inquiry that can enhance professional practice in teacher education and hence contribute to enhanced professionalism of teachers. Historical accounts of educational research also raise questions concerning the varying purposes of educational research (Whitty, 2006) and the identified gap between educational research and practice (Biesta, 2007). This gap, often considered problematic, is said to reflect two sharply contrasting types of knowledge; research-based knowledge that is published in academic journals versus pedagogical knowledge which is useable by classroom teachers in their day-to-day teaching (McIntyre, 2005). Numerous researchers have attempted to formulate proposals on how to bridge this gap between research and practice and, over the years, one key suggestion has been to incorporate research training more visibly into the initial preparation of teachers (Kaestle, 1993; Vandelinde and Van Braak, 2010) in order to build research capacity (see also Munn, 2008). However, depending on the kind of research undertaken by teacher educators and how this is included in the preparation of student teachers, the ‘gap’ between theory and practice may be exacerbated rather than bridged. Building educational research capacity may include many things. However, within this report, using a broadly based definition, we take research capacity-building to embrace all attempts to enhance individual and collective research expertise in pre-service teachers through critical understanding of educational research purposes, methods, skills and application and the critical capacity of educators to inquire into practice. However, similar to the manner in which it is frequently asserted that an education system is only as good as its teachers. Dependent on this, the quality of initial teacher education critically relies on its teacher educators, for whom the conduct and publication of educational research, individually and collectively is often crucially important to their professional identities, while increasingly also research capacity is necessary in order to address the ongoing needs of the profession to renew and revitalise across the lifespan.

Thus the purposes of this study are to:

• provide a preliminary contextualisation of relevant literature and debates in education research as rationale and conceptualisation for the study;
• outline the main ITE and research-related and ITE contexts in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (RoI);
• gather qualitative and quantitative empirical data to investigate the underpinning assumptions regarding concepts of research, including its perceived role and value, in ITE in NI and the RoI;
• determine how research (across a range of forms) is incorporated and deployed across a sample of ITE programmes in both jurisdictions;
• provide a summary profile of the research capability [as determined by a range of research indicators deriving from the literature and teacher educators’ perceptions] of the teacher education community (ITE) in NI and the RoI;
• analyse the perspectives of teacher educators and teacher educator managers (Course Directors) regarding the role of research in ITE programmes research capacity-building across Ireland and quantify the key differences/overlaps/potential synergies?
• draw appropriate comparisons on research-capacity building issues and initiatives arising from the data in NI and RoI;
• provide a range of conclusions that will increase current understanding of research capacity within teacher education on the island of Ireland, its strengths and limitations, with a view to identifying possible means for its enhancement.
Section 2: Conceptual framework and background literature

2.1 Introduction

This section reviews relevant research literature and debates that relate to the broader issues of education research. It covers key historical and contemporary theoretical, practical and policy concerns both in the UK and Ireland as well as internationally on the nature, purposes and relevance of education research. The purpose of this review is to contextualise the study on the perceived role of education research by teacher educators in Ireland (both Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (RoI)) and the significance of their views for research capacity-building in initial teacher education programmes. This literature section is organised under the following sub-headings:

- Education research and teacher education research (2.2)
- Educational research: the problem of evidence (2.3)
- ‘Accountability’ and ‘responsibility’ in education policy and practice (2.4)
- Impact of research evidence in classroom and school contexts (2.5)
- Research impact on policy and practice: the role of teacher educators (2.6)
- Interpreting the evidence (2.7)
- Practitioners and educational research (2.8)
- Reflective practice in ITE (2.9)
- Policy context: building research capacity (2.10)

2.2 Education research and teacher education research

Education research in its broadest sense is often considered the ‘cinderella’ of social science research. Whitty (2005) distinguishes between ‘education research’ and ‘educational research’. The former refers to the more general field of educational inquiry which relates to the social sciences, and is oriented towards improving policy and practice. ‘Educational research’, by contrast, he contends, is more grass-roots focused and work-based. Within this perspective, teacher education research is viewed generally as a relatively new sub-field of educational research (Zeichner, 2006). Difficulties however persist in adequately defining teacher education research and its correlate teacher research, often also referred to as ‘practitioner research’, the latter being defined as ‘inquiry’ (empowering teachers’ inquiries into classroom learning and experience) and that is intentional, systematic, public, voluntary, ethical, and contextual. Although teacher education research shares many of the principles of teacher research, it is often defined by those who engage in it – ‘those who are also practitioners, whether as teacher educators or as managers of teacher education’ – rather than by reference to the actual content or focus of the research [Menter, 2011, p. 8].

Teacher education research is therefore considered important as a focus of this study for a number of reasons. Pajares, 1992, p.307 argued two decades ago that ‘Attention to the beliefs of teachers and teacher candidates should be a focus of educational research and can inform educational practice in ways that prevailing research agendas have not and cannot.’ This continues to be a valid case and might just as readily have been referring to teacher educators. More recently McNamara and Menter (2011) have added weight to the crucial role that teacher education research plays politically. This is the case since Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is in a position of strategic significance, given that oftentimes education systems are seen as dependent on the quality and training of its teachers, and, furthermore, as ‘ITE is an effective mechanism for steering change in the school curriculum and transforming teacher professionalism’ [p. 8]. Murray (2011) also specifically points to the fact that teacher education research itself is a ‘young’ field of research in England ”with a paucity of high quality research findings” [p.14]. Thus,
Research in and on teacher education, often conducted by its practitioners, is a vital part of that work, and also an important component of any more general research capacity-building initiatives in the field of education ... (Murray, 2011, p.16).

Building on these perspectives, a focus on teacher education research in this study in Ireland, North (NI) and South (RoI), is considered important at this juncture for a number of reasons. First, the majority of academic staff in NI and RoI university education departments, and elsewhere, has significant responsibility for the delivery of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. Workload models in the university milieu, in particular, require the conduct of research and its publication in peer-reviewed journals an absolute necessity for securing tenure and even more indispensable for promotion, as well as the securing of research funding. For many education staff, teaching within ITE programmes is perceived as their primary function, separate from research activities. The demanding nature of ITE preparation has the potential to leave staff with little time for or confidence in their capacity to develop their research profiles and as an ongoing means of informing their teaching. Yet, policy changes and quality assessments in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom (UK) and Republic of Ireland (Rol) place constant and renewed pressure on educational faculty staff to produce high quality research evidence that contributes to the knowledge economy. This can result in the creation of what Munn and Baron (2008) describe as a `dual economy’ within faculties of education, where there are those that `teach’ and those that `research’.

Second, there is a strong lobby [Cochran-Smith and Zeichner 2006; Munn, op. cit.] to maintain – or in some cases to introduce – a research dimension directly into teacher education, so that the work of teaching can be clearly acknowledged as research-informed, research-based or research-driven. Such an aspiration requires a commitment and infrastructure that is not always evident in teacher education induction and ongoing professional development in NI or the Rol.

While there are a number of initiatives concerned to maximise opportunities to develop educational research more broadly across the island of Ireland (SCoTENS, Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) and the recently inaugurated (2010) Institute of Educational Research in Ireland (IoERI), based at Dublin City University), nothing specifically focuses on research capacity among teacher educators. These efforts are not helped by a lack of educational research policy in either jurisdiction. Within the Rol specifically, concerns have been expressed regarding inadequate funding and absence of policy coherence both of which were mentioned in a recent international review (Sahlberg, Furlong, & Munn, 2012). The NI educational research community tends to be more closely associated with educational research capacity-building initiatives in the rest of Great Britain, drawing some direction from umbrella bodies such as the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and initiatives such as the Economic and Social Research Council’s Teaching and Learning Research Programme (ESRC/TLRP 2000-2011) which invested a major £40 million in education research capacity-building (Pollard, 2008). Subsequently, the UK-wide Strategic Forum for Research in Education (SFRE) was set up in 2008 to harness some of these developments and to conceptualise more fully the nature of research capacity (Pollard, 2008) across the four UK nations.

In response to identified concerns in teacher education research, the UK has seen the development of a number of support initiatives, most recently, the Teacher Education Research Network (TERN) initiated in 2009. The project, funded initially by the ESRC, piloted a model for sustainable research capacity-building in teacher education across a collaborative network of seven universities in the north of England. Although coming under some pressure now in England, given emergent policies on teacher education (see Furlong, 2012), the intention had been to roll out this infrastructure on a larger scale. Such initiatives have been undermined by more recent government decisions. Nothing of a similar nature has yet been attempted in the Rol in response to building education research capacity. Nonetheless, a cross-border initiative founded in 2003, “SCoTENS has enabled the development of networks and encouraged communication and contacts between significant numbers of teacher educators in the North and South of Ireland” (Furlong, Pendry and Mertova, 2011).
2.3 Educational research: the problem of evidence

In recent times, terms such as ‘evidence-driven’, ‘evidence-based’ and ‘evidence-informed’ practice have increased in their usage. For example, when the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in the RoI corresponded with ITE providers, in April 2012, in relation to a systematic review of the structure of provision of their programmes, it indicated that internationally, the highest performing countries – presumably based on evidence provided by PISA and other international comparative studies such as TIMMS and PIRLS – share some ‘common features’ in ‘teacher education’. Specifically, teacher education ‘is required to be research-driven, ensuring graduates are capable of applying research to their work in a constructive and reflective way’ (DES, 20/04/12, emphasis added). Such assertions create two immediate impressions. One, that until now, somehow teacher education has not been based on evidence; two, arising from this a series of questions including: what evidence, provided by whom and for what purpose? In the absence of considerable clarity regarding these intimately related concerns, it becomes a much more significant challenge to determine, with appropriate precision, the apposite professional formation necessary for student teachers as part of their initial professional repertoire of expertise and disposition. In this regard, the implication of this assertion is that newly qualified teachers should be capable of applying research in their work but that this be done in a constructive and reflective way. This requires understanding, critical reasoning, imagination and professional discretion – the space and opportunity to arrive at professional judgements, conditions that are often influenced and mediated significantly by school context and culture. If decision-making was entirely ‘evidence-driven’ then teaching would become entirely predictable, technical-rational, devoid of autonomy, professional judgement and ultimately a sense of professional responsibility. It is worth noting that such ‘teacher proofing’ has been attempted before and runs counter to the view, supported by substantial evidence that an education system is only as good as its teachers. In the opening paragraph of the most recent report on the restructuring of provision in ITE in RoI, it is stated:

Initial teacher education is probably the single most important factor in having a well-performing public education system. Evidence from the OECD countries is consistent with this notion. Singapore, Korea, Canada and Finland, countries that the OECD labels as having ‘strong performing’ education systems, have systematically invested in enhancing the initial education of their teachers. In all of these education systems, teachers are educated in academic universities where theory and practice are combined to form a foundation for teaching that is on a par with other academic professions. In all of these high performing education systems, teaching is also perceived by young people as an attractive career choice which makes admission to teacher education highly competitive and intellectually demanding. (Sahlberg, Furlong, & Munn, 2012, p. 5).

Clearly, in a climate of global competitiveness and attendant international league tables, evidence matters, and goes to the heart of concerns regarding the nature of professions, of teaching and who has the power to determine what counts as evidence. Such tensions and dilemmas are not new.

From the late 19th century, when for the first time education as a field was being studied systematically, tensions almost instantly emerged between those who advocated a ‘scientific’ approach to research, and evidence, and those who understood teaching and learning more broadly as craft that would also be imbued with the wisdom of practice, including discretionary judgement. This becomes immediately evident in the very first issue of Educational Review, published in 1891. In an essay entitled ‘Is There a Science of Education?’ Harvard professor, Josiah Royce expressed the view that ‘teachers should have a scientific training for their calling’ while simultaneously holding to the belief that there was ‘no universally valid science of pedagogy ... capable of complete formulation and ... direct application to individual pupils and teachers’ (quoted in Condliffe Langemann, 2000, p. ix).

In the second decade of the 21st century, due to a combination of factors – globalisation, international competitiveness, the proliferation of new technologies, the decline of trust in professions, and the rise of New Public Management (NPM), – ‘technologies of control’ have proliferated. In such a confluence of circumstances, evidence has become more critical as part of the apparatus of what counts as being accountable; as Power suggests, it is necessary for organisations, including schools to become ‘auditable’ – through ‘systems of
performance measures which make a certain style of verification possible’ (Power, 1999, p. 91). Consequently, these technologies of control become a critical determinant also through its various ‘instruments’ deployed as to what counts as evidence. However, in the first instance, in differentiating between ‘driven’, ‘based’ and ‘informed’, without delving into the etymology of each word, it is patently clear (there is no ambiguity about the evidence) that, thought of a continuum, ‘driven by’ is much more prescriptive and restrictive than either ‘based on’ or ‘informed by’. In an effort to reinforce this point, we ask that the following interpretation of ‘driven by’ be accepted – that there is no room for discretionary judgement. By contrast, ‘informed by’ allows for contextual and other factors to be considered as part of a more holistic and inclusive approach to professional judgement.

Along this continuum, it is worth considering the impact of Gresham’s law on the complex process of professional judgement which is that: ‘work that produces measurable outcomes will tend to drive out work that produces unmeasurable outcomes’ (Green, 2010). What Gresham’s law indicates is that by privileging some forms of evidence over others, effectively the basis of decision-making is narrowed with consequent potential to be ill-informed, thus increasing the potential for poor decision-making. In the context of this particular study, therefore, there is a desire to explore what types of research ‘evidence’, teacher educators are concerned with in terms of their research goals, practices and methodologies, as well as to view what they consider to be the role of evidence in terms of supporting and developing their programmes for educating new teachers for the profession. Additionally, the very nature of evidence, the research methods deployed to generate, analyse, interpret and report it will have a critical bearing on the quality of ITE programmes, as well as the related research capabilities and competencies among teacher educators.

Space does not permit a detailed account of recent debates surrounding the nature of evidence. Nevertheless, it is necessary to acknowledge their existence and the contentious nature of such discourses and their consequence for education and schooling and thus the tensions that pervade educational research.

2.4 ‘Accountability’ and ‘responsibility’ in education policy and practice

There are quite distinct logics at play in differentiating between ‘accountability’ and ‘responsibility’ (see Englund & Dyrdal Solbrekke, 2011). The language of accountability is ‘an economic language which positions the government as provider and the citizen as consumer’ (Biesta, 2010, p. 54). Consequently, it is only experts in particular kinds of research who can appropriately determine educational policy and practice. In such circumstances, silenced are ‘public deliberations and contestation about the common good and the just and equitable [re]distribution of public resources’ (p. 54). Evidence-based practice, an emphasis on what works, is terminology borrowed from the science of medicine, and its ‘fit for purpose’ in the human sciences and in education in particular, is regarded by many as inappropriate. Apart from questioning the epistemic premise of evidence-based practice for education, it is also necessary to question what knowledge is most appropriate for professional decision-making and action, and in particular ‘what kind of epistemology is most appropriate for professional practices informed by the outcomes of research’ and ‘the expectations about the practical role of research that are implied in the idea of evidence-based education’? (Biesta, 2007, p. 6). Having carefully parsed these questions, Biesta concluded that: ...

... we need to expand our views about the interrelations among research, policy, and practice in order to keep in view the fact that education is a thoroughly moral and political practice, one that needs to be subject to continuous democratic contestation and deliberation (Biesta, 2007, p. 6).

If decision-making is reduced to a narrow emphasis on ‘what works’, in response to questions of efficiency and effectiveness, the moral and political dimensions of education are marginalised. The consequences of such narrowed bases for decision-making are captured rather poignantly in the following:

In our avowedly secular age, the paramount sin is now inefficiency. Dishonesty, unfairness, and injustice — the sins of the past — pale in comparison with the cardinal transgression of inefficiency (Gross Stein, 2001, p. 2).

This emphasis on accountability, at the expense of responsibility, promotes compliance and the language of New Public Management (NPM), its technical-rationality, potentially coerces individuals into compliance rather than
encouraging them to exercise professional responsibility. Gross Stein captures the impact of the language of NPM on both thought and action when she says:

Efficere translates ... as ‘to bring about’, to accomplish, to effect. Only in modern times do we separate effectiveness, efficacy and efficiency and our public conversation is consequently fractured and impoverished (Gross Stein, 2001, p. 2).

This tension has strong resonances with Royce’s century old dilemma of advocacy of a science or a craft of education. Apart from the more obvious limitations of research that tends to focus on evidence of ‘what works’, even those with very sophisticated understandings of what ‘measuring up’ entails, acknowledge that reporting of such test results ‘obscures some important information, exaggerates the importance of other information and can provide a seriously distorted view of difference and trends’ (Koretz, 2008, p. 183). What is often assumed in the ‘science’ of such approaches is that it is possible to measure what matters, leading to the reductionist view that only what matters is what is measured. Far from this being the case, the pre-specification of learning outcomes and the determination of ‘performance indicators’ to measure achievement in education assumes a causal relationship when in reality, for example, ‘educational achievement is a complex process that is influenced by a great variety of factors, some of which are far beyond the control of educators’ (Koretz, 2008, p. 142). This is not an argument against being accountable, nor indeed against the necessity for evidence. Rather, it is a cautionary tale about the nature of the evidence we choose to inform both policy and practice, while suggesting also that considerable capacity-building is necessary if educators at all levels of the education system are to develop appropriately sophisticated repertoires of understanding regarding the very nature of what counts as evidence, and how it is deployed in the processes of decision-making in schools and classrooms and the actions such evidence suggests. In this regard, Menter and Murray (2009: 315) remark that ‘in these times of accountability and audit, it should come as no surprise that there has been a great concern – some might say obsession – with ‘capacity building’.’

If, as increasingly appears to be the case, national policies regarding evidence are being influenced by international agencies such as OECD, IEA, Brussels and others, the conclusion that ‘the language of numbers has gained an extraordinary significance’ should not come as a surprise (Lawn & Grek, 2012, p. 97). For example, it is worthy of note that the Department of Education in NI invests a large percentage (60%) of its (relatively small) research budget on PISA’s triennial survey that aims to assess the knowledge and skills of 15 year olds in various countries across the world by using a series of standardised tests that enable international comparisons to be made. NI inclusion in such research is viewed as a central priority for the Department of Education, despite the ‘opportunity cost’ of such investment and what types of research such investment delimits elsewhere (Leitch & McCullough, 2009). Thus, ‘policy by numbers’ is having a profound impact on the disposition of educational practitioners (including researchers) at all levels within systems, as well as the absorption of significant and diminishing economic resources.

And, yet, it is also important to make the point that evidence-informed practice has demonstrated time and again its value for improvement in several spheres of life, as the following attests:

The examples are so many as to be almost unnecessary, and go back centuries to the use of citrus fruits to prevent scurvy, the importance of washing hands in preventing infection in medical care, the influence of clean drinking water on public health, the ability of disabled children to benefit from public education, and so on. (Cooper et al 2009, p. 161).

These authors go on to make the point that it is not evidence per se that is problematic, but rather overly focused, and narrowly conceived forms of evidence often reduced to test scores that are, with all the reductionism such mechanistic evaluations entail. Cooper et al [op cit.] comment specifically on the reductionist approach to evidence perpetuated by the ‘No Child Left Behind’ legislation in the US at the beginning of the 21st century. They say:

... many of the objections to the science-based provisions of the ‘No Child Left Behind’ legislation in the US were because the definition of evidence was quite narrow and excluded many kinds of evidence that critics thought were reasonable and ought to be included. Other critics fear that the use of test scores or
evaluations of particular interventions will override the professional knowledge and judgment of educators (Cooper et al., 2009, p. 161).

Such objections have a very definite resonance with Royce’s juxtapositioning a century earlier between a ‘science’ of teaching and the practical wisdom, craft knowledge derived from experience and tacit understandings. Science, reduced to ‘numbers’ leaves little or no room for phronesis. Thus they conclude that while ‘All signs suggest that research will play an increasingly important role in education’, this should not enjoy exclusive privilege. Rather, it will have to find an appropriate accommodation along with the realisation that:

Policy choices will continue to be driven in large part by factors other than research, such as political pressures and feasibility constraints. Practices will continue to be based to a large extent on history, tradition and convenience. Those are necessary features of human organizations, and history also tells us that current research is not always the best guide to action (Cooper, et al., 2009, pp. 168-169).

Clearly such considered perspectives strongly suggest that an exclusive emphasis on ‘what works’ will simply not work. In the RoI, in the wake of their recent PISA results (OECD, 2010), and the subsequent publication of the national Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (DES, 2011), and its attendant emphasis on national testing, such evidence is already suggestive of a narrowing of what counts. Although the RoI Chief Inspector recognises the necessity to ‘have good levels of quantitative and qualitative data to monitor student progression and achievement and to monitor the effectiveness of schools’ there is considerable risk that ‘policy by numbers’ will increasingly dominate public perceptions and discourses in ways similar to what has happened in other jurisdictions (Hislop, 2012, p. 19). Such risks are intensified in a time of austerity; in a climate of ‘more for less’, no matter how necessary from an economic perspective, and in the absence of sustained commitment to building professional capacity among the teaching profession.

In the context of the role of research in ITE therefore, the following questions emerge as critical:

- What kinds of research do teacher educators undertake in order and in what way is this perceived as contributing to the adequate preparation of student teachers?
- Should student teachers be required to undertake an appropriate piece of research in order to be knowledge creators as well as critical consumers, to understand the nature of research from the inside?
- What evidence is most pertinent to the student teacher as providing a foundation for their knowledge base of teaching?

2.5 Impact of research evidence in classroom and school contexts

Even if it was possible to find agreement in responding to the above questions, what remains even more challenging is the interpretation of evidence and its implications for practice in specific classroom/school contexts.

Within the globalising tendency, there has been a persistent Europeanizing of education policy, ‘governing a new policy space’, and this has intensified during the past decade (see Lawn & Grek, 2012). Such governing tendencies seek to ‘impose its logic over scattered, segmented places ... and to produce a disciplining and enabling space of engagement with state and transnational agencies and elites’ (p. 82). Increasingly it is through the deployment of ‘standards’ as ‘policy instruments’ that such new policy spaces are being created through the ‘warp and weft of the European policy space in education’. Through this dynamic set of processes, standards have shifted from ‘being descriptive specifications of objects into performance requirements’ to being ‘checked through systematic quality management’ (pp. 77-78). In the RoI, evidence for such tendencies abound in recent times — the professional accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in conformity to pre-specified learning outcomes by the Teaching Council (see Pro Forma application process – Teaching Council, 2010), and the requirement for beginning teachers to meet the requirements of the Teacher Competency Framework in Northern Ireland are cases in point. Further illustrations include the prescriptions of the recent national Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in RoI (DES, 2011), and earlier in the UK and its attendant technologies of national testing, while technologies of control are further reinforced by various means through Whole School Evaluation (WSE).
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School self-evaluation (SSE) too has the potential to promote a further audit culture and accountability conformity rather than enhance professional responsibility. Collectively, these policy instruments combine to bring about ‘coherence’, an emerging policy buzz word that imposes a particular logic of what counts as evidence in the process of standardisation.

2.6 Research impact on policy and practice: the role of teacher educators

In recent years, as universities and colleges of education in Ireland, the UK, and further afield, have embraced the ‘research intensive’ label, teacher educators’ profiles on institutional websites indicate significantly increased ‘productivity’ in terms of a variety of publications (peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, edited texts, reports and conference presentations), research funding secured, and ‘esteem factors’ such as serving on editorial boards of journals, and roles within various national and international organisations and associations. Emerging from this more competitive landscape is an intensifying focus on publications, citation rates and impact factor to the relative detriment of emphasis on teaching. Most specifically, this is reflected in the UK requirement on research assessment by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and other funding bodies (e.g. Department of Employment and Learning [NI]) which has implications for teacher educators in the North of Ireland. The purpose of the peer-review research assessment activity by expert panels is to produce quality profiles for each submission of research activity made by assessment units within institutions. Education is one unit of assessment submitted by higher education institutions and the assessment informs the selective distribution of funding for research. RAE 2008 has now been replaced with the Research Excellence Framework [REF] to be completed in 2014.

Collectively, these new ‘rules of the game’ may be driven by the implicit and explicit value and purposes being attached to the importance of evidence for education, amongst teacher educators, as well as among academics more generally. In either case, there is a growing acceptance of and advocacy for the view that being a leading edge researcher is a requirement, a necessity for effective teaching. While such assertions have much to recommend them, in many instances, they leave unanswered the question of what kinds of research should be the primary focus of teacher educators and in what ways might this be brought to bear appropriately in ITE programmes.

2.6.1 Northern Ireland

Consistent with Gardner and Gallagher (2002), Leitch (2008) identified the approach to educational research in Northern Ireland as ‘ad hoc’ and fragmented, with no co-ordinated strategy discernible for either the scale or the variety of research that needed to be undertaken. She recommended, amongst other things, that dialogue between researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, and users should be strengthened in order to build permanent ‘communities of knowledge’, to increase awareness of the types of research that are being undertaken and to have research informing policy-making in a ‘meaningful’ way. Consequently, the Northern Ireland Education Research Forum [NIERF] was established. During its short existence, NIERF developed a series of symposia with key educational research stakeholders. An early priority was to identify and make accessible the range of educational research that is currently being undertaken in Northern Ireland such that there could be increased understanding between academic researchers and those involved in using a variety of evidence to develop policy.

2.6.2 Republic of Ireland

A similar lacuna is identified indirectly in the recently completed review of the structure of provision of ITE in RoI (Sahlberg, et al., 2012). Although the report makes clear that it is necessary to increase research capacity, it recognises also that it is difficult to have these key characteristics unless the size of the teacher education institution is sufficiently large and thereby has a ‘critical mass’ through full-time professional staff, and competitiveness for good teaching, research and international cooperation. (Sahlberg et al., 2012, p. 18).

As well as creating the necessary critical mass to enable such research to be undertaken, the Sahlberg et al., report further recognises that in the absence of an appropriate research policy, this is likely to remain an unrealised goal. However, it does suggest that a research policy should encompass the following – with the responsibilities of both teacher educators and student teachers being identified in a general manner:
• there should be a culture of research in teacher education where staff are familiar with current research and are engaged in research on critical areas of teaching and teacher education and their own practice;
• teachers’ professional learning;
• national and international education policy;
• the fundamentals of teaching, learning and assessment; and
• the engagement of student teachers in researching their practice, reflecting on it and improving their teaching accordingly.

In short, the teaching profession needs to model an approach to learning that it wishes pupils to adopt – enquiring, engaged and critical.

Returning to this important issue later in the report, its authors indicate clearly the necessity of a ‘national policy for research on teaching and teacher education … to promote the upgrading and enhancing of the research capacities of the new teacher education institutions’ (ibid, p. 33). In this regard, the report continues, ‘it will be necessary to secure proper resources … to adequately address research as one of the criteria for core funding’ (ibid). While these priorities need to be addressed in a sensible and sensitive manner, they run the risk of becoming overly prescribed thus narrowing the evidentiary base of teaching. Nevertheless, the challenges posed by this report need to be given priority and there is a particular onus on teacher educators in RoI to chart this research future.

To avoid over prescription it will be necessary for teacher educators to be aware of the limitations of ‘explicitness’ and to pay more attention to what counts as ‘professional formation’ for student teachers. Formation, in an Aristotelian sense is not merely about the development of explicit expertise, often expressed as ‘learning outcomes’, but about the person in the professional, not merely inculcation, but the cultivation of a disposition that embraces ‘interests, abilities, attitudes and values’ that are critically important also in schools and classrooms if teachers in RoI are to continue to educate for citizenship and civic participation beyond the more instrumentalist requirements of the knowledge economy. In framing such an agenda for teacher education, not only in its initial phase but throughout the working life, it is necessary to hold uncertainty and indeterminacy as a core feature, to recognise ‘implicitly an indefinite mass of considerations which if they had to be made explicit every time a decision was taken, would be impossible to itemize or enumerate (Green, 2010, p. 105).

In short, seeking to privilege ‘science’ over craft knowledge or phronesis is to do teaching and education a disservice, while living with the tensions and dilemmas such conflicts create puts an additional responsibility on teacher educators and the teaching profession. However, it is worth noting the degree of challenge inherent in creating this future. In the Troubling History of Educational Research its author issues the following warning: … vaguely described innovations that are based on untested claims are worrisome. In the past they have undermined confidence in education reform generally, and unless things are changed, they are likely to continue doing so (Condliffe Langemann 2000, p. 239).

While readily recognising the flawed history of educational research, and without being prescriptive regarding its future, few would dissent from the following as a summary of the challenge and potential rewards of promoting educational change ‘through deepened and demanding learning, professional quality and engagement, and invigorated community development and public democracy’ (Hargreaves, 2009, p. 109). The scale of such a challenge extends to the interpretation of evidence.

2.7 Interpreting the evidence

The proliferation of new technologies and the new and emerging international policy spaces lead to demands for more data, more evidence about systems and their relative performance. Consequently, with more data, more time, effort, energy and sophistication is required to interpret such evidence, and to do so in a multi-layered manner.

Perhaps the more pertinent means of illustrating the challenge posed by interpretations of evidence is to focus on the recent PISA results [OECD, 2010]. While the significant decline in the performance of RoI 15-year-olds is...
abundantly evident, unprecedented even, and despite considerable additional expenditure on secondary analysis of national data, beyond reiterating the view that the results give rise to considerable concern, precisely what any individual school needs to do to redress student performance is much more complex and less certain. According to TIMMS, similar concerns can be identified in relation to performance data from NI at primary level in reading, maths and science. Patterns show NI has a shorter tail of underachievement than e.g. England, however, at post-primary the link is stronger than the international average. Again, responses to these trends at school or teacher level remain a challenge, given that the problems are likely to be systemic. The very process of engaging with the evidence provided by these and other tests has a certain exclusionary impact. In economic terms, the ‘opportunity costs’ involved in pre-occupation with rendering such results meaningful for practice in classrooms and schools, of adopting policies to meet students’ needs leaves less time and opportunity to even generate the more qualitative data deemed vital and necessary above for more rounded, and better informed professional judgements for teaching and learning. If in the public gaze, schools are most likely to be judged increasingly by the performance of their students – by their measured achievements on such tests – it is entirely understandable, if not professionally defensible, that practice becomes overly pre-occupied with and overly-focused on teaching to the test (Lasky, 2012; McNeil, 2000). There is a particular responsibility on teacher educators therefore – not only regarding the evidence they generate, interpret and disseminate in ITE and CPD, and in the public arena – but on policy-makers also, to prevent what has happened elsewhere; the narrowing of what counts as educational success. This is not a simple challenge; neither is it one that can be addressed easily and once and for all. Rather, it a systemic ‘problem’ at all levels, where those at the ‘top’ have particular professional responsibilities to retain appropriate openness to what counts as evidence and its implications for practice and the quality of the educational experience.

2.8 Practitioners and educational research

Drawing on the experiences of Cognitively Guided Instruction at the University of Wisconsin and Integrating Mathematics Assessment at the University of California, Los Angeles, Rhine (1998) presents the positive relationship between improving teachers’ knowledge base of, for example students’ thought processes and student achievement. However, the gap between theory and practice, identified by Cochran-Smith (2005), Brouwer and Korthagen (2005), Hiebert, Gallimore and Stigler (2002) and many others internationally, continues to be a very prominent feature of the education landscape. Tensions between researchers and practitioners are well-recognised with practitioners seeking solutions to operational problems and researchers seeking new knowledge (Bates, 2002). This is reflected in Shekdi’s (1998) finding that, while teachers tend not to read professional literature, ‘they give preference to practical educational literature with applicative dimensions’ (ibid., p.70). He concluded that teachers ‘prefer literature that deals with concrete issues that come up in the classroom [while] literature that has a research orientation does not occupy a fixed place in teachers’ libraries [other than] in the context of requirements of academic study’ (ibid.)

Venderlinde and van Braak (2010) identify many perceived problems with educational research including its failure to ‘provide valid and reliable results that are confirmed through unambiguous and powerful evidence, [it] is limited in practical use, [it] is not meaningful for teachers [and] practitioners do not have the skills to use educational research’ (ibid., p.302). They also remind us however of the more positive perspectives on the relationship between educational research and practice and the role of research in shaping policy and practice that has been taken by Levin (2004), Whitty (2006) and others.

Sockett (2008) identifies three models of teacher education, two of which are relatively inhospitable to educational research.

1. The scholar professional where the focus of teaching is on the translation of ideas rather than the transfer of ideas;
2. The nurturer professional, where the focus is on the relations between teacher and pupil, with the teacher there to nurture the child;
3. The clinician professional or the reflective-adaptive model where the reflective teacher utilises research knowledge in order to make professional decisions and research is an essential component.
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Sockett regards the clinician model as the most widespread while Shekdi (ibid., p.575) notes the ‘growing readiness to close the gap between the teacher’s world and the researcher’s world [as reflected in] the growth of action research done by teachers themselves or with academic partners to solve problems and improve professional practices in their own classrooms as a means of developing their own teacher professionalism’. Similarly, Cheng et al., (2010) concluded that the quality of teacher education programmes can be improved only if the teacher educators help student teachers identify the gap between teachers’ practice and theory, and continually facilitate them in connecting their learnt theory and practice.

Against a background where the professional status of teachers is ‘rigorously protected and the power of teachers’ professional associations/teacher unions is strong’, Christie and Menter (2009, p.342) proclaim that ‘the concepts of research and enquiry have entered the discourse of teacher professionalism in Scotland’. For example, the Scottish Standard for Chartered Teacher (SCT) expects that successful candidates will ensure that their teaching should be informed by reading and research by, for example:

- engaging in professional enquiry and action research, and applying findings;
- reflecting critically on research evidence and modifying practice as appropriate;
- testing whether a particular theoretical perspective actually applies in practice;
- interpreting changes to education policy and practice; and
- contributing and responding to such changes (Scottish Executive, 2002).

The Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004) reform provided opportunities for teacher educators in association with other educational researchers to engage collaboratively with teachers, pupils and other stakeholders including student teachers in transformational research activities focusing on the development and implementation of the new curriculum outcomes and experiences (Christie, Menter, 2009, p. 348).

From a RoI perspective, while the teacher unions have been influential (Gleesen, 2010, p. 250), the Teaching Council in the RoI faces a formidable challenge in gaining acceptance of the rank and file of teachers. When Kiely (2003) asked RoI post-primary teachers about their familiarity with research publications and educational theory, she found that ‘most interviewees perceived these as being ‘irrelevant’ and ‘not practical’ (p. 95) and that, while ‘they would keep up-to-date with their subject matter and with changes in the syllabi, they find little relevance in educational studies, research papers etc.’ (ibid., p.225). Similarly, Sexton (2007, p. 93) found in his study of attributes of teacher professionalism as seen by RoI post-primary teachers that ‘having an understanding of the theoretical knowledge base and keeping up with developments in educational theory both score comparatively poorly’. This mirrors Cloke’s (2003) finding that nearly half of Irish primary teachers surveyed regarded the theory they learned in college as largely irrelevant to their working lives. However, the DES (2012) Guidelines on School Self-Evaluation challenge the prevailing culture in RoI insofar as the first step in that process requires the gathering of evidence regarding student outcomes, learning and teaching.

Practitioner research in Northern Ireland, too, has been significantly under-developed, under-recognized and, until recently, un-coordinated in terms of its contribution to knowledge production, teacher development and school improvement (Leitch, 2008). At both compulsory and post-compulsory levels in Northern Ireland, it is promoted in a number of ways and by a variety of stakeholders such as: university teacher education programmes, curriculum advisory and support services, learning and skills development agency (LSDA), teacher CPD, bursaries etc. Despite these initiatives, teacher research or, in the case of ITE, tutor research has never enjoyed the support and infrastructure that has been available historically and continues to be evident in other parts of the United Kingdom (e.g. National Teacher Research Panel [England]; former Best Practice Research Awards [DfES]; Networked Learning Communities [National College of School Leadership]; Chartered Teacher Programme [Scotland]).

Nevertheless, the General Teaching Council (GTCNI) has supported a variety of practitioner research-type activities through their professional development bursary schemes, delivering on such themes as emotional intelligence, e-learning, use of interactive whiteboards, assessment, primary movement, dance, well-being and health promotion, parental involvement, ICT etc. The GTCNI has also supported the development of a digital
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repository (Access to Research Resources for Teachers Space (ARRTS)) to ensure access to and dissemination of local practitioner research in NI, including teacher action research and high standard masters and doctoral thesis research, as the example below demonstrates. Part of the vision is that the ARRTS will contribute to evidence-informed practice and policy-making in education and encourage partnerships between the local educational research community and practicing teachers.

2.9 Reflective Practice in ITE

Beyond acknowledging that some of the research activity at ITE is action-based research, Hyland (2012) does not avert to the growing emphasis on reflective practice in teacher education. While teaching in the RoI has historically been ‘characterised by a culture of individualism and isolation, where opportunities for dialogue around collaborative planning or evaluation processes have been noticeably absent’ (MacRuaric and Harford, 2008, p. 501), teacher educators have begun to recognise the importance of reflection for the teaching profession (Goodson and Hargreaves, 1998; Leonard and Gleeson, 1998; Cochran-Smith and Lyttle, 1999; Harford and MacRuairic, 2008). This demonstrates the identification of reflective practice and research as key aspects of teacher quality and teacher education in recent EU (2004) policy statements and in the international literature (Sahlberg, Furlong & Munn, 2012; Brookfield, 1995 and 2005; Zeichner and Liston, 1987). This shift is clearly reflected in the Teaching Council’s new ITE Guidelines as well as in its Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education where it states:

... the duration of the placement should also allow for the development of a more reflective, enquiry-oriented approach to the school placement and facilitate the development of the teacher as reflective practitioner (Teaching Council, 2011b, p.16).

[ITE] programmes should prepare students to be reflective practitioners throughout their teaching career (ibid., p.23).

Initial teacher education should develop knowledge-of practice, knowledge-for practice and also student teachers’ capacity and skill for reflecting critically on their own practice and that of others, referred to in the literature as knowledge-in practice (Teaching Council, 2011b, 11).

However, the available evidence suggests that it will take some time before this thinking takes root in the culture of RoI schools. Gleeson and Kiely (2005) found that many of their post-primary teacher participants were unclear about the notion of reflective practice. The most common perceptions involved reflection on students’ achievement in the state examinations or personal reflection on classes at the end of the day or during their own quiet time or when driving home from work. A minority said they engaged in reflection on a lesson, individually or with colleagues, involving observation, recording progress and learning from mistakes. Sexton (2007, p. 93) concluded that his post-primary respondents saw ‘teacher professionalism very much in terms of a practitioner who is pragmatic and ‘gets in there’ and does the job with a good positive attitude’. MacRuaric and Harford (2008, p. 508) found that in the current neo-liberal climate, student teachers and practising teachers were engaging in ‘a transient form of reflection’ rather than critical reflection.

In her review of students’ experiences of concurrent teacher education in one Irish university, Coady (2009, p. 74) reported that ‘higher achievers more strongly commended the usefulness of reflection’ with ‘final year students demonstrate[ing] conscious awareness of how reflecting on problems and issues informed their subsequent teaching methods and practices’ (ibid., p.176). She reported that supporting teachers believed that ‘reflection was a waste of time and that student teachers would never do this when they were full-time teachers working in the ‘real world’ (Coady 2010, p 209). While school cultures may be changing, individualism and privatism regarding classroom pedagogies continue to prevail, particularly among older cohorts of teachers, socialised into a culture where being ‘able to stand on your own two feet’ was a mark of professional autonomy and ‘good’ teaching.

2.10 Policy contexts: Building research capacity

Crossley (2011) identifies that research capacity development is emerging as a worldwide priority in many fields
and disciplines. He argues that it is particularly important to strengthen educational research capacity in small states. In addition to understanding international literature and trends on what is effective in research capacity-building, it is vital to have a deep and well-grounded understanding of local context in order to properly improve education policy and practice. Crossley cites Pollard (2008, p. 45) who provides a specific rationale for the dilemmas encountered by the smaller nations that make up the UK in terms of educational research capacity-building through his leadership of the UK SFRE. Pollard suggested that sustaining an effective research base within the smaller four nations of the UK was limited by available research expertise and the smaller scale of the labour market in these areas. In some cases it was felt that smaller research and policy communities were more vulnerable, in terms of maintaining and developing research capacity, because of their scale. Turning to Ireland, NI and the RoI, independently and together could be considered as relatively small states and thus some of the issues and challenges identified and applied elsewhere are likely to be reflected in this study.

Menter and Murray (2009, p. 315), explore some of the challenges and difficulties relating to definitions of research capacity-building, noting that the term may relate to the range of skills available, the research infrastructure (funding, facilities, etc.), and the numbers of experienced and/or qualified researchers. To this list they added issues of quality, arguing that ‘there is little point in having substantial capacity, if the quality of that capacity is at a low level.’ Needless to say, such concerns are germane to this study.

In their examination of education research, including teacher education research in Scotland, Christie and Menter (2009), draw on the work of the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) and the Applied Educational Research Scheme (AERS), established to build research capacity in Scotland. Each faculty included ‘some staff [who] are primarily teacher educators and others are primarily researchers’ and many of the staff were appointed to ‘the antecedent colleges of education… on the basis of successful teaching experience in schools’. While serious attempts have been made to effect cultural change in order to ‘ensure a reasonable level of high-quality research activity’ they note that ‘there is evidence of some sense of alienation among significant numbers of staff in some of the institutions’ (ibid., p.340).

The focus of the AERS funding scheme for applied educational research was on the importance of research collaboration:

between educational researchers and academics from other social science disciplines; second, collaboration among researchers across the various higher education institutions with an interest in education as a discipline or a field of enquiry... and third, collaboration between educational researchers and other stakeholders in education, namely, teachers and other professional practitioners, policy makers and local politicians (ibid., p.344).

Over the five-year period from 2004 to 2009, the conditions were created in which the level of engagement in research could be enhanced among teacher educators in Scotland through new opportunities to collaborate in substantive research activity around such areas as Curriculum for Excellence. This enabled previously inexperienced teacher educators to gain experience of all aspects of the research process. In this way, it was argued that individual research capacity was enhanced. The collaborative involvement of other stakeholders in the research activities of the AERS projects not only enabled these stakeholders to gain research experience themselves, but also contributed to building collective research capacity by enhancing the quality of the research being carried out in terms of its relevance and ecological validity (AERS, 2009). The significant increase in the numbers of education academics, including teacher educators, recognised by the national RAE in 2008 as being research active and producing work of national and international importance, can be taken as a measure of increased research capacity within the field of education in Scotland (ibid., p.349).

Referring to Wales, Tanner and Davies (2009) argue that the ‘ultimate purpose of educational research is to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning’ (ibid., p. 375) and that many Welsh teacher education institutions were in danger of being separated from their research base due to funding and other external pressures. While expressing their concerns that ‘education research capacity in Wales is not healthy and some might consider it on the ´critical list´, they report on the experience of the i-ped project funded by Welsh Education Research Network (WERN). The aims of this collaborative project were to develop research capacity [skills
and understanding) in three Welsh universities as well as developing interactive pedagogies in mathematics and science. They summarised the value of this research for second-career teacher educators in terms of ‘a thorough and critical analysis of the literature and data gathered which strengthened their knowledge of the field... it developed their capacity to understand and undertake research... [and] becoming a researcher developed their critical awareness and evaluative skills’ (ibid., p.386). Their overall conclusion was that engagement in practitioner-based research contributed to the development of their student teachers as reflective practitioners as well as ‘enhancing the delivery of research modules and the supervision of student research activity’ (ibid., p.386).

2.11 Summary

Having considered education research in general, with particular reference to teacher education, this broadly-based section has discussed some problems associated with the modern emphasis on evidence-based practice and the interpretation of evidence. It problematised accountability and responsibility in education policy and practice along with the impact of research evidence on classrooms, schools and teacher education. Research capacity-building in Initial Teacher Education, the key theme of the current research report, has been considered from the perspectives of education policy and the attitudes of school-based practitioners. The next section will consider Initial Teacher Education policy and practice in both jurisdictions in some detail.
Section 3: Teacher Education North and South and education research capacity

3.1 Current Provision of Initial Teacher Education in Northern Ireland

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Northern Ireland is currently provided through five institutions and is limited to one of two principal routes – a four-year B.Ed degree or a one-year Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) at masters level. The two university colleges offer B.Ed courses and PGCE (one in Irish Medium), early years education and educational psychology. The two universities provide PGCE courses in primary and post-primary teaching, and the Open University offers full-time and part-time PGCE courses in selected subjects at post-primary level.

The dual system of schooling for the two main religious groupings which emerged in Northern Ireland in the 1920s is paralleled by a teacher education system that is partially denominational in character. According to Montgomery and Smith (2006) since the creation of Northern Ireland, the vast majority of students undertaking preparation for primary teaching have attended institutions which reflect a particular religious affiliation. Post-primary teacher education is largely undertaken in the two universities which remain constitutionally non-denominational.

Entry to all courses is highly competitive and places in all institutions are oversubscribed, with up to five times more applicants than places available (OECD, 2002:19). Academic entry requirements are therefore high and statistics presented by the OECD indicate that the academic level of entrants to teacher education courses in NI is above the level of the highest scoring courses in England (Montgomery & Smith, 2006). Total enrolment figures however are taking a downturn across all the ITE institutions as a result of demographic trends. The number of trainee teachers in Northern Ireland has fallen by almost a quarter since 2004, with the intake to teacher education courses reducing from 880 in 2004/5 to an annual total of 663 in 2011/12 (Belfast Telegraph, 2011). Presently this has reduced an intake of approved 600 with an allocation of 256 (BEd) and 173 (PGCE) for 2012/13 with the significant reduction (n = 63 post-primary places) borne solely by the two universities.

Table A: Approved intakes to Initial Teacher Education courses (NI) 2012/13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Primary BEd</th>
<th>Primary PGCE</th>
<th>Primary PGCE Early Years</th>
<th>Post-Primary BEd</th>
<th>Post-Primary PGCE</th>
<th>Post-Primary PGCE Early Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University College 1</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University College 2</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University 1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open University</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>190</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>234</strong></td>
<td><strong>600</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to falling numbers, issues of financial sustainability and a desire in some quarters for a more shared vision for education in NI, there have been various (so far failed) attempts to rationalise and integrate teacher education institutions. At present, as indicated, teachers are trained in five separate institutions in NI which, according to Stephen Farry, Minister for Employment and Learning (DEL, 2011) ‘seems excessive for a region with a population
of 1.8 million people. It must also be viewed in the context of the changing landscape around the need for qualified teachers and the number of school aged children’.

In Northern Ireland, ITE discourse is dominated by a ‘competency’ approach. The teacher education framework in Northern Ireland has specific competencies linked to each phase (ITE, Induction and Early Professional Development and CPD) delivered through what is termed a partnership model, with schools delivering the practicum element. Moran, (1998) described it in its early days as a ‘developmental, progressive and integrated vision of professional learning’ (DE, 1998). Progression in teacher professional development in NI is prescribed as an aspiration towards deepening the 27 identified competencies across these various stages of a teacher’s career (GTCNI, 2005). None of the competencies refer directly to the need for knowledge, understanding or application of educational research, although this capacity might be inferred as latent in some of them e.g. Competency 25, where teachers will ‘select from a range of assessment strategies to evaluate pupils’ learning, and use this information in their planning to help make their teaching more effective’. However, while this is an importance capacity, it is doubtful that it would meet a more inclusive or broadly-based conception of research capability.

More relevant to concepts of ‘research’ and in particular ‘practitioner research’, the NI model of teacher education is explicitly underpinned by the concept of ‘reflective practice’ encapsulated in the metaphor of ‘the reflective and activist teacher’ (GTCNI, 2007, p9). This is understood amongst a range of activities therefore to ‘be concerned with the purposes and consequences of education, as well as what might be called technical proficiency and whether teachers are prepared to experiment with the unfamiliar and learn from their experiences (op. ci., p.9). Additionally, as part of their role, teachers will act as ‘researchers and change agents: in seeking a deeper understanding of their practice, or in seeking to plan for change, teachers use a variety of evaluation and action research techniques to collect and interpret findings, to inform their thinking and decision making’. Explicitly, they are expected also to be ‘creators of knowledge and theory builders: in the process of reflective practice and action research teachers develop new understandings of learning, teaching and educational change.’ (op.cit., p.9).

At the present time there is no carefully worked out articulation of how these values, skills and expectations associated with ‘reflection’; ‘activism’; ‘action research’; ‘theory building’ are to be initiated and embedded in ITE, and neither are they explicitly referred to in the NI teacher competencies. However there may be ways in which...
these notions of developing new teachers as ‘reflective practitioners’ (after Stenhouse, 1968, 1975) and Donald Schon (1983, 1987, 1987: 22) may be in-built as elements of the processes and pedagogies of teacher education to initiate a sense of ‘professional artistry’ in both the North and the Republic of Ireland. Since teacher education programmes are commonly regarded as over-loaded, over-examined, and increasingly over-prescribed at the present time, creating the spaces and opportunities for both teacher educators and their students to reflect in meaningful rather than performative ways is likely to be viewed as a major challenge.

3.2. Educational research and funding infrastructure in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland there are two Government Departments responsible for education:

- the Department of Education (DE), responsible for schools and youth; and which has its own statistics research branch (NISRA) and also commissions a small number of specific reports on aspects of education each year such as attendance, bullying, effective pre-school education and also is bought into the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).
- the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL), responsible for third level education, training and a range of employment related matters.

Both Departments argue in favour of high quality, up-to-date research in developing, implementing and monitoring educational policies. The DE oversees ITE and determines the annual intakes to ITE courses in NI as outlined above. The DEL provides research funding for the Northern Ireland universities and university colleges through a range of mechanisms and aims to develop and sustain a research sector that holds a strong position within the UK and beyond by increasing the quality and maintaining a wide range of research appropriate to the region.

Teacher training numbers and academic requirements are set by the DE, while the funding of the institutions falls to the DEL. Recurrent research funding is distributed by reference to quality as assessed periodically by performance in a UK-wide university quality research assessment exercise as indicated above. In 2013-2014, each university department and thus each education Unit of Assessment in the UK (UoA 25) will submit evidence to be rated, with 60% of marks awarded for the quality of their research as judged by expert academic panels, 25% according to the ‘impact’ the research makes through the submission of impact case studies and 15% according to the quality of the research environment of the department including its research policy, research income and international collaborations.

In Northern Ireland, education research tends to be supported within higher education institutions (HEIs) through research council and charities as well as through individual and collective scholarship. HEIs contribute variously to educational research and are frequently involved in competitive tendering within and beyond Northern Ireland. Each HEI has its own research strategies and research strengths, methodological expertise and areas of focused activity e.g. research centres. Three of the four local HEIs will be making returns for the forthcoming UK exercise – (REF, 2014).

As part of the UK-wide HEFCE process, research quality assessment exercises are viewed as a driver for NI higher education institutions, especially since graded outcomes lead to increasingly selective investment in research funding and are also viewed as a quality yardstick within the UK HEI sector (e.g. through national HEI league tables). In the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE, 2008), three of the four NI education units were returned for assessment and, given their previous starting points, all three performed successfully on grade average as an estimate of research quality, but with relatively small quanta of active researchers (n=39). Due to the low number of HEIs in Northern Ireland, it has been argued that this inevitably leads to low capacity and a high degree of competitiveness. Competition between educational researchers in HEIs for research bidding, set against the capacity of commercial companies to out-tender with their quick-win approaches [Gardner & Gallagher], does not always serve the [small-size of this] educational community as well as it could. Leitch (2007) also suggests that this tendency may also lead to decreasing research quality by restricting the potential for partnership working and thereby creating opportunities to build greater research capacity through research networks in teacher education and through sharing expertise and resources. The REF is clearly something that is likely to differentiate the experience of initial teacher educators between NI and the RoI since research assessment and core funding
are not intertwined in the same manner in the two jurisdictions. Nevertheless, while differences remain, there is increasing pressure on teacher educators in the RoI, particularly in the University sector to both secure funding and be research productive, frequently also creating intense competition for very limited resources rather than a more concerted collaborative approach intended to build research capacity. It is reasonable to suggest that these more performative influences are likely to play out differently on both sides of the border in terms of teacher educators’ attitudes towards research and the role they perceive it should play within ITE in particular. It is also likely to influence views on teacher professional learning more generally, as well of course in shaping teacher educators’ own professional identities.

3.3 Research Capacity in Northern Ireland

In terms of building educational research capacity in NI, NI is a society in transition, emerging from a prolonged period of conflict and political volatility but with ongoing concerns for the stability and longevity of peace. For example, in 2004 a DE report indicated that:

> Clear signs exist of the strength of the desire, on all sides, to heal long-standing and still painful divisions, both within the United Kingdom and looking at the pan-Irish context. Few things are more important for NI’s future development than the new generations of teachers who will carry the responsibility for equipping the young people of the region with the knowledge, skills and values to live as citizens in this rapidly-changing world (Taylor and Usher, 2004, p. 2).

Despite the aspirations the current patterns of divisiveness persists across the educational infrastructure [including a number of the ITE bodies which are still in part divided along ethno-religious lines] and the need continues to develop constructive understandings of what works most effectively to best educate children and young people in NI for the betterment of all. Consequently there is an ongoing imperative to invest in building and extending research capacity in order to progress insights and developments on how we can sustain peaceful co-existence while interrupting and improving the legacy of the current educational systems. At a minimum, this means increasing numbers of methodologically sound and versatile educational researchers, including practitioners, with a vision and appetite for knowledge development and application of research to practice as well as the inclusion of insights from practical knowledge. Simultaneously there is an identifiable need within NI education stakeholders to commit to an expanded version and understanding of research capacity-building based on a collaborative dialogue between existing and new practitioners, policy makers and what is referred to as the researcher community in education.

Although not directly concerned with building research capacity in teacher education, one specific way in which this aspiration of research capacity has been addressed in NI until recently has been ‘The Northern Ireland Education Research Forum’ (NIERF). NIERF was established 2008 and ran for a couple of years although it is presently dormant. This body initiated by the DE did stimulate a range of conversations by means of a series of meetings and constructive events within the education sector and between key stakeholders (DE, DEL, GTCNI, ETI, HEIs etc.) about education research capacity and in particular the value of evidence-based education policy. It had not reached the point in its vision of engaging schools and their practitioners before becoming inactive due to a series of influences, including a change of civil service personnel.

The purpose of NIERF group was primarily to exchange research information, knowledge and skills to inform analytical thinking on current and emerging issues in relation to education policy. In part it was stimulated by the UK Strategic Forum for Research in Education (SFRE, 2008-2010), in recognition of the need for UK and national strategic planning in education research (OECD-CERI). OECD-CERI had outlined how a process of self-review could be constructed within the UK and this was picked up and enacted through SFRE. This goal had been the ambition of SFRE’s predecessor, the National Education Research Forum (NERF) in the late 1990s but that organisation had failed to represent a UK four-nations perspective on educational research, particularly in relation to the needs arising in Northern Ireland. Members of the NIERF produced three reports that mapped various aspects of research capacity in Northern Ireland [www.sfre.ac.uk/northern-Ireland/] and presented these at SFRE fora which were then published on its website. One specific spin-off of this initiative was the sponsorship of a five-nations day in NI in 2010, supported by the SFRE held at the University of Ulster and which included representatives from the RoI on the potential to develop research networks and priorities in education research.
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across the UK and Ireland. The event was a success in terms of dialogue on education research issues across the five jurisdictions but the initiative was not sustained.

3.4 The nature and duration of initial teacher education programmes Republic of Ireland

There are currently 19 publicly-funded providers of consecutive and/or concurrent teacher education programmes in the Republic of Ireland. There are currently thirteen publicly-funded post-primary teacher education providers, namely the seven universities, three institutes of technology, the National College of Art and Design and three specialised colleges. Six of these providers offer both consecutive and concurrent teacher education programmes. There are currently five publicly-funded providers of primary teacher education, five of whom offer both concurrent and consecutive programmes.

While most are funded through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), three of the smaller primary teacher education colleges are funded directly by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). There is also one private college that provides post-graduate initial teacher education for both primary and post-primary teachers using a blended learning approach. The seven university providers and two of the primary teacher education colleges also provide programmes to Masters and Doctoral levels and the two latter colleges also offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Arts/Humanities.

The teaching profession in Ireland “has traditionally enjoyed high social status and there is keen competitiveness for entry to all categories of teaching” (Coolahan, 2003, p.26). Despite a shifting economic climate (Clarke and Killeavy, 2012) and the advance of performativity forces (Hyland, 2011), teaching has remained an attractive profession in Ireland as reflected in the number of students applying for third level degree and post-graduate diploma courses in education.

Figure B Applications for concurrent and consecutive (NUI colleges) teacher education programmes (2001-2010)

Figure 1 Application Statistics for Level 8 Courses in Education from 2001 to 2010

Postgraduate data: personal communication from Company Secretary & CEO Postgraduate Applications Centre, Galway
The relatively high public status of teaching as a profession in the Republic of Ireland is reflected in their ‘relatively high salaries’ (Coolahan, 2003, 7). The recent *Education at a Glance* (OECD, 2011, p.410) report reveals that, when compared to GDP per capita, remuneration for experienced Irish teachers is well above the OECD average. The status of teaching in Ireland is further supported by the relatively high levels of public trust and satisfaction with the work of teachers as identified by the iReach Market Research report (Teaching Council, 2010) which lends support to Coolahan’s (2003, p.63) suggestion that teaching ‘is regarded by parents as very important and there is a public acceptance that the work of teachers, within a holistic approach to education, extends well beyond the direct business of teaching school subjects’.

The trends reported in Figure 1 above are naturally reflected in the increased numbers of ITE graduates between 2007 and 2011.

Table B: Numbers graduating from publicly funded Primary and Post-Primary ITE programmes in the Republic of Ireland (2007-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th></th>
<th>Post-Primary</th>
<th></th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concurrent</td>
<td>Consecutive*</td>
<td>Concurrent</td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>2360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>1054</td>
<td>2729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>911</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>2816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>1137</td>
<td>3008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>1112</td>
<td>2750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>4,696</td>
<td>1,639</td>
<td>2,020</td>
<td>5,308</td>
<td>13,663</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(based on Hyland (2012)

* During these five years Hibernia College graduated 2,658 primary teachers from its consecutive PGDE, over 1,000 more than the five publicly funded providers.

A total of 1,174 students graduated from the publicly-funded colleges for primary teachers in 2011 – 973 from concurrent programmes and 201 from consecutive programmes while 1,576 graduates completed a post-primary teaching teacher education programme – 464 from concurrent programmes and 1,112 from consecutive programmes.

The majority of second level teachers take the consecutive route, completing an undergraduate programme in a specific subject or subjects, followed by a one year ITE programme at postgraduate level. Post-primary concurrent programmes are of four years duration. While the post-primary Professional Diploma in Education PDE, previously the PGDE and prior to that the H. DipEd has been a one-year programme since its inception, it will become a two year programme from September 2014.

Since its introduction in 1974 the B.Ed. programmes in RoI has been of three years duration and the entry to primary teaching for the majority of entrants. The primary PDE in more recent years has been extended to a period of 18 months. From September (2012), the BEd (Primary will be four years and the PDE for both primary and post-primary teaching will be extended to two years, the former from 2013, the latter from 2014).

The extended duration of primary concurrent programmes and primary and post-primary consecutive programmes results from recent Teaching Council (2011a) proposals and the DES (2011) literacy and numeracy policy which states that these changes are necessary ‘to ensure the development of teachers’ skills in literacy and numeracy teaching’ (ibid., pp.34-35). This development reflects a tendency for education policy makers to see ITE as the solution to most problems. The Teaching Council in RoI (2011a, p.14) expects that the proposed extensions will enable the promotion of ‘research/enquiry-based learning’.
Some concerns have been expressed in small number of Teaching Council reviews conducted to date about the under-resourcing of Education Departments in the university sector e.g. failure to replace retired teacher educators; the student-staff ratio in one Education Department was found to be over 40:1 in a university where the average was less than 20:1.

The Regulations of the Teacher Registration Council, drawn up in 1926 under the Intermediate Education Act of 1914, provided the framework for the professional qualification of post-primary teachers until the publication of the Teaching Council (2011a) Guidelines. These regulations, for which there was no parallel at primary level, were drawn up to serve the Higher Diploma programmes in the universities, – ‘Studies in the Foundations of Education’ (i.e. Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology and History of Education) identified as essential components of ITE. They also included a requirement in relation to Professional Studies which ‘must include general methodology and specific methodology and should normally include studies in the areas of school organisation, audio-visual technology, evaluation and assessment and curriculum studies’ (Department of Education, 1987, p. 8). When these regulations were revised during the late eighties and a Guide to the Regulations for the Registration of Secondary Teachers was published in November 1988, there was no mention of research capacity and/or development, notwithstanding the move towards an all-graduate teaching profession, the increased rates of student retention and the new emphasis on curriculum change.

3.5 Education research in the Republic of Ireland

The RoI does not have an official education research policy or a national body with responsibility for education research. This has to be seen against a background where the social sciences that developed most successfully after Independence were history and economics (Garvin, 1985) to the neglect of the social sciences so that, even in the 1980s, ‘Ireland still lagged well behind the average level of European social thought… [due to the lack of] importance attached to the mind educated in social thought’ (Lee, 1989, p.609).

The OECD (1991, p.42) examiners commented on the ‘dearth of policy-related educational research’ in Ireland and pondered whether the authorities in Ireland had become “dubious of the utility of the research findings brought to their attention” (ibid.). Coolahan (1994, p.228) remarked that ‘it is quite extraordinary that only .003 per cent of the national education budget of almost two billion is devoted to research and development. Cussen (1994), an Assistant Secretary in the Department of Education, commented on the general lack of integration between research, planning, and policy-making in Ireland compared with the Nordic countries while emphasising that ”policy-makers need access to research findings in an accessible form” (ibid., p. 233). The Education Green Paper (Department of Education, 1992, 228ff ) acknowledged the importance of recognising educational research and development as an integral part of educational planning and suggested the establishment of an Institute for Educational Research that would pool the resources of existing research facilities and conduct research in relation to various policy initiatives was being investigated. However, when the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) was established in 2000 it did not include any representative from the education sector. In more recent times the Council has been merged with the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET) to form the Irish Research Council.

Annual DES expenditure on Research and Development (R&D) activities has varied from 0.07 per cent of total Education expenditure in 1998 to 0.3 per cent in 2003 to 0.1 per cent in 2006. The reduction in overall expenditure at the height of the Celtic Tiger period, from €19 million in 2003 to less than €8 million in both 2004 and 2005, is particularly significant.

The DES published an account of projects supported by this Committee from 1994-2000. Average annual expenditure on R&D over the period 1994-2000 [Broderick and Coughlan, ed., 2002] came to €139,083 and the average amount of each post-primary grant was €13,500. A considerable proportion of this budget goes to support the educational research activity of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRI). This extremely low level of provision for R&D at primary and post-primary education contrasts sharply with the allocation of €356 million to the Scientific and Technological Education (Investment) Fund set up in 1998 to develop technology education at all levels ranging from primary schools to advanced research and this Fund was allocated €250 million in 2005 (DES, 2007b).
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Sugrue (2009) bemoans the absence of a comprehensive policy on education research and suggests that, within the prevailing market forces, there is a real risk that the publication of research is seen as an ‘end in itself, part of the politicisation of educational reform’ (ibid., p.17). In such circumstances, quality becomes ‘relegated to a secondary consideration, and dissemination [is] increasingly politicised, thus blurring the boundaries between researchers, advocates and policymakers’ (ibid., p.22). On the basis of his analysis of papers published in Irish Educational Studies, Sugrue (ibid) suggests that the Irish academic community pays little or no attention to research policy or quality not to mention the nature of research itself.

One of the four high-level goals of the latest DES Statement of Strategy (undated, 12) is to ‘provide high quality learning, research and innovation opportunities in the higher education sector’. The focus is on the higher education sector in general so that it can ‘respond to changing needs of learners, the economy and society and support Ireland’s economic renewal, growth and quality of life’ (ibid). There is no mention of teacher education and the primary/post-primary issues singled out for attention in the Programme for Government are: the development of ICT for teaching, learning and assessment; the future design requirements of school accommodation and a review of provision for education disadvantage (ibid, 19ff). The economic recession is clearly impacting further on research expenditure insofar as the 2011 outturn for the Budget heading that includes research and development was only 38% of the 2010 outturn.

3.6 Building research capacity in ITE Republic of Ireland

The terms of reference for the review of Initial Teacher Education announced by the Minister for Education in 2012 include a reminder to the Higher Education Authority review team that the following features are evident in countries where student outcomes are high (Sahlberg, Furlong, Munn, 2012, 13):

- Teacher education is required to be research-driven;
- Graduate teachers are capable of applying research to their work in a constructive and reflective way;
- Relatively small numbers of institutions are involved in ITE provision allowing for critical mass to conduct research at a high level;
- Such institutions span/combine education sectors allowing for meaningful synergies in ITE between early childhood, primary, second-level and other sectors of education.

Noting that Finnish student teachers are prepared through a research-based approach led by researchers, international reviewers (Sahlberg, Furlong, Munn, 2012) began from the premises that:

- in order to advance further in its national teacher education system, Ireland [RoI] needs to invest more in the continuous improvement of the quality of teaching, the role of research in teacher education (ibid., p.6)
- as a high status profession teacher education is increasingly relying on research knowledge on the one hand and focusing on preparing teachers to use and do research on the other’ (ibid., p.15).

The Review Panel highlighted the importance of a culture of research in teacher education where staff are familiar with current research and are engaged in research on critical areas of teaching and teacher education: their own practice; teachers’ professional learning; Irish and international education policy, and the fundamentals of teaching, learning and assessment.

They argued that student teachers, with the support of ITE faculty, should be engaged in researching their practice, reflecting on it and improving their teaching accordingly. Noting that part-time staff members are not properly integrated into ‘the scholarly culture’ of the university, the reviewers recommended that research-driven programmes need to be adequately staffed by full-time university lecturers well versed in research and in current debates about practice.

Given the regulations guiding ITE programmes outlined above, it is hardly surprising that educational research (Coolahan, 1985; Sugrue & Ui Thuama, 1994) in RoI has been dominated until relatively recently by the Foundation Disciplines of History, Psychology and Sociology with relatively little other than small-scale classroom-based research. The dependency on foundational studies arguably reinforced the prevailing assumption that teaching is essentially a rational activity guided by a predefined stock of knowledge. In this context reflective capability was not seen as a central feature of teacher professionalism and good practice was assumed to consist in applying theory.
However, despite the emphasis on Foundation Studies, certainly at post-primary level, little or nothing has been written about the nature or content of such courses. There is a noticeable tendency for official reports regarding ITE (e.g. Coolahan, 2003; DES, 2002a; 2002b) to focus more on school placement (Gleeson and Moody, 2007) than on the content and function of the foundation disciplines. From the perspective of the current study, the absence of any reference to developing the research capacity of student teachers is particularly striking.

This prevailing mindset was challenged progressively throughout the 1990s and more recently. For example, the Report of the Advisory Body on Post-Primary Teacher Education (DES, 2002b) conceptualised the work of the teacher under the four headings artist, clinician, professional and researcher. The Group identified ‘a need for teachers to have skills in research, i.e. that they not only know how to find and manage knowledge, but also how to critically appraise it and ultimately how to produce it’ (ibid., p.33). It suggested that teacher education programmes should have a research component which is formally integrated into the curriculum through course assignments, projects, action research during school placements, and/or a dissertation requirement. Teachers were seen as intellectuals who critically reflect on their own everyday practice with a strong emphasis on the Enquiry Orientated model [which] best suited teacher education programmes given the needs of student teachers and subsequently of the teaching profession. (ibid., p.79).

On the other hand the Report of the Advisory Group on Primary Teacher Education (DES, 2002a) did not address the issue of research capacity-building in student teachers at all, focusing instead on the need for Colleges to ‘develop the capacity to carry out research relevant to their core operations (e.g., relating to student selection, students’ performance in college, and tracer studies of graduates) and to offer postgraduate studies’ (ibid., p.163). Indeed that group appears to have held views about reflective practice: ‘while it may be accepted that reflection has a role in teacher preparation and in teaching, it also should be acknowledged that the reflective practitioner model, like the technical rationality model, has serious shortcomings’ (ibid., p.47). It is rather ironic then to find that the participants in the Marino Institute of Education school-based action research work during the early 1990s came mainly from the primary sector (see McNiff and Collins, 1994). These differing emphases between the primary and post-primary sectors are also reflective of institutional histories and trajectories. At the time these reports were being compiled the major colleges of education were forging new relationships with their respective partner universities, thus in this milieu, building research capacity among teacher educators was being privileged over other possible priorities.

The Country Background Report on Ireland, prepared in the context of the OECD (2005) study, Teachers Matter, does not identify the building of teachers’ research capacity as an issue, simply stating that ‘research training, including action research, features in many of the university courses’ (Coolahan, 2003, p.34). However, that report identifies the fostering of ‘a reflective practitioner approach’ as a policy priority for teacher education (ibid., p.41).

Against this backdrop, Hyland’s (2012, p.20) comments in her Review of the Structure of ITE Provision in Ireland, reflects rather positively on RoI teacher educators when she states that: ‘a significant amount of educational research activity takes place in colleges of education and in education departments/faculties of universities’. Having noted that the Educational Research Centre (ERC) is located on the campus of St. Patrick’s College, she points out that it publishes a research journal. And the all-island Educational Studies Association of Ireland organises and hosts an annual conference and publishes Irish Educational Studies, an international peer-reviewed journal. However, Hyland comments also that the ‘extent to which this research impacts on teacher education is not clear’ and bemoans the paucity of collaboration and the absence of a coordinated approach to education research. She states:

Some of this work is action-based research and involves collaboration between staff in the colleges of education and in education departments, and practising teachers in classroom settings. While there are many active and highly-respected individual researchers and some relatively small scale research projects, it is clear from even a cursory examination and analysis of the websites that cross-institutional collaboration is limited and that there is a good deal of overlap in the areas of educational research across institutions (ibid., p.21)
She expresses particular concerns regarding the absence of a critical mass of researchers in Irish ITE provider institutions and calls for greater inter-institutional co-operation.

Centres and research teams involved in educational research in Irish higher education institutions are relatively small in size and do not have the critical mass that would normally be associated with academic Centres of Excellence internationally. It is clear that many areas of educational research in Ireland would benefit if there was greater inter-institutional collaboration and co-operation (ibid).

While acknowledging that teacher education staff involved in subject methodologies, especially in university education departments and who are normally employed on a part-time basis, ‘are undoubtedly excellent teachers’ she expresses concerns that ‘many do not hold doctoral degrees nor do they appear to be engaged in academic or pedagogic research’ (ibid., p.20). Similar research capacity issues, particularly regarding pedagogical content knowledge are identified by the international expert panel (see below) (Sahlberg et al., 2012).

3.6.1 Teaching Council policy

Having been formally established in 2006, the Teaching Council in RoI published its policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education in 2011 with its guiding principle that teacher education should ‘be informed by the best available research and evidence [and should] foster reflective, critical and research-based learning’ (Teaching Council, 2011b, p.10). The Council’s Criteria and Guidelines for ITE Programme Providers in effect make it mandatory that all teacher education programmes accredited professionally are obliged to ‘qualify’ teachers as both reflective practitioners and researchers. Towards this end, the Foundation Studies element of ITE will ‘provide research-informed insights into student teachers’ understanding of the practices of teaching, learning and assessment’ (Teaching Council, 2011a, p.13) and provide for ‘the development of student teachers as researchers and lifelong learners’ (ibid., p.14).

These guidelines also stipulate that ITE staff ‘should be research active and take lead roles with regard to assimilating, conducting, publishing and supervising research with appropriate staff development support (ibid., p.19). Three of the Teaching Council’s expected learning outcomes for graduates of programmes of ITE make explicit reference to research. Graduates are expected to:

• demonstrate knowledge and understanding of educational research and its contribution to teaching, learning and assessment (ibid., p.25);
• engage in data gathering and critically analyse and evaluate relevant knowledge and research (ibid., p.27); and
• conduct and apply relevant research as appropriate to his/her teaching context, identifying, critically analysing and integrating new knowledge regarding curriculum, pedagogy and assessment into his/her practice (ibid., p.28).

The Council’s research policy (Teaching Council, 2012) makes explicit provision for the awarding of bursaries for practitioner-based research and in excess of one hundred teachers have received support to date.

3.6.2 Report of international reviewers

The Review Panel (ibid., pp.18-19) concluded that the current configuration of provision for ITE results in the ‘lack of a critical mass for research purposes’ and noted that there is a lack of common understanding by HEIs with regard to the research terminology i.e., research-driven, research-led, research-active, research-informed and research-based assume different meanings in ITE. They proposed that the current nineteen providers be rationalised to form six centres of teacher education and went on to comment on the research capacity of these proposed centres, rating the capacity of three centres as strong with two in need of further development.

The Panel’s vision is that ITE provision in RoI Ireland will be structured around a network of teacher education institutions based on a small number of internationally comparable institutes of teacher education. Each of these institutes will offer research-based teacher education in internationally inspiring environments, provided at Masters-level initially or through continuing professional development. Such institutes would also offer further professional development services on the continuum ranging from early childhood to in-service training of teachers and leaders.
Section 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This section of the report outlines the research design of the study, instrument design, data analysis, reporting and interpretation. Essentially, the research design includes elements of emergent and progressive focusing (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) with aspects of mixed methods included also (Creswell, 2003). The study occurred in three phases. Phase one was a pilot study to garner the perspectives of key actors to inform the design of a survey instrument for the second phase. Phase two, involved the design of a survey instrument to be distributed to the entire population of teacher educators north and south, while the third phase involved in-depth interviews with a small number of volunteers who participated in phase two with a view to exploring emergent ‘themes’ from the survey in greater depth and to illuminate further elements of survey data.

4.2 Aims

Consistent with the questions of the study articulated in preceding sections, the aims of the research were articulated as follows:

4.2.1. To provide an analysis of the experience, perspectives and resources of teacher educators with regard to the factors that support and/or inhibit research capacity-building in during their programmes of initial teacher education.

4.2.2. To create a comprehensive baseline understanding of how research awareness, understanding and skills are incorporated and developed during initial teacher education.

4.3 Research questions

In the interest of completeness, we re-state the study’s questions here. They are:

• What are the underpinning assumptions regarding concepts of research in initial teacher education in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland?
• How is research (across a range of forms) incorporated and deployed across a sample of ITE programmes and with what educational/ professional/practical purposes?
• To what extent are the efforts of ITE faculty in developing research capacity supported by the culture of their institutions?
• What is the research capability (as determined by a range of research indicators and stakeholder perceptions) of the teacher education community (ITE) in the two jurisdictions?
• What are the perspectives of teacher educators, including Course Directors, regarding the role of research in ITE programmes in the Republic of Ireland/Northern Ireland. What are the key differences/overlaps/potential synergies?
• How is the notion of research-capacity-building in ITE understood on the island of Ireland?
• On the basis of evidence and our analysis of it, what recommendations are to be made regarding potential developments to enhance research capacity-building in ITE programmes North-South?

4.4 Data collection

The study, which involved an iterative design process, was conducted over three inter-related phases and combined quantitative and qualitative data sets.

4.4.1 Phase 1: Exploratory interviews with Course Directors.
These were conducted with four teacher education Course Directors (CDs), two in NI and two in the RoI. The interview schedule used was derived from the research questions and may be seen at Appendix One. Both primary and post-primary teacher educators were included. The main purpose of these interviews was to inform the
development of the on-line survey by developing a contemporary, baseline understanding of perceptions and issues from the perspectives of CDs in a representative range of institutions North and South.

These interviews provided a basic mapping of the current terrain of ITE in NI and RoI in both primary and post-primary programmes and informed potential areas of questions for the on-line survey. Certain issues emerged that had to be considered when designing the survey instrument including:

- The duration of concurrent versus consecutive teacher education courses;
- the emphasis of ITE courses on professional practice;
- the range of understanding of what research entailed for ITE providers, the differing perspectives of ITE faculty on the research capacity building of staff and students;
- the capacity and confidence levels of faculty staff in relation to research;
- the increasing emphasis on evidence as a basis for ITE programmes;
- the increasing focus during ITE programmes on the development of the reflective practitioner as action researcher;
- the number of issues competing for time in the context of ITE programmes of relatively short duration;
- research culture and ethos of institutions; and
- funding opportunities.

These issues were incorporated into the on-line survey questions for use in Phase 2.

4.4.2 Phase 2: Design and distribution of electronic survey

The survey was designed in collaboration with Gr8Consultancy. An online questionnaire-based survey was designed using QUALTRICS© survey software. This comprised a 65-item structured questionnaire, arranged into the following three sections:

- Biographical information/context;
- Personal research experience and opportunities;
- Research within Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

This survey (included in Appendix Two) drew on the experience of the Phase 1 interviews, but was also informed by a review and synthesis of pertinent literature and the experience of the researchers in the field of teacher education. The main issue included in this electronic survey dealt with:

- perceptions of the appropriate level of research competence that ought to be developed at ITE stage;
- the extent to which ITE programmes focused on the development of skills in quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods and action research;
- the perceived importance of research capacity building in ITE from the perspectives of the Practicum, Foundation Studies, Reflective Practice etc.;
- providers’ perceptions of the extent to which ITE programmes should develop research knowledge, skills and capacity in a range of relevant areas;
- the proportion of the working week devoted by faculty members to research activity [workload models];
- the nature, weighting etc of the dissertation in ITE programmes;
- the availability of funding and opportunities for research within teacher education;
- conference attendance on the part of teacher educators;
- the levels of engagement of teacher educators in research projects;
- the nature and extent of publications by teacher educators; and
- provision made for related staff development.

A range of question types including single answer, multiple choice, matrix table, sliding scale, rank order and qualitative, text-entry free responses was devised. Not all respondents were required to answer each question because various ‘skips’ were built into the questionnaire design to facilitate follow-up questions, depending on previous responses. Also, some questions were included solely for Course Directors.

The online survey was piloted with a number of selected ITE individuals who did not subsequently take part in the actual online survey. This allowed question content to be reviewed and helped iron out any difficulties with the use of the Qualtrics system. The survey questionnaire was issued electronically to professional ITE staff (full-time and
Understanding the role and potential for research capacity-building in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes

North and South Ireland: A baseline and comparative study

part-time) in 25 ITE institutions throughout Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (RoI). An example of the accompanying email may be seen at Appendix 3. When completing the survey, participants were asked if they wished to volunteer for a subsequent interview.

4.4.3 Phase 3: interviews with teacher educators in each jurisdiction

Having undertaken some analysis of the survey data to identify emerging trends, anomalies and matters that warranted further in-depth exploration and elaboration, four teacher educators were interviewed in each jurisdiction. Participants were selected in a purposive manner from the large pool of volunteers bearing in mind variables such as gender, primary/post-primary involvement, concurrent/consecutive programmes. A semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 3) was generated for this purpose and one-to-one interviews were conducted by telephone or in person, recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

4.5 Samples and sampling

4.5.1 Details of sample completing survey

The online questionnaire-based survey was forwarded electronically to 437 professional ITE colleagues located in 25 ITE institutions throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, of whom 25 per cent worked in Northern Ireland. University teacher education departments tend to have a dual economy (Munn & Baron op cit) representing those who ‘research’ and those who ‘teach’ on ITE and/or related programmes. The survey was distributed only to those known to be directly involved in ITE. (This does potentially create a skew in terms of the overall profile of education research characteristics presented and that must be taken account of in any attempts to generalise about ‘education research’ from this report).

Completed online surveys were returned by 267 colleagues representing an overall response rate of 61.3% (this represented a response rate of 72% in the case of RoI and 27% in the case of NI). 89% (n=237) of all respondents were from the RoI and 11% (n=30) from NI. 62% of respondents were female and 38% were male.

Respondents were from institutions of varying sizes with the number of full-time faculty working in ITE ranging from 1-5 to 26+ while the majority of institutions had 26+ staff as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Full-time faculty working in ITE institutions (Course Directors responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RoI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26+</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some survey questions were directed specifically at Course Directors (CDs) and 67 of the respondents fell into this category (7 in NI and 60 in the RoI). Almost all CDs were full-time (100% in NI and 97% in RoI) with 71% of NI CDs being male and 60% of their RoI counterparts being female. 86% of the CD respondents from NI hold a Doctorate as against 55% in the RoI with most of the others holding Master’s degrees. CD respondents in both jurisdictions are most likely to be Senior Lecturers (36%) while in the RoI some are Professors (6%), Principal Lecturers/Lecturers (56%), Heads of College (1%) or even College President (1%).

While most CDs have been working in ITE for 11-15 years, some RoI CDs have substantial experience (21+ years) in the sector (12%) with 14% of NI CD respondents and 12% of RoI CDs having 0-5 years experience.
Of the ITE programmes for which Course Directors returned information, one institution in NI had more than 100 students enrolled annually whereas half the RoI institutions had 100 or more students enrolled. There were more than 301 students enrolled in ITE programmes in 14 RoI provider institutions while this was true in the case of one NI provider (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Numbers of ITE students enrolled annually

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RoI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 or less</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-50</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-100</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-150</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-200</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-250</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251-300</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301+</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most ITE respondents north and south are full time (90% of NI; 93% in RoI). As may be seen from Table 3 below 52% of RoI respondents were working in a College of Education affiliated to a university and 38% in a university setting as compared with 48% and 42% of NI respondents respectively.

Table 3: Percentage of respondents re type of institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of institution</th>
<th>N.I</th>
<th>RoI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Education affiliated to a university</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute of Technology</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 indicates that most respondents in the RoI are Lecturers (62%), whereas in NI, the majority are Senior Lecturers (57%).

Table 4: Post held by respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post held</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>N.I</th>
<th>RoI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Lecturer</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant/Fellow</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NI respondents have considerably longer service than their counterparts in the RoI. For instance, 41% of staff in NI have >16 years service as compared to 16% in the RoI [see Table 5]. 52% of staff in the RoI have <11 years experience compared to 35% in NI. Overall, in Ireland as a whole, 66% of respondents had between six and fifteen years’ experience of working in ITE.

Table 5: Length of service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>N.I</th>
<th>RoI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ years</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some two-thirds of RoI (62%) and NI (64%) respondents hold doctorates, while the remainder have Master’s. As would be expected most ITE staff working in NI completed their qualification in that jurisdiction (82%) and vice-versa for RoI staff (69%).

As outlined in Chart 1 the ITE activities of respondents in both jurisdictions were spread across the B.Ed (Primary) (45% in RoI; 27% in NI), concurrent ITE (Post-primary) (22% in RoI, 20% in NI) and Post Graduate Diploma (Post-primary) (21% in RoI, 30% in NI). While the low proportion of RoI respondents who located their main teaching activity in consecutive Primary teacher education, most faculty teaching on these programmes are also working on concurrent B.Ed. programmes.

Chart 1: Type of ITE programmes in which respondents are involved
96% of NI respondents indicated that they have school teaching experience (50% of whom indicated that this experience was at post-primary level) compared with 91% of RoI respondents (37% of whom indicated that this experience was at primary level). 9% of RoI respondents indicated that they do not have any teaching experience as compared to 4% of NI respondents (see Table 6 below). 65% of RoI respondents who indicated that their ITE activity was mostly in primary provision indicated they have experience of teaching at that level, as compared with 40% of NI respondents. In contrast, 66% of RoI respondents who indicated that their ITE activity was mostly in post-primary provision indicated they have experience of teaching at that level, as compared with 73% of NI respondents.

Table 6: Teaching experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RoI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary level</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-primary level</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both primary and post-primary level</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those respondents who indicated that they had taught at either primary or post-primary level, the majority had between 1-5 years experience.

4.5.2 Details of sub-samples participating in follow-up interviews

Eight volunteers were selected for follow-up interviews, equally divided by jurisdiction, gender, primary and post-primary ITE sectors and types of institution and representing a range of ages (30-60 years), experience and subject disciplines (see Table 7).

While there are always potential issues regarding representativeness of a large sample as a result of selection of sub-samples, the main purpose of Phase 3 was to illustrate and draw out in more depth some of the key themes that were presented in the on-line survey data and to identify similarities and differences in the experiences and views of NI and RoI interviewees.

A semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix Four) was generated for this purpose and one-to-one interviews were conducted by telephone or in person, recorded and subsequently transcribed and thematically analysed (in line with the main research questions).

Table 7: Profile of NI and RoI interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NI Interviewees Reference</th>
<th>Teacher Ed. sector</th>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Length of service (years)</th>
<th>Subject Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PPU1</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mathematics and ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPCEd1</td>
<td>Post-Primary</td>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Professional Studies/Pegce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCEd2(CD)</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Art and Design /Pegce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCEd3</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Professional Studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RoI Interviewees Reference</th>
<th>Teacher Ed. sector</th>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Length of service (years)</th>
<th>Subject Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PTE1</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>College of Education (CD)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Professional studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6 Ethical considerations

The study followed the BERA ethical guidelines and the requirements of the university codes of ethics. Participants in all three phases were provided with opportunities for informed consent:

In Phase 1 the Course Directors had the purposes of the study explained and were also engaged in discussion pertaining to their role in the development of the question data bank for the survey instrument, before they agreed to participate in the recorded interviews.

In Phase 2 all those providing the Education component of Initial Teacher Education programmes in NI and the RoI (excluding those who only teach subject disciplines other than Education in the context of concurrent ITE programmes) were contacted in July 2012. RoI teacher educators received individual emails inviting participation, where they were given a web link to the survey. In the case of NI this same email was sent to Course Directors or Heads of School for circulation to teacher education faculty. The invitations email introduced the aims and purposes of the survey, how long it would take to complete, the main issues covered and how to respond to the online instructions. RoI teacher educators were advised that the study had been commissioned well in advance of the ITE review announced by the Minister in June 2012. The nature of the study was such that recipients of the email were free to respond to or ignore the invitation to participate in the study as they saw fit. The original recipients received a reminder email in September 2012 using the same strategies as in July. This message thanked those who had already responded and encouraged those who hadn’t to do so.

In Phase 3, interviewees were selected from those respondents who had indicated a willingness to engage in a follow-up at the end of the online survey. Those participants selected were re-invited, reminded of the purposes of the study and the follow-up interview. They were informed of the general topics to be covered in the interviews, that the interviews would be digitally recorded, stored safely and data destroyed after completion of the study and assured that their views would be represented anonymously. They understood that the information would be used as part of a published report and further papers and they could withdraw from the study at any point until publication.

The limitations of the study include the imbalance in both the overall number of teacher education institutions and teacher educators in each jurisdiction and in the proportions of respondents by jurisdiction. It should also be recognised that a number of the survey items required respondents to engage in self-reporting and self-evaluating.
Understanding the role and potential for research capacity-building in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes

North and South Ireland: A baseline and comparative study
Section 5: Survey Results

5.1 Introduction

This section presents findings from the on-line surveys based on descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and key cross tabulations. Teacher educators’ attitudes towards research and their interests, activities and funding are addressed in Sections 5.2 to 5.6. Their perspectives on research culture and capacity within their institutions are presented in 5.7 followed by their perceptions of how well student teachers are prepared to engage in research (5.8) and their views regarding how participation in research activity might be increased at 5.9.

5.2 Respondents’ research interests

The survey question asking respondents to indicate their three main areas of interest as a researcher produced a huge array of almost 500 topic areas. Across both jurisdictions there was a broad range of research interests identified with the spread being proportionately greatest in RoI and with a significant frequency of individual areas of interest being mentioned by both groups of respondents. When summarising patterns of commonality and difference, it is necessary to exercise caution with respect to the differences in return between NI and RoI samples. The most commonly mentioned research topics across both jurisdictions fall under the general heading of ‘school subject related’ research interests. These included Maths, Languages and Science Education as well as Educational Technology and ICT and generally reflected the respondents’ main areas of delivery in ITE programmes. The generic areas of curriculum, pedagogy, teaching, learning and assessment also featured prominently with a proportionately greater frequency of mention of these by RoI respondents. It appears that teacher education and reflective practice are particularly popular areas of research in RoI and given that models of reflective practice underpin ITE in both jurisdictions it is surprising that greater numbers of respondents did not declare specific interest, especially in the NI sample. Other areas frequently mentioned by RoI respondents included student teacher development; teacher attitudes/beliefs/identity; CPD; leadership; education policy; SEN and history of education. Research on aspects of aesthetics, ethics and drama were referred to only by the RoI sample as were concerns with research relating to education policy, higher education and adult and community education.

In NI, with fewer sample numbers, research interests included teacher identity, teacher attitudes related to teacher education and approaches to co-teaching. Education policy-related research, and research interests on school leadership and school improvement were not referred to in the NI sample. The legacy relating to work on education in divided societies as a result of the impact of the NI conflict was reflected in specific mentions by a small number of NI respondents whose interests concern impact of education post-conflict, history/culture, citizenship and teaching controversial issues. In both jurisdictions, a proportion of respondents mentioned areas related to inclusion, however the focus on inclusion topics in RoI tended to relate to cultural integration, disadvantage, inequality and pluralism while in NI the slant seemed to be on Human Rights / Children’s Rights with research on student voice and student agency being an emergent area of interest in both jurisdictions.

There were also individual references to specific areas of interest related to research on inclusion covering such topics as health education, bullying, social and affective learning and pastoral care/counselling across both NI and RoI samples, with proportionately more mentions in RoI.

5.3 Perceived research competence of respondents

Respondents’ self-assessment of their background experience of training in research methods are set out in Table 8 and their perceived research knowledge and skill levels are presented in the charts that follow. While there are general concerns about the reliability of self-reporting, the apparent gaps between research experience and perceived research competence are of interest.

The vast majority of ITE staff in both jurisdictions indicated that they had studied research methods previously (89% in both). Asked which research methods they had previously studied, relatively few respondents indicated
that had studied quantitative research methods, particularly in NI (see Table 8). Nearly half of all respondents in both jurisdictions indicated that they had studied mixed methods (50%, NI; 48% RoI). While 90% of respondents in the RoI and 88% in NI viewed reflective practice as a form of research less than one third said they had formally studied it.

Table 8: Research methods studied by respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research methods</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>N.I</th>
<th>RoI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mostly quantitative methods</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly qualitative methods</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed methods</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner/Action research</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked about how they rate their experience and competence in carrying out educational research, interesting patterns emerged, especially given the focus of this study on research capacity-building in ITE programmes, north and south. For instance, it was clear that ITE colleagues in the RoI rated their experience and competence in relation to conducting research more highly than those in NI as may be seen from Chart 2 below.

The majority of NI respondents rated their experience as ‘satisfactory’ (48%) and their level of competence as ‘very good’ (48%). In contrast the majority of RoI respondents rated both their levels experience and competence as ‘very good’ (47% and 52% respectively). It should be noted that while 7% of staff in the RoI rated their research experience as ‘poor’, no one in NI felt similarly. Overall, 40% of respondents rated their research experience as ‘satisfactory’ or ‘poor’ and 35% rated their competence similarly. Only 13% of respondents rated both their experience and competence as ‘excellent’. These trends suggest that ITE staff feel there is scope for further development in these two areas.

Chart 2: How respondents rate their research experience and competence
When considered as a discrete category, 39% of Course Directors described their research experience as ‘satisfactory’ or ‘poor’ while 12% of RoI Course Directors and none in NI rated their experience as ‘excellent.’ One third of all Course Directors described their research competence as ‘satisfactory’ or ‘poor.’ While no CD in NI rated their competence as excellent or poor, 10% of colleagues in the RoI rated their competence as excellent and 5% regarded it as poor.

5.4 Publications profiles

Respondents were asked to identify the number and type of publication(s) within the past three years. Chart 4 shows the trends for respondents who had 1-4 publications, across the different types, in the last three years. Apart from co-authored/edited books, NI respondents had more publications than RoI respondents over the previous three years. The most common types of publications overall are refereed journal papers and reports/briefing papers.

Chart 3: Proportion of respondents with 1-4 publications in the last three years.

In terms of ‘Other’ types of publications mentioned, these typically include newspaper articles, educational blogs, book reviews, educational DVDS, articles in teacher magazines, government submissions, resource packs and evaluation reports. 21% of RoI respondents as compared with 12% in NI had given seven or more conference papers in the last three years.

Chart 4 displays trends for the percentage of respondents by publication type who declared they had no publications in the last three years. For instance 93% and 94% of respondents in NI and RoI respectively had not published a single-authored book in the past three years. More than a quarter of respondents in both jurisdictions had not published a referred journal article in the past three years.
When the differences between the number of refereed journal publications of teacher educators from the university and non-university sectors are compared, higher proportions of those working in the university sector were found to have published three or more papers than their counterparts in the non-university sector.

Table 9: NI respondents with three or more refereed journal articles in the past three years by sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 3</th>
<th>3 or more</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>7(54%)</td>
<td>6(46%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-university</td>
<td>13(76%)</td>
<td>4(24%)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20(67%)</td>
<td>10(33%)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: RoI respondents with three or more refereed journal articles in the past three years by sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 3</th>
<th>3 or more</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>53(59%)</td>
<td>37(41%)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-university</td>
<td>121(84%)</td>
<td>23(16%)</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>174(74%)</td>
<td>60(26%)</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of respondents who had published three or more papers in refereed journals over the past three years was consistently higher in the case of university-based teacher educators in both jurisdictions. Using Chi-Square tests, statistically significant differences emerged between RoI respondents from the university sector and their non-university ITE colleagues with three or more refereed journal papers over the past three years (p<0.001). While a higher proportion of university-based respondents in NI had also published three or more papers in refereed journals than respondent researchers from the non-university sector, these differences were not statistically significant.
5.5 Research funding

Respondents were invited to confirm how much research funding they had been awarded over the past three years, both as an individual researcher and as part of a consortium/collaborative effort. Making direct comparisons between these jurisdictions is not straightforward because some funding was awarded in Pounds Sterling (£) and other funding in Euros (€). Overall, 48% of RoI respondents indicated that they had not secured research funding in the past three years either individually or as part of a consortium as compared with 33% of NI respondents. In terms of individual funding in the last three years, 41% of RoI respondents indicated that they had not secured funding in Euros in the last three years (89% indicated that they had not secured funding in sterling). In comparison 35% of NI respondents indicated that they had not secured funding in sterling in the last three years (100% indicated that they had not secured any funding in Euro) (see Table 11 below). 28% of NI respondents secured funding of more than €100,000 in the past three years as compared with 9% of their RoI colleagues who secured funding over £100,000. When those in receipt of funding are considered and currency exchange rates are factored in there is little difference between levels of support in both jurisdictions.

Table 11: Research funding awarded for each jurisdiction by individual, collaborative research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NIC</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>RoI</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As an Individual researcher</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>164,000</td>
<td>19,705</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>82,000</td>
<td>2,584</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>21,458</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As part of a Consortium</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>61,833</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>12,666</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>53,336</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the university and non-university based respondents are viewed separately, interesting differences emerge, though not in the same direction. It is important to keep the relatively low proportion of NI responses in mind when considering these Tables.

Table 12: Research funding awarded to ITE faculty as individuals/members of consortia over last three years by sector in RoI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (£1000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>20.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-university</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>4.1597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consortium research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>38.9778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-university</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>16.9507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean awards to ITE respondents in the university sector were almost five times greater than in the case of non-university respondents while the mean award for collaborative research was more than twice as large in the case of university sector respondents.

Table 13: Research funding awarded to ITE faculty as individuals/members of consortia over last three years by sector in NI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (£1000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-university</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.0588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consortium research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23.8462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-university</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>47.2353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean awards to ITE individual respondents in the case of the NI non-university sector were larger than in the case of university-based respondents while the mean award for collaborative research was more than twice as large in the case of respondents from the non-university sector.

5.6 Attitudes of respondents towards research

Respondents were asked to indicate how they saw the role of research in ITE. Their wide ranging individual comments have been thematically analysed and the frequency with which each of the eight main themes were mentioned is placed in rank order in Table 14.

Table 14: Perceived role of research in ITE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Role of research in ITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To inform high quality teaching and learning in order to ensure that content and pedagogies are up-to-date and meaningful;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To develop enquiry and problem-solving capacities of student teachers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To improve policy and practice;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To link theory and practice;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>To teach student teachers how to conduct research as reflective practitioners;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>To provide an evidence-base that promotes the image, relevance and status of teacher education;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>To promote reflexivity and a critical edge for lecturers which transmits to the students;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>To challenge existing methods, value-systems and beliefs and ensure continuous improvement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked to indicate how important they thought it was for student teachers to develop their KNOWLEDGE in a range of research activities. Table 15 (below) shows the responses of colleagues in NI and the RoI. The majority of ITE respondents in NI and RoI viewed most aspects as very important, particularly knowledge of literature searching, practitioner/action research and the interpretation of report and evidence.

Table 15: Importance of students developing research knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither important nor unimportant</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>Rol</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>Rol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative research methods</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research methods</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-methods research</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner/Action research</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing research reports</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature searching</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting research reports/evidence</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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particularly highly. There was strong support in both jurisdictions for qualitative research methods, literature searching and interpreting reports and evidence.

Table 16: Importance of students developing research skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither important nor unimportant</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>RoI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>RoI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative research methods</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research methods</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-methods research</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner/Action research</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing research reports</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature searching</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting research reports/evidence</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to describe the value of educational research for teachers in schools, 68% of all respondents felt it is very valuable/valuable with 67% of RoI respondents and 50% of NI respondents saying it is very valuable. 13% of respondents in the RoI and 7% in NI felt that educational research was of some value for teachers in school.

5.7 Research culture and capacity within ITE institutions

Respondents were asked to confirm what percentage of their academic year is devoted to each of a range of teaching education related activities. Based on the mean scores shown in Table 17 (below) the situation north and south is very similar in the case of most categories. However, faculty in NI tend to spend slightly more time than their RoI counterparts on ITE teaching and related duties including supervision of students on placements, whereas colleagues in the RoI spend a more time of their time on administrative duties and non-ITE teaching.

Table 17: Time spent by respondents on key activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean%</th>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>RoI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>RoI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and teaching-related duties for ITE students</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of students on placements</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative duties</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity related to research</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and teaching-related duties for students other than ITE</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of student dissertations [postgraduate level]</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership of External Bodies e.g. Teaching Council, External Examining, Committees</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of student dissertations [undergraduate level]</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When this workload data is scrutinised more closely some interesting differences emerge.
Almost half of all RoI respondents (49%) spent more than 30% of their academic year devoted to ITE teaching and teaching-related duties [compared with 60% of NI respondents].

One third of RoI respondents spent between 5-10% of their academic year supervising students on placement as against one fifth of NI respondents.

One fifth of NI respondents did not spend any time supervising students on placement as compared with 8% of RoI respondents.

Half of NI respondents spent no time supervising postgraduate dissertations as compared with a quarter of RoI respondents.

More than a quarter of NI respondents indicated that at least 27% of their academic year is devoted to administrative duties as compared with 19% of RoI respondents.

At the other end of the scale, 6% of RoI respondents indicated that none of their academic year is devoted to administrative duties as compared with 18% of their NI colleagues.

One fifth of NI respondents did not spend any time engaged in research activity as compared with one tenth of RoI respondents.

One quarter of NI respondents spend 10% of their academic year engaged in activities related to research as compared with 21% of RoI respondents.

More than a quarter of NI respondents indicated that at least 27% of their academic year is devoted to administrative duties as compared with 19% of RoI respondents.

At the other end of the scale, 6% of RoI respondents indicated that none of their academic year is devoted to administrative duties as compared with 18% of their NI colleagues.

One fifth of NI respondents did not spend any time engaged in research activity as compared with one tenth of RoI respondents.

One quarter of NI respondents spend 10% of their academic year engaged in activities related to research as compared with 21% of RoI respondents.

More than half the respondents in both jurisdictions devote no time to supervision of undergraduate student dissertations.

When some of the above findings are viewed alongside the publications records from each jurisdiction some interesting questions arise including the contrast between the university and non-university ITE sectors.

Table 18: Mean proportions of time spent on teaching related duties and research activities in each jurisdiction by sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RoI University</th>
<th>Non-University</th>
<th>NI University</th>
<th>Non-University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and teaching related duties for ITE students</td>
<td>25% (n=80)</td>
<td>35% (n=124)</td>
<td>22% (n=11)</td>
<td>45% (n=17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity related to research</td>
<td>19% (n=80)</td>
<td>11% (n=124)</td>
<td>24% (n=11)</td>
<td>13% (n=17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent t-tests were used to examine the statistical relationship between type of institution (university/non-university) and proportion of academic year devoted to both teaching/teaching-related duties and research in both jurisdictions. In the case of the RoI, statistically significant relationships emerged between

a) type of institution and proportion of academic year devoted to teaching and teaching related duties (p<0.001) and
b) type of institution and proportion of academic year devoted to research activity (p<0.001).

These mean differences indicate that the average amount of time spent by RoI university-based respondents on ‘teaching and teaching related duties for ITE students’ was less than that spent by their colleagues in non-university institutions, while university-based respondents were devoting more time to research activity than their colleagues from the non-university sector.

When the same independent t-tests were conducted for N Ireland, a statistically significant relationship emerged between type of institution (university/non-university) and proportion of academic year devoted to teaching/teaching-related duties (p<0.005). Mean differences suggest that university-based NI respondents spent, on average, less time on ‘teaching and teaching related duties for ITE students’ as compared with their colleagues.
from non-university institutions. No statistically significant difference emerged between type of institution and proportion of the academic year devoted to research activities in the case of this jurisdiction.

High percentages of respondents, north (77%) and south (72%), including Course Directors, would like to have more time to devote to education research while a small minority of respondents in each jurisdiction were content with the amount of time they devoted to education research. Table 19 (below) provides a summary of the most frequently mentioned reasons (in rank order) for not having more time to devote to education research. The first two (teaching workload and administration pressures) were by far the most frequently mentioned reasons among respondents, north and south.

Table 19: Reasons for respondents not having more time to devote to education research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Reasons for not having more time to devote to education research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teaching workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Unnecessary) paperwork/too much administration/the emergence of an <code>audit culture</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Family commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Insufficient recognition that research is an important part of the role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No real incentive or encouragement forthcoming/ lack of a meaningful, collaborative research agenda at institutional level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Supervision of dissertations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reducing staff numbers and consequent heavier workloads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lack of resources/funding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over 80% of respondents in both jurisdictions said there was an expectation that ITE staff should present conference papers. However, the level of support provided for attendance at conferences varied according to whether or not the attendee was a delegate only or giving a paper (Chart 5 below). 7% of respondents in the RoI and 11% in NI felt that no support available for conference attendance regardless of the basis on which they attended. Two-thirds of RoI Course Directors and 40% of NI Directors said their students were encouraged to attend conferences.

Chart 5: Does your institution support your attendance at conferences?
As shown in Table 20 (below), approximately two-thirds of respondents feel that it is very important to develop the knowledge and skills research capacity of ITE students while the remainder felt that this is important (apart from 1% in the RoI).

Table 20: Importance of developing students’ research capacity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RoI</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RoI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither important nor unimportant</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Half the respondents across both jurisdictions thought that their institutions only promoted collaborative research ‘a little’ and ITE staff generally felt that more could be done in this respect. 15% of all respondents feel that collaboration is promoted to ‘a great extent’ while a further 9% of respondents feel that a collaborative approach is not promoted at all within their institutions.

Course Directors in the RoI were more positive about the extent to which their institution promotes a collaborative approach to undertaking research with half of them saying it happens to a great extent or quite a lot. Most NI Course Directors felt that research collaboration is promoted ‘a little bit’ or ‘not at all’. Overall, the Course Directors seemed to be quite divided on this subject with 45% feeling their institutions promote a collaborative approach to undertaking research ‘to a great extent’ or ‘quite a lot’ and 55% feeling this only happens ‘a little bit’ or ‘not at all’.

A rather similar picture emerges with regard to the research culture of institutions with 55% of all Course Directors saying that a research culture exists ‘to some extent only’, one third saying it exists ‘to a great extent’ and the remainder saying it’s there ‘only to a little extent’. Some 80% of respondents (23%) feel that ITE students are either not involved at all or only involved ‘a little’ in the research culture of their institutions while only 3% of felt that students are ‘very involved’. Chart 7 (below) presents the differential responses from each jurisdiction.

Chart 7: Student involvement in research culture of the organisation
54% of ITE staff felt that they have ‘easy access’ to research-related staff development opportunities, although this varies between jurisdictions with considerably more respondents in NI agreeing with this statement (78%) compared to RoI colleagues (51%). The RoI trend is interesting given that 49% of respondents felt they did not have easy access to such opportunities, thus suggesting a real dichotomy of views. 71% of Course Directors in the RoI indicated that there is an annual budget to support education research activity within their institution.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of research in relation to five specific aspects of ITE. They rated research as very important where it focuses on reflective practice (58%), preparation for teaching (57%) and specialist subject methods (56%). Foundation studies research was least likely to be rated as very important (45%). Chart 6 [below] shows some interesting differences between the two jurisdictions with a higher percentage of respondents from the RoI rating preparation for teaching, reflective practice and teaching practicum as ‘very important’ compared to colleagues in NI.

Chart 6: Importance of research in relation to different elements of ITE

Table 21 (below) shows the number of hours devoted to research training in total within the ITE curriculum according to Course Directors. It appears that more time is allocated in RoI compared to NI.

Table 21: Hours devoted to research training within the ITE curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>std(X)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoI</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8. Perceptions of how well prepared ITE students are to engage in research

The majority of respondents in both jurisdictions felt that ITE students are either ‘prepared’ or well ‘well prepared’ to read research reports. A majority of NI respondents felt that their students were either prepared
or well prepared to evaluate research studies, write about research, understand different forms of research and undertake differing forms of educational research. NI respondents however were less positive about their graduates’ preparedness to engage in individual or collaborative research activities.

Aggregate RoI responses (Table 22 below) were more negative however, falling generally between ‘prepared’ with more than 50% saying they were either ‘not very well prepared’ or ‘unprepared’ to evaluate educational research reports, understand different forms of educational research or engage in collaborative research activity and 48% saying they were either ‘not very well prepared’ or ‘unprepared’ to write about educational research, undertake educational research enquiries or engage in educational action research. In the case of all seven research activities, between 4% and 14% of respondents in the RoI felt that students were ‘unprepared’ while higher proportions of respondents from the RoI indicated that students were ‘not very well prepared’ or ‘unprepared’ than their NI colleagues in the case of all seven categories. Overall, 62% of respondents feel that students are ‘not very well prepared’ or ‘unprepared’ in relation to engaging in collaborative research activity.

Table 22: How well prepared students are regarding a range of research activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very well prepared</th>
<th>Well prepared</th>
<th>Prepared</th>
<th>Not very well prepared</th>
<th>Unprepared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read educational research reports</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate educational research studies</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write about educational research</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand differing forms of educational research</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake educational research enquiries</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in collaborative educational research activity</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in educational action research</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When CDs were asked ‘How well do you think your graduating ITE students have developed their educational research skills?’ their responses were more positive. More than half of them chose ‘quite well’ (RoI, 50%; NI, 80%) and 10% of RoI CDs saying these skills had been developed ‘very well’. No CD felt that such skills have ‘not been developed at all’ while 19% of RoI CDs felt these skills been developed ‘not very well’.

It is a requirement for 80% of ITE students in NI and 72% in the RoI to complete a dissertation. 55% of RoI respondents indicated that these dissertations are in the area of education/pedagogy. Other students complete their dissertation in a subject discipline (21%, RoI; 50%, NI). 24% in the RoI and 50% in NI undertake a dissertation in another area such as Curriculum Studies, a combination of education/pedagogy and subject discipline, behavioural management/Special Education or in a topic of their own choice.

Course Directors were asked about the support that students undertaking a dissertation are given (Table 23). The most common support strategies in both jurisdictions were taught research modules, 1:1 supervision and the use of a dissertation handbook. Online research modules were provided in the RoI but not in NI while group supervision was used more frequently in NI and ethics training was more likely to be provided in RoI.
Understanding the role and potential for research capacity-building in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes
North and South Ireland: A baseline and comparative study

Table 23: Support for students undertaking a dissertation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RoI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taught research module(s)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online research module(s)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:1 supervision</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group supervision</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training on ethics</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation handbook/guidelines</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop/research day</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Course Directors, 6% of student teachers progress to Masters/Doctorate study in NI as compared with 12% in the RoI (Table 24).

Table 24: Percentage of graduating ITE students who proceed to Masters or Doctoral study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>RoI</th>
<th>Min%</th>
<th>Max%</th>
<th>std(X)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>11.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoI</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked to identify what the main inhibitors are regarding research activity. The main themes emerging were time pressures associated with heavy teaching workloads, administration, supervision, assessment and the lack of sufficient resources/funding to support the development of enhanced research activity in ITE institutions. Other inhibitors that were mentioned included poor leadership and the attitude of management/bureaucrats resulting in low value being placed on research within ITE; the adoption of an overly elitist, academic view of research where the positivist model of research undervalues practitioner/action research; difficulties in accessing classes/pupils/curriculum activities for data collection purposes; poor research culture and the absence of a strategic research agenda; ethics procedures that assume the worst in researchers.

5.9 Increasing participation in research activity

Respondents were asked to suggest what steps could be taken to increase the participation of student teachers in research activity in the future. Categorisation of the many comments made by respondents in NI and the RoI identified eight main themes as shown in Table 25 (below).

Table 25: Increasing the participation of student teachers in research activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Main suggestions for increasing the participation of student teachers in research activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Incorporate research as core practice (rather than an ‘extra’)/have dedicated module(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Centralise to coursework/have research-based assignments and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Make funding available (e.g. research bursaries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Have collaborative research projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Build-in more time for student teachers to carry out research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Develop a research culture within each institution/share research ideas (e.g. through a student research forum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>More support for students undertaking research (group and 1:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Build a research element into professional placements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A similar question was asked in terms of the steps that could be taken to increase the participation of teacher educators in research activity in the future. The main strands emerging from a thematic analysis of the qualitative data are shown in Table 26 (below).

Table 26: Increasing the participation of teacher educators in research activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Main suggestions for increasing the participation of teacher educators in research activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Provide more time/address the issue of the teaching burden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Resource it properly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Convince the decision-makers of its worth/have research recognised as a legitimate/important aspect of ITE activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Develop more opportunities for collaborative research projects within the ITE teaching community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Make research part of staff development programmes/initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Establish research activity/output as a mandatory part of the contract of employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Encourage new starts to register for doctoral study on entry into ITE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lower fees/subsidise fees for post-graduate research-based qualifications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 6: Qualitative follow-on interviews with NI and RoI teacher educators

6.1 Introduction

This section provides a series of accounts derived from a series of follow-up interviews with small sub-samples from the NI and RoI on-line survey population. The aim of this section is to provide a synthesis of their accounts in order to complement and/or extend insight into a number of the patterns and trends that have been identified through the on-line survey findings including the need to:

(i) probe further the research capacity of student teachers and the emphasis emerging from the survey findings on reflective practice in NI and the positive responses regarding action research in both jurisdictions;

(ii) explore shared perceptions on the importance of research beyond what was possible in the survey, particularly in view of the pressure on respondents to balance their teacher education activities with the pressure to publish and the emerging lack of consensus on the meaning of research in ITE;

(iii) identify in greater depth the forms of research being undertaken by teacher educators;

(iv) tease out the balance between collaborative and individual research activity, including the emerging differences between jurisdictions;

(v) explore teacher educators’ perceptions of practicing teachers’ attitudes towards research;

(vi) discuss respondents’ understanding of future directions for research development in ITE, particularly in the RoI, given recent policy developments from the DES, Teaching Council and the report of the international review panel published during the life of the study.

6.1.1 Interview respondents

Eight teacher educators were interviewed individually of whom four worked in NI (PPUn1; PPCEd1; PCEd2; PCEd3) and four in RoI ITE (PTE1; PTE2; PPTE1; PPTE2) [see Table 4, Methodology, for full details]. The discussions were recorded and transcribed. There has been an attempt to provide a range of qualitative views from a range of institutions across NI and RoI. However, due to necessary restrictions on sampling, we make no claim that the views presented by our respondents are representative of all ITE institutions or the broader population of ITE staff. They are provided with the intention of adding nuance to the broad-brush findings and as a point-of-departure for wider discussion on the issues raised.

For ease of reference, the following summary key may help in identifying individual respondents’ characteristics:

P = Primary
PP = Post Primary
TE = Teacher Educator
Un = University
CEd = College of Education

In line with the aims of the inquiry, the main themes to emerge from analysis of the interviews are:

- Developing the research capacity of student teachers;
- Perceptions of research and its importance in ITE;
- Publishing concerns;
- Forms of research;
- Collaborative versus individual research;
- Teacher educators’ engagement in research and staff development needs;
- Perceptions of educational research among practicing teachers by ITE educators;
- Future directions.

The interview data are presented under these sub-headings, with the main issues for NI and RoI staff being presented sequentially for ease of presentation and comparison. Key points are illustrated and supported by direct
quotes, with common issues being highlighted and culminating in some discussion of the interviewees’ views on future directions necessary to develop quality and capacity research in ITE. A comparative grid summarises the main similarities and differences across the main themes.

6.2 Developing the research capacity of student teachers

According to the three NI College-based interviewees (PPCEd1; PCEd1 and PCEd2), their ITE courses were informed by aspects of research in specific curriculum subject areas and on areas of learning, teaching and assessment. These aspects of research, however, were not always evident in a manner that was explicit or consistent, thus it could not be referred to as ‘research training’. Aspects of research were identified as incorporated within all four years of the ITE undergraduate courses in NI, becoming progressively more challenging as the courses progressed. In one college, introductions to research, during the first and second years, comprises reflective practice-based observation tasks for student teachers in order that they identity research problems and issues and address these in context: ‘for example, what is the role of the SENCO in the school?, and they [the students] would have to interview the SENCO or teacher in charge of pastoral care’ (PPCEd1). The third year in this ITE programme includes a specific taught module that covers both quantitative and qualitative research methods, and this is aimed at preparing students for two research-based projects that are completed in final year – one which is subject-based and one which is education-based.

In another college, all fourth year undergraduates are required to complete a ‘research-based’ dissertation of eight to ten thousand words. This has been a development since 2012 as prior to this, students could elect to study additional modules instead of engaging in a research dissertation. Students however were reported as having difficulty with this newly-introduced dissertation task, given that they have had little experience of studying research methods (methods the interviewee described as ‘real’ research) up to the point of starting their dissertation:

“They are fired straight into it. They have a couple of workshops about it; the latest one is on ethics and all of the things to consider when doing research with children, and you have the choice of education or curriculum studies. The post-primary students, because they teach a subject, can choose a subject-based dissertation but it must cover up-to-date research thinking’. (PCEd3)

This lecturer also noted that, while reflective practice and action research are not formally taught, in that ‘the students don’t really know it as that’, these concepts underpin and form a large part of their style of reporting and are the basis of assignments for school-based work placements. Instead of a formal module to outline ‘reflective practice’ systematically, it’s this airy-fairy thing that’s almost out in the ether… It’s this thing they pick up from a number of different strands, as they go along their programme it weaves its way through.” For example, reflective practice is a recurrent theme extending through lectures on writing lesson plans to the formative evaluation from the end of their six-week placements. While this participant thought there is ‘no place for it (action research) to be formally taught’ due to time constraints, she did feel that it would be of benefit if those practices were presented more robustly, as students sometimes did not understand the underpinnings and links between reflective practice and action research and thus did not know how to capitalise on these approaches and write and think as critically as they should:

Some of them don’t really understand what they’re doing – it’s not really progressing their knowledge – they say ‘I liked today’s lesson’ – it’s descriptive, not analytical. (PCEd3)

A PGCE university lecturer (PPUn1) spoke of the ways that national initiatives influence current research agendas at university-level and to some extent inform what is taught on the programmes and how research is thus incorporated into the one-year PCE programme. With this course, ‘the latest thinking on diversity and inclusion’ features highly, as topics and ones that are also identified as ‘high up in the research agenda,’ particularly at [the university]. Up-to-date research on inclusion, SEN and other areas such as citizenship are incorporated through additional workshops and in some cases as additionally certificated courses. On the PGCE, research topics that are of current interest in the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in relation to ‘Enhancing Learning and Teaching in Higher Education’ also provide an occasional influence on the taught PGCE programme: ‘It’s all about the
student experience – things like achievement levels and ultimately engaging pupils and students better’. The focus here tends to involve students in pilot work for new feedback and assessment methods, or in peer assisted study, that might be applicable also in schools but not on research tasks per se. However, while time was also a huge restriction on what could be offered in the PGCE curriculum, it was also pointed out that none of the teacher education competences in the NI teacher education framework referred specifically to students improving their awareness of or competence in educational research. This is ‘something that tends to be left for the later stages of CPD when these students will proceed to masters degrees and so on... this despite the PGCE now being accredited at master’s level’.

One of the undergraduate lecturers (Interviewee PCEd3) said that it was ‘preferable’ that ITE lecturers be research active if they were to build research capacity in students. This was seen as modelling good practice and ‘demonstrate[s] that education is constantly changing and highlight[s] the need for research to inform practice [and that] research active lecturers are more likely to be aware of current research by others in the field.’ This implies that variation is likely to exist in the extent to which individual lecturers incorporate current research into their lectures. The argument provided was that this often depends on the orientation of the staff to the value of research and also the degree to which staff members are research active in their subject area or related field(s) of education. Another B.Ed. undergraduate lecturer (PCEd2) described how she and her colleagues ‘would try and bring in research reports and findings and we would discuss papers with them to help give them that wider context and that wider view of what’s going on within education’ (PCEd3). But she was not aware that this was general practice.

While all RoI interviewees felt that their ITE programmes were informed by research, three of the four interviewees (PTE1, PPTE1 and PPTE2) acknowledged that their current ITE programmes afforded limited opportunities for building the research capacity of students. For example PTE1 noted that most students on her three year B.Ed. programme ‘would have engaged in some sort of research in their [subject] elective, and [that] faculty brought research to the attention of students’. The Art teacher education programme in PPTE2’s institution includes an introduction to research focusing almost entirely on qualitative methods and students carry out a reflective practice assignment where they reflect on ‘the Art I practice and the Art I teach’ which carries about ten per cent of overall marks. PPTE2 remarked however that it was only in recent years that they had ‘come up to speed at all in demanding that our students should be au fait with the research literature’.

On the other hand, most students in PTE2’s college availed of the option of a fourth year that would qualify them for an honours degree. Thirty-five per cent of the credits for this extra year are awarded for research – ‘students are getting a good grounding in what it is to be a researcher ... they are identifying an issue in their school and researching it... this is filtering into their classroom practice’.

6.3 Perceptions of research and its importance in ITE

All four NI interviewees believed that formal exposure to modes of research developed students’ critical thinking skills, and helped them to connect theory learned in lectures to the practice they see in classrooms or schools. How widely ITE students were exposed to a variety of modes of research varied greatly and providing students with an appreciation for and grounding in the range of research methods was seen as an aspiration rather than a actuality. Most ITE programmes, they believed, started with the underpinning task of critically appraising practice through reflection, but how far this was built upon to develop wider understandings of research methodology was an unknown. Reflective practice was agreed to be the natural starting-point for ITE since this was as much about developing practice and learning from experience as it was about developing a sense of anything foundational in relation to educational research:

The reflective practice bit is important. Because again when they are out in the classroom in the real world, it’s what they will need to improve their own practice and also the children’s learning. (PCEd2)

It develops practice, and it looks for new ways to improve the ways things are being done. (PPCEd1)
One lecturer felt that teaching practice is the natural antecedent to understanding research in that student teachers ‘primarily need experience from which they can form [research] questions’ (PCEd3). In other words, students’ intellectual curiosity had to be engaged from seeing practice first-hand, and asking research-based questions should follow naturally from that, leading on to considerations of how to design systematic research.

Two of the NI interviewees nonetheless thought it was important that students be exposed explicitly to a more formal academic approach to understanding educational research. Importantly this should lead to the development of critical appraisal of education practice, whereby student teachers develop the capacity to challenge assumptions and have the confidence to refer to evidence, rather than just opinion. An additional rationale for building in educational research was that acquiring basic understanding would be in the interests of the fairly large numbers of NI student teachers who progress academically through enrolling on Masters or doctoral degree programmes: ‘if students who do those postgraduate certificates get into the mind frame that ‘I’m going on to do a Masters or an EdD ... that could mean more engagement with the literature; then you are on a path to getting them to think about research’. (PPUn1).

Engagement with academic research was also seen to be particularly important in the specific educational context of NI. Two of the interviewees [PPUn1 and PCEd2] referred to the importance of NI being a society emerging from conflict and the role that education has been playing in reconciliation and in policy change. They referred to the fact that there had been a significant amount of quality research undertaken in recent years that has led to changes in attitudes as well as changes to educational practice; ‘student teachers ought to be aware of the evidence base for what has been achieved. This is a part of their preparation but unfortunately students’ exposure to this tends to be rather piecemeal - in workshops or through Citizenship education’. (PCEd3) The focus on NI research however should not be restrictive:

We can be very inward-looking in Northern Ireland educationally and it is vital that student teachers develop wider perspectives through awareness of current research by others internationally. This challenges students to think about how other countries approach issues of curriculum, achievement, division, selection and so on, rather than assuming the way we do it is the only way it has to be. ‘What is the evidence?’ I ask them (PCEd2).

Despite recognising the rationale for building educational research capacity in ITE, and the importance of staff being research active to do so effectively, NI interviewees also spoke about the role conflict they experienced; which in some cases could undermine their proposed justification. They referred to the pressures on them to be more research active, to build their own research profiles, coming either from within their place of work through the national research assessment expectations or even from their personal desire for academic development and career progression. Two of them specifically raised fundamental questions about the changing role of the teacher educator and its compatibility with the development of education research capacity:

We have to ask ourselves – what is our job here? Ultimately our job is to prepare young people to teach -effectively, so how ‘research-active’ can I be in a situation where I have so many things on? And how research-active can I ask the students to be when there are so many other things competing for their time? To go back to what our purpose is here – learning to be a good teacher—it’s much more than just research……even though I think it is important, I never want to give anybody a big stick to beat me...about research because I think there is more to teacher education as well. (PPCEd1)

Within the last three years or more, probably, there has been a complete turnaround. We were very much teachers teaching student teachers, and although you used research and journals to keep up to date with what was happening in your area and in education as a whole, an awful pressure has now come upon us to be publishing. (PCEd3)

RoI interviewees generally regarded the development of the research capacity of ITE faculty as being really important.
Research capacity is absolutely essential to what we do at any level as teacher educators... if we’re not engaged in research we are essentially navel gazing... and we’re not preparing students for tomorrow... we are back to sitting with Nellie... The work we do with our students has to be informed by something [other than] the vacuous ‘I taught for five years fifteen years ago and this is what I am drawing on’ (PTE1)

I fully support the notion of research-active teacher educators and teachers... it is crucially important that we have teacher educators and a teaching profession who are actively researching (PPTE2).

PTE2, who would like to see a ‘closer [rather than] a cosier relationship’ between teacher educators and policy makers, felt that ‘the people who are talking about research [should be] demonstrating it’ He believed that it’s ‘fundamental that we are discerning in what’s out there [and] able to mediate appropriate up-to-date research in a way our undergraduates can get to grips with’. However he was acutely aware of the difficulty of matching research with teaching when someone is ‘teaching modules on five or six different programmes ... my particular area is migrant children... if I am publishing and reading journals in that area where’s the come across there?’

Despite their general belief the importance of the research capacity of teacher educators, three of the four RoI interviewees expressed concerns about the impact of research activity on teacher education. PTE1 admitted to being ‘torn’ between the two – ‘while 90% of me thinks that [research activity] diminishes the ITE student experience, it means that people are more focused on policy’. She also noted that ‘teaching of ITE students is a very small part of what we do whereas in the past it was central’ and noted the ‘huge demands’ of being ‘involved in post-graduate studies and continued professional development for teachers’.

RoI interviewees working in post-primary teacher education were rather critical in their approach towards the meaning and importance of research. For example, PPTE1 distinguished between different layers of research activity. These layers varied from the teaching practice (TP) supervisor using her/his

Classroom experience to guide students towards a certain kind of research capacity... to subject methods people with some expertise and some reading ... to those generic who draw from their own experience in areas such as classroom management... to other teacher educators who are looking at wider issues like the culture of the school or the social class or gender mix and you would expect their teaching to be informed by reading and research there... to the gold standard person engaged in cutting edge research in their area... this is often very specialised and has to be translated in order to make use of it in the classroom.

PPTE1 placed the greatest emphasis on self-knowledge ‘where teachers learn about themselves and teaching becomes a kind of a practice which depends on their self-knowledge for success, where they are able to interrogate their classroom experience and the student anchors research in her/his own practice’.

6.4 Publishing concerns

Each of the four NI interviewees indicated independently that there was a pressure to publish, with distinctions evident between those who were employed by differing types of ITE organisations and those on different contracts. The main driver for publication in NI was considered to be the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF 2008-2014) where those employed as lecturers in institutions that were submitting to the REF are required to have four high quality publications (amongst other quality indicators such as research income and research impact). Each submitted piece will be rated by a national panel of experts and will contribute to an overall assessment of research quality for the submitting unit. PPUn1 recognised this as having direct consequences for core research funding for his institution. In this case, the feeling was one of ‘publish or perish’, a regular adage expressed by each of the NI interviewees. The pressure was expressed most strongly by the participant from the university ITE programme but it was also the case for at least one participant from one of the University Colleges. It was recognised that staff employed as teaching assistants did not have the same requirement to be submitted to the REF but an expectation to publish still persists (for promotional purposes) to demonstrate ‘scholarly activity’. Perceived expectations in the colleges regarding scholarly activity hold their own confusions and challenges:
We are constantly being asked for scholarly activity evidence. And it doesn’t matter what scholarly activity it is. I write a report every year, and it’s published on a website. Now that has the same standing in the college as somebody who has published an article in an international journal, which, my feeling is, it shouldn’t be. Now the people who publish in those have lighter teaching timetables, funny enough. To be published in an international journal is a really rigorous academic process, whereas you are talking about three or four nights of reading for the report I write up.. it’s a summary of findings rather than creating something new and intellectually rigorous. (PCEd3)

How would I rate my own research experience? Experience in terms of publishing or action research? If I was to compare myself against other people in the college, I probably would rate myself as ‘satisfactory’. If I was compared to other people externally, it maybe wouldn’t be satisfactory, because it depends on what the expectations are. (PPCEd1)

Indeed, finding the appropriate place to publish findings was seen as a challenge for both teachers and teacher educators as indicated by one interviewee:

It may be that some people engage in small-scale projects, on an action research scale, where they are research active, but this is practitioner research—they are looking at their practice. It probably is publishable, but maybe not in the REF sense of the word. If you’re in a school, the appropriate place to publish might be actually online, where your materials can contribute to the library of teaching resources and others’ practice – in many ways that is publication, but not in the university sense...whereas working on the PGCE, the appropriate place might be a journal of higher education. But it’s difficult to know how those are rated. So the answer would be, there is sometimes frustration that you can’t find the proper outlet for what you want to write. (PPUn1)

Two NI participants emphasised their dilemmas and felt that it was important that the pressures experienced did not make them cynical about research and let those feelings spill over to students. They also questioned support for staff publications. They indicated that despite the pressure and desire to be research active, motivation to engage in research was still fundamental – specifically centring on deciphering which ideas are worth researching and publishing. NI universities and colleges offered staff development sessions to encourage and support ITE staff in publishing but concerns persist about this approach:

I don’t believe staff development sessions are key at all to encouraging people to engage in research. I think fundamentally there needs to be intellectual curiosity, a question, a need to know, an idea to develop; this is what motivates research. (PCEd2)

You have to look at what’s worth publishing, and what people could learn from the work. If it is novel and a contribution, then I think I would do it, yeah, rather than publish for publishing sake. That’s what motivates me. (PPUn1)

Pressures to publish were also reported in RoI, although mixed views were expressed regarding the impact of increased research activity on teacher education. Remarking ‘that publish or perish’ has also been the underlying rule of survival in the RoI academic world for quite a while now’, one participant acknowledged that it was becoming a more powerful force – ‘winning funding is the main agenda, publishing in refereed journals is ahead of books’. At the same time he had ‘never felt threatened by it’ and did not think it was putting pressure on teacher educators. As for its effect on ITE, he felt that in the context of a one year PG programme, the publication record of the teacher educator had ‘more to do with appearance’ insofar as ‘students feel a bit more reassured if they know their lecturers have published’. At the same time he was ‘hoping for more student engagement in a [the incoming] two year programme where students would use their site for research [and] research agenda would come on to the menu in a central way’.

In the opinion of PPTE2 (RoI) much of the published literature makes ‘very little contribution to teacher education’. He was particularly critical of the current tendency to see ‘published papers as the beginning and the end of
the professional career’ and of ‘the whole discourse of publish or perish [where] people spend so much time generating papers for the CV’.

Coming from a department that provides concurrent and consecutive teacher education in Art and Design, PPTE2 introduced an interesting understanding of research – ‘what we mean by research in art and design [is] a distinct form of practice-based research, very much akin to action research’. In this scenario, exhibitions would be seen as an appropriate research outcome for academics. And he felt that the same rules should apply to teacher educators who develop resources, present workshops etc. so that ‘their outcomes should not be totally measured by publications’. This approach suggests a viable approach towards the current dilemma regarding recognition for curriculum and teacher research and development activities which may have a greater impact on education policy than publications in high-index journals.

The two RoI primary teacher educators interviewed expressed fewer reservations regarding the involvement of teacher educators in research activity. PTE1 remarked that, ’while very few colleagues had PhDs in 2000, today people are publishing at a rate they never did before’ while PPTE2 noted that his (fairly small) department ‘will shortly be in a position where most of our staff have a doctorate of some form’ and he emphasised that, in the case of new ITE appointments, there should be greater emphasis ‘on research experience and outputs’.

Referring to her own research around teacher identity, PTE1 recalled that, while pressure to publish had clearly increased, it was difficult to ‘say where the pressure was coming from… it’s certainly not coming from the college, it goes back to competitive individualism and self-motivation, what gives them recognition in academia is publishing in refereed journals’.

6.5 Forms of research

NI interviewees identified qualitative methods, such as reflective practice, and action research, along with critical engagement with educational literature, as the main forms of research that were referred to in ITE programmes. They regarded these as key tools in their own work with students because such approaches can readily overcome the challenge of research being perceived as dissociated from everyday teaching. With undergraduate students, these methods were viewed as helpful for identifying themes and issues in practice, for placing their work within the wider research body, and for helping students subsequently ‘make a difference in a classroom and come up with solutions’ (PPUn1). The link to the broader range of qualitative methodology however was rarely made.

The NI interviewees referred to quantitative research as still being seen as the ‘gold standard’ and also recognised that understanding basic quantitative methods and statistics was vital for interrogating a wide range of aspects associated with present day schooling. Nevertheless they considered quantitative methods were probably not adequately covered during ITE. Valuable aspects of quantitative research identified for ITE included; competence in the interpretation and comparison of student results, comprehending baseline data sets, interpreting school league tables, understanding inspection reports and school improvement measures, and appraising policy evidence. PPCEd1 said that having statistical knowledge was increasingly vital given ‘the general, pervasive obsession with measurement in education and schooling.’ Notwithstanding this, the participants were unsure of how much of this was undertaken but thought that building students’ capacity in these methodological skills was likely to be very varied in their institutions and would be dependent on what was covered in general lectures as well as what was taught directly in some subject/methods classes. They were not aware of any general training for students in quantitative research approaches ‘outside of subject areas like geography or maths or science, where understanding statistics is often central’ (PCEd2) or in basic preparation for undertaking a dissertation. (PPCEd1)

Both RoI Primary teacher educators identified the need for balance between quantitative and qualitative research training during ITE. PTE1 identified the need for teachers to have ‘some ability to analyse statistics and engage with PISA results, standardised tests, STEM scores’. She felt that ‘it’s unbalanced at the moment’ with most of her colleagues ‘coming from a qualitative paradigm and very few from a quantitative background’.
PTE2 felt that students ‘have to be able to look at’ both approaches, adding that ‘policy documents will be informed more than likely from a quantitative perspective... there’s no getting away from that’. However he recognised that action research is ‘something teachers can run with more easily than quantitative [and that] it’s very difficult to do action research without a grounding in qualitative methods’. The research module that he teaches is ‘mostly qualitative with some quantitative’ and he ‘tries to steer them away from mixed methods because the project is such a short piece of work’.

The RoI post-primary interviewees saw action research as the most important form, ‘given the importance of quality of learning and the qualitative question, [the question is] how can I improve myself’ (PPTE1). Recalling his own experience in curriculum development activity, PPTE2 was ‘very committed to the notion of the reflective practitioner’ and he regretted that ‘the pendulum has swung so that even the people engaged in that sort of developmental work see the publication of the research activity as more important than the actual work itself’. He would like to see greater recognition for forms of practice that are ‘not pure research in that classic academic sense but are inherent to the professional practice of teacher education [and] should be valued [such as] work with teachers, schools’. At the same time he conceded that ‘we neglect the quantitative [and it is] important if only for people to be able to engage with it’.

6.6 Collaborative versus individual research

Collaboration between teacher educators, on the one hand, and teachers and teacher-tutors in schools, on the other, was regarded as an important strategy to advance research and improve capacity and expertise in NI education research. Opportunities for research collaboration were seen as varied and collaboration was interpreted broadly to include belonging to national and international networks, in addition to more local collaborations within and between colleges/universities and other institutions on research ventures. The latter included reference to various North-South (SCoTENS) collaborations, regarded as vital to research capacity-building in NI, especially for ITE staff.

Despite the generally positive orientation to collaborative research, the research assessment culture (e.g. for REF) was seen as running counter to collaboration because it ‘places emphasis on submitting four high quality research-based articles, which cannot have shared authorship with any colleague in your own institution. This obviously puts pressure on colleagues working together as you have to produce twice [the number of] quality articles for you both to be submitted. It doesn’t inhibit collaboration outside however...in fact this is often seen as a plus’ (PPUn1).

Collaborations were not always easy; accordingly, they were something that were seen as taking time to build and finding time was always a problem for busy ITE staff. PPUn1 also spoke of how it took time to ‘get a name’ for a particular area of interest in terms of research in the field and when this happens, it opens up possibilities for wider research networking:

I am interested e-learning, and once you get a name for that, then if somebody gets an article or a conference invite, they are likely to send those to me. But recognition only comes along through time. It didn’t happen when I originally joined, because people didn’t know me.

However, once networks are established, this means of sharing ideas and information between staff was viewed as an important method for ‘thinking about what are the current topics in teaching and research’ (PPUn1) and in some cases, applying for funding and carrying out joint research projects. PPCEd1 reported how some of her colleagues were involved in collaborative international research-type projects (EU-funded) but she found that, although there were definite benefits, such activities put additional time pressures on staff members in light of their existing work-loads. In this case, the team had managed to complete the work without the support of research assistants or research fellows ‘to help them out’. However, if properly funded to allow time and to include research support, such international collaborations were perceived as potentially helpful for staff to engage more effectively in educational research. Experiences such as these, she argued, could give staff greater insight into research design and fieldwork, as well as funding streams to obtain larger research projects, whereby ‘staff would be encouraged to put together their own applications to conduct research in the future’. There were also instances
identified of ITE staff in universities and colleges collaborating together on research projects and also examples of research teams from the two universities engaging together on educational research but ITE colleagues rarely had a leading role. Collaboration therefore was not considered to be systematic, and the impetus for collaborative research was often found to be fractured as a result of competition over funding and the need to excel in the research assessment exercises.

NI interviewees additionally believed that building teachers’ research capacity was vital. There was a view that teachers should be encouraged to collaborate in order to form their own ‘communities of research and practice’, since ‘people learn quickly from engaging with other professionals and as a group ...it is an endorsement of what you do’. [PPUn1] This opinion was reiterated by another of the B.Ed interviewees; she regarded collaboration as valuable but noted that teachers in NI did not have the same platforms and networked communities that are available in other parts of the UK, ‘where teachers question, reflect on their practice, develop ideas about how they teach, and engage in action research, [and] where they are endeavouring to move education forward... platforms where teachers have a voice and can air their thoughts and share best practice’ (PCEd2). Examples of such platforms included, the Best Practice Research Scholarship Programme (which DfES funded in England and Wales between 2000-2004 to promote teachers’ engagement in small-scale classroom-based research) and, to some extent, Area Learning Communities (ALCs) in NI. PPCEd1 said that there are a large number of ALCs in NI that engage schools, FE Colleges and other providers in innovative and creative approaches to collaborative working. These also include communication through social media, such as twitter pages, blogs, internet radio, and learning festivals. These ALCs, it seems, do not have a research focus but one of the interviewees (PPCEd1) felt that, given their apparent effectiveness, this was an area for future development, perhaps linking in with ITE. The argument developing here is that for effective education research capacity building in NI, attention also needs to be paid to research engagement with the entire education community not just those involved in higher education.

While RoI survey respondents were generally more involved in individual rather than collaborative research [as emerged from the survey], interviewees were very well-disposed towards collaborative work. PTE1 commented that ‘a lot of the stuff on the national stage’ is collaborative while others drew attention to the influence of European funding:

The only money around now is at European level and you need your three partners for that [PTE2]

Most of our external funding is on basis of collaborative projects where we are part of a team with other institutions, for example the second phase of an EU Comenius project with six other EU countries. (PPTE2)

At the same time, some interesting anomalies emerged in relation to the issue of collaborative and individual research. PTE1 noted that ‘we talk to students about the importance of collaboration yet in many ways we are in egg crates... and competitive individualism is on the rise’. She also noted the anomaly that, whereas education faculty members in her department had ‘collaborated on developing the revised programme, at research level there’s a drive to publish 50 million articles in your own name’ adding that ‘what gets recognition in the academy is publications in refereed journals, books’.

PPTE1 was acutely aware of the individual competitiveness of PDE students and their reluctance to share their resources, ideas and written reflections on teaching. While recognising the importance of engaging student teachers in collaborative research and acknowledging that the collaborative approach to research ‘gives one a lot of publications’, he himself preferred ‘individual research because...in terms of originality and authorship, you are more in control... your name is there and it means something’. Indeed he felt that ‘there’s an element of dumbing down in the collaborative... when one hires in a researcher to do the research, that’s a form of surrogacy... it’s second- and third-hand research’.

Noting that teacher educators ‘don’t utilise the literature enough’, PPTE2 identified the need for collaborative research projects where the ‘voice of the teacher was included and the outcomes were owned by teachers’.
6.7 Teacher educators’ engagement in research and staff development needs

NI interviewees expressed some consternation about how being ‘research-active’ is defined for teacher educators and the competing demands on their time to carry out other responsibilities. The issue of perceived differentials in resourcing for research emerged as an issue. One college interviewee believed that the ‘research-activity’ of teacher educators needed to be defined as ‘dealing with things on a small scale, like action research or developing my own practice [because] I could never and would never want to compare myself with someone from [a University] who has a research assistant to go and do the interviews for them and hand over a transcription’. Resources, such as staff support, were not the only challenge to being research-active in the traditional sense. Nevertheless, resourcing was also an issue for university ITE as having such resources depended on successfully obtaining grants and according to PPUn1, ‘these are not always easy to come by’. Time was the main issue. Three of the interviewees described their heavy teaching timetables and the time limits that put on what was achievable in terms of research:

I teach 25 hours a week, so the research is almost affecting my teaching, because I’m having to constantly think about the actual research I’m doing, whereas before I would have been coming home and preparing and planning what I was going to teach students. So from that point of view, yes, I do believe it’s important but it’s also about that work-life-research balance that you need. (PCEd3)

Along with a colleague a few years ago, we did interviews with [subject] teachers. It took me ages to transcribe those. The whole thing just became too big a task for me. As much as I would love to pursue that type of research and follow it through because I know the data are interesting, I just don’t have the time. (PPCEd1)

I would dearly like to do more and I know the Head of School would dearly like me to do more, but I would also dearly like to have a life! (PPUn1)

These statements illustrate some of the competing pressures experienced. The comments highlight that if teacher educators are involved in research activity themselves, they have less time to actually prepare their lectures to a high quality and also lead a balanced life. As another lecturer states:

In an ideal world I think [academic research] would be very valuable, especially as it leads to improving your practice and gives you more knowledge about what you are interested in and you can bring that to what you are teaching the students. I think [the College] needs to realise that if they want us to be research-active, they need to support us to be research-active. (PCEd3)

Financial cutbacks within higher education budgets (reduction in student numbers leading to loss of staff) have also resulted in teacher educators taking on many more roles and responsibilities than they had before, and this has eaten further into the time available for research:

I’ve also changed roles quite a bit – there are a lot of personnel changes with people going, so you are taking on new courses, new roles, more responsibility, so the time pressure is on all the time thus reducing time for research. (PPUn1)

Due to financial cutbacks, my College has chosen to give me more admin responsibilities on top of those I already have, which makes finding time for research increasingly difficult. One solution that has been suggested to me is that I give up research! (PCEd2)

Some interviewees had enrolled on taught doctoral (EdD) programmes at the same time as the cutbacks were taking place. One felt that this showed how the College she worked at valued and encouraged research and the development of her research competence. However another participant was struggling with the competing demands involved and felt that the content of the doctoral programme was not always helpful in terms of encouraging the research skills that it was supposed to enhance:
I have to give the college great credit – they paid for the EdD for me, which is certainly a great way of developing my expertise. So they obviously see the value in research. (PPCEd1)

We were basically told to do an EdD three years ago... I think when you’re teaching, you don’t have time for all this... The EdD is trying to give us examples of various types of research...some of it is very research-based and I found this really useful because it gave me an insight to how you do research, whereas other aspects are very theoretical - this does not really help you with how you go about doing research. (PCEd3)

Clearly there were increasing research expectations expressed by the NI interviewees. On occasion, this was seen as being matched with support and investment in the development of their researcher identities. Nevertheless the general feeling was one of ‘being squeezed’ by the increasing pressure arising from other roles and the lack of time for research through any work allocation model. Other research capacity-building measures referred to included attending seminars at various colleges and universities, attending and giving papers at local and national conferences/symposia and being supported through the range of research courses offered in the universities. These measures were often suggested as responses to research development needs identified during appraisal but there were not always opportunities to attend these given other competing priorities.

Staff mentoring was also identified as having value for research capacity-building. Some of the NI ITE institutions did provide mentoring in the form of more experienced researchers working alongside and involving early career or recently-appointed staff in funded research. PPCEd1 felt that a mentoring system – ‘somebody that could give me a push in the right direction and make suggestions as to what I could do and set me achievable goals-would work well for developing research activity, even amongst staff who have been in ITE for some time’. While this approach was available, there appeared to be a general lack of certainty about how effectively staff mentoring was being used to support ITE staff in the development of their research aspirations and competence. The interviewees themselves had rarely availed of it, having obtained their research development elsewhere (e.g. through doctoral programmes) or through undertaking small-scale individual research projects.

All the RoI interviewees had also experienced great difficulty finding time for research.

I have a heavy admin role coordinating the B.Ed so my research time comes at weekends I wouldn’t have a hope of a research day or afternoon... and people involved in curricular areas would have little time because they have a huge number of workshops ... the disciplines in education have more space, not doing the small group activity work that the vast majority of people in education are... they have them in large year groups.... (PTE1)

I can only give it a very minimal proportion of my time, it’s outside of the working week... research goes down to the end of the line [due to] the demands of teacher education. (PTE2)

[While my institution] has a long standing practice of one day per week for research purposes... my research is done almost invariably my own time (PPTE2)

I see research time as time snatched... I couldn’t say I am going to do research this afternoon except by staying away from office emails especially when involved in admin so you have to be available... research and admin time are contradictory animals, you have to get away to a lib with phone switched off... (PPTE1)

PPTE1 also remarked that time spent on student supervision in schools was ‘a dead loss research-wise unless one is able to use the time for research purposes... going in to supervise you have to fill out several pages, that’s different to pursuing a research issue unless for example you wanted to look at research styles’.

The same respondent felt that there was ‘admiration for people who get the [research] grants’ with the result that many people feel that ‘their little bit of research is irrelevant to the big picture... that it is too small, not important enough’.
PPTE2 felt that the process of recruiting teacher educators into university departments was being increasingly driven by a ‘limited concept of research rather than practice and development’ which meant that the profile of teacher educators had changed, with ‘people frequently appointed on the basis of their research background with little or no practical teaching experience’.

RoI respondents noted limitations in regard to staff development provision for research capacity building. For example, PPTE1 remarked that research-related staff development courses in his university ‘are on a university wide basis and they tend to be a little bit generic… it seems fine at the time but washes out then quickly’. His primary concern is with increasing the performance rather than research capacity of those working on the PDE, particularly part-time staff though providing in-service courses in areas such as literacy and mentoring.

While PPTE2’s institution does not have a structured staff development programme, individual staff members can identify staff development fields they want to engage in which may include research. However, he was unsure as to whether that budget heading would ‘survive the cuts’. His institution has a graduate school of research across the college, involving staff and research students, and there is also a research institute that ensures some time off teaching for staff members who are accepted.

Neither of the primary teacher educators was particularly positive about the staff development available to them:

Provision is middling... we get a conference allowance, we do have regular research seminars throughout semester one and two where people present their current work... that’s voluntary, depending on whether you have time [PTE1]

We have seed funding, research seminars, good support for conference attendance... a lot are involved with SCoTENS, not much beyond that... many of our staff are close to completing doctorates... doing studies outside jurisdiction.

6.8 Perceptions of educational research among practicing teachers by ITE educators

All four of the NI interviewees were relatively sceptical about the feasibility of classroom teachers engaging in formal academic research, seeing it as the ideal rather than the norm:

Having been a teacher – I’m only lecturing the last six years – teachers don’t really, from my own experience, they don’t really ‘do’ research of the academic type.. And ...I would very rarely have used it in my teaching, and the experience of my colleagues would be that they very rarely would have used it in their teaching within schools. [PCEd3]

Probably the closest we come to this in NI is in expecting teachers to become reflective practitioners, and those who engage in research via Masters (or Doctoral) degrees. My experience of teachers is that many are keen to engage in research, they have ideas, they know what the problems are, but other pressures such as school structures, time, exams, etc. stifle it....it isn’t surprising that NI teacher educators rated their research experience as no more than satisfactory. Most teacher educators in the colleges were teachers, and there hasn’t been a culture of research in teaching. [PCEd2]

However, the university lecturer in ITE felt that teachers’ perceptions of their research capacity are low:

What the teachers might be saying is that they don’t perceive themselves as satisfactory researchers, but ...I might say ‘you are doing practitioner research every day; you are trying something out and evaluating how it works’. They are active researchers in their practice, but they don’t see it that way. [PPUn1]

While there were perceived barriers to teachers engaging systematically in research, this was distinguished from the increasing number of teachers that were seen to be interested in the processes and outcomes of research in NI. The interviewees reflected that those engaged in educational research in HE now must consider not only dissemination of findings to wider audiences but also the impact of research. This has led in some instances
to more imaginative attempts to involve teachers in research conversations through, for example, practitioner workshops, research advisory boards and steering groups. This seems to be raising the levels of discourse about research between practitioners and researchers, which is seen as having a knock-on effect on research capacity-building in NI. PPUn1 noted “we have noticed an increase in the numbers of headteachers and teachers attending research seminars and conferences here, even after a long day, if the times are planned right”.

All RoI respondents were somewhat pessimistic regarding practicing teachers’ perceptions of educational research. For example PPTE2 remarked that ‘practicing teachers have always had a jaundiced view of research … and student teachers echo what they hear in the staffroom’. PTE2 felt that research is ‘quite low’ on the agenda of teachers. He emphasised the importance of ‘journal articles and books’ in relation to current educational issues and criticised the dissemination of research findings in the primary teacher union magazine, giving the example of ‘a recent most bland piece on migrant kids [which was] mostly common sense’. His concern was that, ‘if that’s how research is being seen’ it’s little wonder that teachers have negative attitudes. In his view teacher educators ‘are bad at putting themselves out there, making statements and this feeds in to the view of research that practicing teachers have… to raise the perception of education research we have to get more savvy about how to get the message out’.

PTE1 felt that practicing teachers’ views of teacher education are ‘rather divided… older teachers do not regard it as important though finding themselves pushed into this area by the Minister while young teachers would have engaged with it to inform their own practice’. She emphasised that ‘parents are now demanding evidence on students at parent teacher meetings’ certainly in more middle class schools, while in the case of DEIS schools there is ‘increasing surveillance of test scores with teachers having to deal with statistics on a half yearly basis’.

PPTE2 indicated that ‘we don’t make enough use’ of the many teachers who have completed MEds while PPTE1 remarked that those ‘teachers who don’t have any hunger for postgraduate studies do not see any relevance in research… they talk about ivory towers, irrelevance’.

6.9 Future Directions

NI interviewees considered that the future for educational research capacity-building in ITE lay mainly in strengthening practitioner/or action-based research within ITE programmes. At present this approach, inherent in the concepts of reflective practice and ‘the reflective practitioner’, remains too haphazard and ad hoc. They identified that there is a clear epistemological basis to such approaches which needs to be strengthened and expressed more coherently, with the links between reflective practice and action/practitioner research being made more explicit. PPCEd1 noted the potential benefits of high-quality practitioner research and saw the current challenge in terms of how to ensure this is ‘properly integrated across programmes, such that ITE students can then build and extend their skills more extensively in the areas of qualitative and quantitative research through ongoing CPD’. The problems identified related to finding time-efficient ways to do this, as well as convincing/up-skilling some staff and revisiting the teacher competency model that underpins teacher education to ensure that there is an explicit and appropriate reference to developing research capacity in ITE.

Additionally, the current ways of linking with teachers through school partnerships and ALCs should be extended to promote the dissemination of quality research findings and build relationships. The NI interviewees feel this would contribute to the ‘popularisation of research’ as well as the ‘theorisation of teaching and learning, which has tended to fall off the radar in recent times’. [PPUn1]

It was noted that there has been a lot of progress in research activity within ITE in NI in recent years and a number of UK nationally-based initiatives (eg ESRC/TLRP) as well as SCoTENS have supported this. Nevertheless, the interviewees indicated that much remains to be done to strengthen initial teacher educators’ research identities and improve research quality. While ITE lecturers are presently encouraged and supported to be research active, ways have to be found to make more time available for research in order to reduce stress. Only by managements responding constructively to the current role conflict will ITE staff be able to provide positive role models as practitioner researchers that are also engaged in individual and/or collaborative research. Work load models that
facilitate time for research funding applications, staff development and the publication of quality outputs (across a range of fora) are seen as crucial.

Overall, the interviewees identified the need for a more co-ordinated, ‘joined-up’ approach across NI supported by key stakeholders, for example, the Universities Council for Teacher Education (UCET NI), the General Teaching Council (GTCNI) and also by the DE inspectorate and the relevant departments of education. Given the small size of ITE units across NI, currently, and with little hope of this changing in the near future, (‘we have tried to merge and it failed’) most of the respondents felt that it was timely and economically prudent to share expertise and work together on issues of educational significance and mutual research interest. This, they felt, would offer a more productive way forward than the current piecemeal approaches, based on competition between individuals and institutions. More confident and competent research active staff should, they argued, lead to improved ITE programmes with educational research more at their heart.

All RoI respondents thought the imminent extension of the duration of the B.Ed. and/or PDE would enhance building of research capacity. For example PTE1 drew attention to ‘the Teaching Council requirement that there would be a research component to the programme’. She explained that students on their new four year B.Ed programme would take a ‘module in research methods with 24 contact hours plus independent reading that will feed into their research project in Year 4… [including] reflection seminars where they will have to critically engage with journal articles’. That project will be linked with the minor elective e.g. early childhood, literacy while ‘action research, which will happen from year one… will be distinct from the project’. She did express concerns about the feasibility of providing supervision for ‘425 students all doing a research project in year four [and] how real that will be for students and the danger that it will become bureaucratic compliance… going through the motions’.

PTE2 identified the need for proper research funding structures at national level. And he hit a note of realism when he said that, even if the B.Ed. was five years long, ‘we could not expect students to be able to engage in research at the same level [say] as academics at a conference’.

The primary sector is one year ahead of the post-primary sector in terms of programme review. While PPTE1 was optimistic about the advantages of the longer programme, he was not as far advanced in his thinking as primary teacher educators about how this time would be deployed. However he saw ‘the two year programme [as] a new game… [and hoped that] the research agenda would come on to the menu in a central way’ and support the move from competitive individualism to collaboration ‘thus increasing research capacity in a way that’s not possible when you are on your own [and] moving away from the current competitive culture’. And he would like to see the development of a ‘research module given by practicing teachers and ourselves [which] would increase research capacity’.

While PPTE2 felt that the extension of the PDE to two years ‘at level 9 or at Master’s level would ensure that it is research-led or – based, in keeping with the recent report of the international reviewers’, he was concerned about the future of research capacity-building in the context of the four year concurrent programme for two reasons: the relative immaturity of these younger students and the fact that the duration of the programme remains the same.

PPTE2 would like to see teacher education programmes reflect four forms of research, possibly in a sequential fashion, though he felt that this would be more appropriate for post-graduate than concurrent programmes:

- Research-led: research about teaching and learning; research-oriented, developing student research skills and practices; research-based, where students actually undertake research; research-tutored, where research findings provide the basis for discussion and reflection.

6. 10. Conclusions

There is consensus among teacher education interviewees both in RoI and NI regarding the following:

- The importance of developing the research capacity of student teachers alongside some scepticism regarding the feasibility of engaging student teachers more fully.
The need for the concept of ‘research-active’ to be interrogated fully within the context of ITE;

The importance of the perceived relationship between research activity on the part of ITE staff and the quality of ITE provision;

The strong emphasis on reflective practice and practitioner-based research in ITE but its value in research terms not being recognised or valued sufficiently;

The growing sense of an identity crisis for teacher educators in view of the increasing emphasis on research output (particularly in Northern Ireland);

The growing pressure on teacher educators to complete doctorates and to ‘publish or perish’;

The significant time pressures as ITE educators attempt to combine research with teaching and teacher education activities and the need for this issue to be addressed for research to flourish in ITE;

A shared sense of scepticism regarding classroom teachers’ levels of capacity or interest in engagement with formal research and their perceptions of its relevance for everyday practice;

The contribution of SCoTENS and EU Projects to the promotion of collaborative research.

Some interesting contrasts also emerged between respondents in the two jurisdictions include:

More attention has been paid to the research training of student teachers in NI (with particular reference to current issues) than in the RoI;

While pressure to publish is strongly felt in both jurisdictions, participation in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) is seen as the main reason for such pressure in NI, whereas teacher educators in the Republic of Ireland are motivated more by considerations of promotion and competitive individualism;

There appears to be more emphasis on the mentoring of researchers in N I than in the RoI;

Notwithstanding problems indication that collaborative research is more common practice in NI than RoI;

The engagement of practising teachers in the processes and outcomes of research is viewed as having more potential for education research capacity-building in NI;

ITE in the RoI is set for major changes in view of the recent Guidelines from the Teaching Council of Ireland and the recent report of the international review panel introduced earlier;

NI interviewees would like to see a more co-ordinated approach to teacher education with a strengthening of practitioner or school-based action research;

The contrasting treatment of research-related issues by the two Teaching Councils insofar as it does not feature among the current set of competences set down by the NI body whereas its importance is recognised in the parallel RoI body’s Guidelines for Initial Education Programmes.
Chapter 7: Distilling the Evidence: Some Implications for Policy and Practice?

Introduction

In a structured and systematic manner, this section identifies what is considered to be the most salient elements of the evidence presented in earlier sections, to connect these to the wider literature and in the process signal significance for policy and practice, while being circumspect also about the warrants of the research. We do this in three ways. First, we identify emergent points of comparison between teacher educators (NI and RoI) that we consider have significance in shaping the future of ITE and the nature and role of research within it. Second, we address as succinctly as possible each of the research questions, extrapolating findings from earlier sections, summarising what we consider most notable while orienting our discussion of this evidence towards agenda setting as a means of shaping the future without circumscribing possibilities. The section concludes with a summary of the research questions, the evidence accumulated to address them, and the most important implications we identify for policy and practice as a means of setting institutional and national/international agenda.

Emergent ‘Themes’

From a comparative perspective, the following ‘findings’ emerge as being worthy of identification and comment. These are:

(i) Whereas one NI Course Director reported that her/his institution enrolled more than 100 students annually, half the RoI Course Directors reported similar enrolment levels with 25% of them reporting enrolment levels in excess of 300 each year (Table 2).

(ii) The staffing levels of NI teacher education Departments appear to be more generous with 9% of RoI Course Directors having less than five full-time staff working in teacher education and only 36% having in excess of twenty six as against 44% in NI.

(iii) While two-thirds of respondents in each jurisdiction were holders of doctorates, it would appear from Table 4 that NI teacher educators are more likely to be promoted to Senior Lecturer than their RoI counterparts. Almost two-thirds of RoI respondents are employed at Lecturer level (either above or below the bar) whereas over half of NI respondents are Senior Lecturers (57%).

(iv) According to Table 6 the vast majority of teacher educators in both jurisdictions had some teaching experience at primary and/or post-primary with the majority having between 1-5 years’ experience.

Summary: Staffing of teacher education is more generous in Northern Ireland with tighter control of numbers being accepted into programmes. The majority of survey respondents in both jurisdictions have teaching experience at primary and/or post-primary.

Discussion/ Implications

Evidence suggests that in the RoI, ITE within the Universities (as opposed to the Colleges of Education) has been treated as a ‘cash cow’ (see Hyland, 2012), recommendations in the report by Sahlberg et al., (2012), strongly suggest that funding for the proposed Institutes of Education should be ring-fenced for teacher education only, and this is likely to be of benefit in improving staff-student ratios. Additionally, since the Teaching Council (2011) in its Criteria and Guidelines recommends a staff-student ratio of 1:15, and this is being insisted upon as part of the accreditation of new programmes, despite austerity, and on the assumption that teacher education continues to be publicly funded, these policy targets are likely to be achieved in the near future. To give substance to this possibility however, there needs to be a strategic approach to staffing of teacher education. While currently efforts are being made to project future teacher needs within the RoI, particularly in the post-primary sector, an exclusive focus on student numbers, without adequate attention to staffing may result in depleted research capacity rather than the converse, something that is necessary in pedagogical content knowledge (see Sahlberg et al., 2012). There is recognition that in the absence of a research policy for education and an appropriate dedicated budget, rationalisation alone without capacity building measures, is likely to undermine further the fragile fabric of teacher education capability.
As we turn attention to the research questions and the evidentiary warrants provided by the research, we are mindful of the significance of evidence, its interpretation and implications for policy and practice. Consequently, we consider it necessary and appropriate, at the risk of some duplication, to reproduce key findings in response to each of the research questions. Thereafter, these findings are discussed with a view to identifying their possible implications from a policy/practice perspective as a means of giving direction to ITE and the 'teaching continuum' more generally.

Q 1 What are the underpinning assumptions regarding concepts of research in initial teacher education in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland?

I. Interviewees generally identified the need for a coherent policy regarding research training for student teachers in both jurisdictions and emphasised the need to ‘unpack’ the meaning of research in the context of ITE.

II. Virtually all survey respondents saw the development of students’ research capacity as part of their brief as teacher educators (Table 20) for a variety of reasons including (Table 14) the promotion of high quality teaching and learning, where teachers’ content and pedagogies are up-to-date and meaningful; the development of student teachers’ enquiry and problem-solving capacities; encouraging students to see the relationship between theory and practice and the linking of education policy and practice.

III. More than half the survey respondents (particularly from RoI) rated the importance of research in relation to reflective practice, preparation for teaching and specialist subject methods (Chart 6) as very important while its importance in relation to Foundation Studies was not rated as highly.

IV. While recognising the importance of developing the research capacity of student teachers so as to provide critical reflection on and analysis of education policy and practice, interviewees were generally sceptical regarding the feasibility of engaging student teachers in more formal research activity and/or regarding the relevance of much of the existing research literature to initial teacher education.

V. Virtually all survey respondents rated the development of the research knowledge and skills of ITE students as either important or very important with two-thirds saying very important.

VI. Survey respondents in both jurisdictions saw knowledge and skills in the areas of literature searching, practitioner/action research and the interpretation of research reports/evidence as particularly important (Tables 11 and 12). The preparation of research reports was deemed least important followed by an understanding of qualitative and quantitative research methods.

VII. The vast majority of survey respondents in both jurisdictions regarded reflective practice as a form of research and rated the importance of developing associated research knowledge and skills as very important or important (Tables 11 and 12).

VIII. The importance of action/practitioner-based research also emerged strongly from the interviews with teacher educators. The relationship between reflective practice and action or practitioner research was not always made explicit in programmes and there was an expressed desire for a more coherent, clearly articulated approach. RoI interviewees noted the importance of balance between qualitative and quantitative methods being presented to students while NI interviewees emphasised the practical importance of quantitative methods for student teachers.

IX. Interviewees expressed scepticism regarding practicing teachers’ levels of interest in research findings. NI interviewees noted the potential role of school/university partnerships in relation to the importance of dissemination and impact strategies for educational researchers while the role that in-career teachers who had completed PG courses was mentioned in RoI as a means of building capacity.

Summary

While most respondents were positively disposed towards the development of the research capacity of student teachers for a variety of reasons including the promotion of quality teaching and learning, they also identified the need for a coherent policy in relation to research and wished to see the unpacking of the meaning of research in this context. They identified the knowledge and skills associated with reflective practice and practitioner-based research as being of particular importance along with the skills of literature searching and interpreting research reports and evidence. They expressed scepticism however in relation to the feasibility of engaging student teachers more formally in research activity, the relevance of much published research to student teachers and the levels of interest of practicing teachers in research, although this was being actively fostered in some quarters in NI.
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Discussion/Implications

While respondents in both jurisdictions were positive about the development of research capacity in student teachers, they regarded reflective practice as the most relevant aspect of research during initial teacher education — but one that needs to be built upon more systematically. This resonates with the policies and teacher competence/standards set down in both jurisdictions. What the current study did not explore was the possible multiplicity of understandings of practitioner-based and action-research held by teacher educators, although the data clearly suggests that the main focus is understandably on professional practice in the context of the practicum. As discussions in section 2 indicated, it is largely the case that in the RoI more general discussions regarding the nature of educational research and its implications for ITE and the teaching continuum are largely in their infancy at best. This is an obvious arena in which teacher educators are well-placed to lead such a critical debate with a view to shaping policy and practice. In asserting this, it is necessary also to recognise that such debates need to be open-ended and will continue to be contested.

While Irish teacher educators expressed reservations regarding practicing teachers’ views of research it is worth noting that levels of engagement with research in some other jurisdictions are advancing. Cruice (2011) argues that some English schools in the National Teacher Research Panel have a ‘growing [even] vibrant research culture’ with teachers accessing research motivated by professional development through knowledge. Cruice portrays a picture of a teaching profession which is increasingly willing and able to improve the experience of student teachers as a result of engaging in and with research. This may be a rather rose-tinted view of the general state of affairs in England but is certainly something that might be increasingly modeled in schools, especially where networks within and between schools exist or are growing. This is increasingly the case in NI where networks of schools engaged, for example, in CPD could provide particularly fertile soil for the creation of research-empowered practitioners and models of good practice for new and student teachers through Area Learning Communities or Shared Education. On a cautionary note however, there is also evidence of a government intention in England to drive a school improvement initiative linked with practitioner research activities across both initial and continuing teacher education. While this might integrate practitioner research it flies in the face of empowering teachers, one of the intentions of practitioner research. These cautionary tales are particularly relevant in the RoI at a time when school-university partnerships are being negotiated and formalized in response to recent Teaching Council policy prescriptions (Teaching Council, 2011). This represents a significant leadership challenge to teacher educators as well as more experienced practitioners to spearhead practice-informed decision-making at the school and national levels that has a more cosmopolitan outlook rather than being parochial.

The perceived importance of developing student teachers’ knowledge and skills in the areas of literature searching and the interpreting research reports/evidence (as well as practitioner/action research) is indicative of a growing realisation of the need for all members of the profession to ‘look up for a change’ and take cognisance of national and international policy developments and trends. While new technologies can be harnessed appropriately to enable this more cosmopolitan perspective, it needs to be systematic, rigorous and sustained if it is to avoid being superficial and selectively self-serving.

The evidence from the current study suggests that, where ITE faculty are research-active in their area of expertise, their research is likely enrich the student knowledge base, skills and experience. Examples of this might involve reference to up-to-date literature, key debates, actual interrogation of research findings and also the inclusion of key policy reports as part of the critical discussion in an area. Set against this were the issues associated with an already burdened ITE curriculum and time pressures to also produce professional and practically competent new teachers. From a policy-practice perspective, there is need for two distinct but related professional conversations — on the nature of educational research and the extent to which being a researcher should be part of an initiation into the profession.

Q 2 How is research (across a range of forms) incorporated and deployed across a sample of initial teacher education programmes and with what educational/professional/practical purposes?

I. NI interviewees indicated that research training has been part of their ITE programmes for some time while RoI interviewees said their student had received little research training up to now.
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II. Teacher educators in each jurisdiction devote almost half their working week to teaching and monitoring students during placement – three times as much time as they spend on their own research activities (Tables 17, 18).

III. When research activities and supervision are combined, respondents in both jurisdictions spend, on average, one fifth of their time on research activities [slightly more in NI].

IV. The main factors inhibiting staff engagement in research include time pressures due to heavy teaching workloads, administration duties, teaching practice supervision, assessment/grading and the lack of sufficient resources/funding. Interviewees, north and south, identified teaching workload and administration duties as the main reasons for not having more time to devote to research.

V. Interviewees in both jurisdictions highlighted the difficulties that they experience in trying to combine research activities with teacher education commitments with all interviewees and three quarters of survey respondents saying they would like to have more time to devote to education research.

VI. Survey respondents identified various strategies that would enable increased research activity on their parts, including addressing the teaching burden, increased resources for research, greater recognition for the importance of research within ITE institutions, more opportunities for collaborative research and related staff development programmes.

VII. NI survey respondents were considerably more positive than their RoI counterparts regarding how well student teachers are prepared for various aspects of research (Table 22) although survey data suggests that significantly more time is devoted to research training during RoI teacher education than happens in NI (Table 21).

VIII. Perceptions of how well students are being prepared for the more practical aspects of educational research were a cause for concern. Levels of preparation to undertake educational research enquiries, engage in educational action research and engage in collaborative research activity were disappointing (Table 22) with over half the respondents saying they were either not very well prepared or unprepared to undertake action research.

IX. Survey respondents’ main suggestions for improving student engagement in research (Table 24) included its incorporation as core practice rather than simply being seen as an ‘extra’ e.g. through having dedicated module(s); building research-based assignments and assessment into students’ coursework; making research bursaries available and collaborative research projects.

X. It appears that some three quarters of all ITE students are required to complete a dissertation, generally in the areas of education/pedagogy and particular subject disciplines. The most common forms of support provided included taught modules and dissertation handbooks (Table 23).

XI. Course Directors indicated that 6% of ITE graduates on average progress to Masters/Doctorate study in NI compared to 12% in the RoI.

XII. While the research interests of survey respondents were broad, the most commonly mentioned areas were associated with respondents’ own subject areas (see 5.2).

XIII. NI interviewees emphasised the need to strengthen the research capacity of ITE staff, improve the profile of practitioner research and develop the interface between practitioner research and policy.

XIV. RoI interviewees were generally confident that the imminent extended duration of ITE programmes would enhance research capacity through, for example, the inclusion of dedicated modules on research.

Summary

Interviewees believe that there has been a greater focus on research training for student teachers in Northern Ireland than in the Republic. NI survey respondents were considerably more positive than their RoI counterparts regarding how well prepared their student teachers are for various aspects of research. Interviewees in RoI feel that the imminent extension of most teacher education programmes will facilitate enhanced treatment of research. Levels of student teacher preparation to undertake educational research enquiries and engage in educational action research and collaborative research activity were disappointing with over half the respondents saying they were either not very well prepared or unprepared to undertake action research or engage in collaborative research. Survey respondents called for the mainstreaming of research in the teacher education curriculum. While the involvement of teacher educators in collaborative research is also problematic, particularly in RoI, the work of SCoTENS in this respect was praised.
Teaching and the supervision of research and teaching placement students are the most time consuming aspects of teacher educators’ workloads north and south. When time spent on administration is factored in, they are left with an average of 15 per cent of their working week to engage in research activities. Many of them are finding the combination of teacher education and research activities stressful. Teacher educators’ most common research areas are related to pedagogical aspects of their own subject disciplines.

Discussion/Implications

The expressed desire in both jurisdictions to have more time to devote to research reinforces the view that there is more pressure to be ‘research productive’. However, in the pursuit of this goal, it must be recognised that teaching and administrative responsibilities cannot be ignored or downgraded. In a time of austerity, when core funding is being cut on an annual basis by 5% in RoI, there are increasing demands to ‘perform’ in all three work domains – teaching, research and service – in ways that make a mockery of the rhetoric of ‘work-life’ balance. Additionally, given the absence in the RoI of any sustained discussion regarding educational research and its place in ITE, there is considerable risk that reforms will be driven by pragmatics rather than any vision of the future shaped by enlightened consideration of research etc.

While professional formation should be informed by research findings the demands of such formation and research being research-active are not easy to reconcile in either jurisdiction. Implementation of the recommendations of the Sahlberg report and a critical review of curriculum and assessment overload can go a long way towards the resolution of this issue in RoI.

The rather low satisfaction levels of teacher educators in the RoI regarding how well prepared their student teachers are to engage in particular forms of research (Table 22) represent a serious challenge for that jurisdiction. However, current RoI developments focusing on increased research capacity-building during ITE are not without some tensions, if not contradictions. At one level, there is almost a naive faith in the notion that ‘more emphasis on research in ITE’ is an unqualified good in itself that gains further currency on the as yet untested assumption that such a focus leads to ‘better’ teaching. While it is possible to subscribe to the view that there is need for more emphasis on research in ITE, and also in CPD, precisely what the emphasis should be, for how long, how it might be assessed, and what will be its place in the overall ITE programme are important questions that remain unanswered. Finding appropriate answers to these challenges and resolving them are critically important. By comparison, in NI, the agenda for research and ITE is increasingly determined by central government in a top-down manner. Austerity in the RoI may result in a similar agenda being pursued unless teacher educators can convince policy-makers that alternatives they may suggest have merit. There is an urgency regarding the necessity for such discussions and the policy context of Institutes of Education provides an important platform on which to air concerns in a policy-oriented manner.

Recent policy in the RoI regarding academy-school partnerships are a structural approach to addressing longstanding concerns regarding ‘theory-practice’/science/craft divides. However, there is growing recognition by teacher educators, if not yet by the Teaching Council and policy makers, that such partnerships have to be built on trust, continuously cultivated and nurtured if both policy and practice are to benefit mutually, thus building systemic capacity. It is a sophisticated balancing act that needs to be adequately resourced. In the absence of adequate resource allocation, such policy aspirations are more likely to remain just that while technologies of control will hold teacher educators to account in ways that foster compliance rather than a more expansive sense of contributing to the professional formation of student teachers. Resolving such tension is not rendered any easier by the fact that employment in ITE normally requires some teaching experience. In this context the tendency has been to appoint teacher educators largely for their classroom expertise and track record in teaching rather than their research and publications. Due to increasing pressures within the university milieu where being ‘research intensive’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ are privileged over practical or craft knowledge, arguably a two-tier teacher education faculty is being created, rather like a two-tier Europe whereby German ‘austerity’ is being universalized for its ‘debtor’ partners (Beck, 2013). Consequently, two tendencies come together – less emphasis on teaching experience and more emphasis, post-appointment, on research and publication, with major long-term consequences for the professional identities of teacher educators.
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The finding that the most popular research topics across both jurisdictions were subject-related including STEM, and literacy (with occasional mentions of numeracy) is hardly surprising since these are also policy priorities in both jurisdictions to varying degrees. Other areas of common interest included ICT in education (including e-learning), as well as in the generic areas of teaching and learning curriculum and assessment and aspects of school leadership. It was noted that teacher education and reflective practice were particularly popular areas of research in RoI. The popularity of ‘education in divided societies’, Human Rights/Children’s Rights and student voice in NI has its own significance while SEN and inclusion were mentioned in both jurisdictions.

While the present data do not indicate the scale and nature of the research reported, experience and some available evidence strongly suggests that much of the RoI work is single-authored, unfunded and small scale (Sugrue, 2008). This reality leaves teacher educators vulnerable to the accusation of pursuing their own ‘pet’ research agendas without reference to systemic needs from a policy-practice perspective. While a national research policy seems desirable from this perspective, it would likely need to strike an appropriate balance between systemic needs and the professional interests and learning needs of teacher educators in the interest of sustaining morale and career advancement. It would also need to avoid ‘fashion’ as suggested by the evidence above to the relative neglect of other considerations. Thus, teaching, learning and assessment while generic need to be informed by developments in the ‘disciplines’ thus building in inter-disciplinarity into research agenda while promoting collaboration at institutional, inter-institutional and internationally are important policy and practice issues as the various institutes of education are forged in the immediate future. Additionally, in the RoI, such policy considerations might consider the possibility that individual institutes would become the lead locus of research in different areas though this might not lead to cultivating the desired capacity and critical mass in sufficient depth.

Q 3. To what extent are the efforts of ITE faculty in developing research capacity supported by the culture of their institutions?

I. The differences emerging between universities and other teacher education institutions with regard to the time devoted by teacher educators to teaching and research (Tables 17, 18), publications in refereed journals (Tables 9, 10) and (in the case of RoI) research grants (Tables 11-13), are of particular significance.

II. 55% of all Course Directors feel that there is a research culture in their institutions ‘to some extent only’ while 32% believe there is such a culture ‘to a great extent’ with RoI respondents being more positive.

III. While virtually all survey respondents felt that there was a research culture in their own institutions, three quarters felt that ITE students were either not involved in that culture at all or only ‘involved a little’.

IV. Over 80% of survey respondents reported that ITE staff members are expected to present conference papers.

V. More than half of all survey respondents feel that they have ‘easy access’ to research-related staff development opportunities with considerably more NI respondents agreeing with this statement (78%, compared to 51% in RoI).

VI. ITE staff in both jurisdictions felt that their institutions could do more to promote a collaborative approach to educational research with almost half feeling that this only happens ‘a little bit’.

VII. Interviewees in both jurisdictions praised the contribution of SCoTENS to the promotion of research collaboration on the island.

VIII. RoI interviewees felt that individual research was the norm in that jurisdiction, feeling that there was a greater willingness to collaborate around teacher education programmes and activities than around research.

Summary

The varying responses regarding research culture most likely reflect the understandable differences between large universities and Colleges of Education of varying sizes. Survey respondents believe that student teachers have little or no involvement in the research culture of their institutions. Levels of access to relevant staff development for teacher educators varied considerably.
Discussion/ Implications

It is important to differentiate between research cultures within teacher education and more recent policy practice in higher education in general where status and promotion are contingent on publications and the ‘winning’ of research grants. By comparison, teacher educators are positioned between being ‘relevant’ to the profession of teaching while gaining appropriate recognition and reward within the ‘entrepreneurial’ university. There needs to be a research culture that reflects this Janus positioning of teacher educators, while teacher educators must learn to navigate these new and emergent surroundings. In general, research culture resides in the environment of an institution and is observable in terms of the activities, opportunities and resources available to teacher education staff and students. Research culture and the number and quality of research indicators tend to be interrelated and co-dependent. Thus, offering a genuine research culture in a teacher education institution assumes a significant quorum of research-active staff, alongside the demonstration of other quality indicators in the environment, such as research training, research funding, publications records, research impact and strong collaborative research links nationally and internationally, including conference attendance and presentations. It is important to acknowledge that due to the research assessment culture in the UK, such criteria and their explicitness are much more prevalent in the discourse in NI than in RoI.

In terms of the contribution of staff profiles to research culture, it was interesting to note that the majority of staff held doctorates or were being actively encouraged, supported (or ‘pushed’ in some cases) to obtain doctorates. However, there is some anecdotal evidence that while individuals have gained credibility among their peers by being awarded doctorates the cultivation of a research culture whereby this newly acquired expertise can be capitalized on is something that in the RoI in particular has not received adequate institutional and systemic attention. Here again, the new policy environment represents an important moment whereby developing a research policy and the reduction of the number of providers of ITE to 6 has potential to transform research culture in ways that do justice to the academy and the profession.

Q 4 What is the research capability (as determined by a range of research indicators and stakeholder perceptions) of the teacher education community (ITE) in the two jurisdictions?

I. NI interviewees experienced strong pressure from within their own institutions to complete doctorates and be research-active (in the context of the RAE) whereas their southern colleagues were motivated by the need to enhance their research profiles in the context of appointments and promotions and by the competitive nature of homo academicus.

II. The most common types of publications are refereed journal papers and reports/briefing documents (Chart 3).

III. With the exception of co-authored/edited books (of which there have been few) NI respondents have published more than their RoI counterparts over the previous three years.

IV. RoI (21%) survey respondents were more likely than NI (12%) respondents to have given seven or more conference papers over the previous three years.

V. More than a quarter of respondents in each jurisdiction had not published a referred journal article in the past three years.

VI. Almost half the RoI respondents had not secured research funding in the past three years either individually or as part of a consortium as compared with one third of NI respondents.

VII. Whereas 28% of NI respondents had secured funding of more than £100,000 in the past three years, only 9% of their RoI colleagues had secured over €100,000.

VIII. Respondents in both jurisdictions identified funding as the main barrier to increased research activity along with reduced teaching hours.

IX. Survey respondents’ ratings of their own research competence varied considerably. While a slight majority rated their levels of research competence and experience as good/very good, a significant minority rated themselves as satisfactory or poor.

X. RoI interviewees felt that staff development for research needed considerable attention while NI interviewees saw strategies such as mentoring and collaboration were seen as helpful in this respect.
Summary

The most common types of publication were refereed journal papers and reports/briefing documents. Northern Irish survey respondents were publishing more than their RoI counterparts in all areas with the exception of co-authored/edited books. It appears that the RAE in NI puts a premium on peer-reviewed journal articles, while in the RoI pressure is manifested by and motivated through the appointments and promotions process and by competitive individualism. Northern Irish teacher educators were also more successful with research funding. While a slight majority of survey respondents rated their levels of research competence and experience as good/very good a significant minority rated them as satisfactory or poor.

Discussion/Implications

A cumulatively emerging picture speaks to a ‘tale of two cultures’ when it comes to attitudes to, engagement with and practice of research in NI and RoI, with some signs also of increasing convergence. The austerity agenda over the past five years, particularly in the RoI, where promotion has been seriously curtailed, has raised the bar significantly with regard to publication and research funding, thus competitive individualism and the lack of work-life balance have gained in prominence. Consequently, well beyond the scope of this research, there is an increasing concern regarding the attractiveness of an academic position, if it can be secured at all, as a lifelong treadmill rather than a desirable way of life (Gallagher, 2012; Lynch, 2012; Macfarlane, 2012).

It is clear from the data that Northern Ireland has something of a head start when it comes to the development of research-capacity in ITE. It seems reasonable to suggest that the demands of the research assessment exercise have contributed to this situation along with the fact that its primary B.Ed. has been of four years duration for some time. Teacher educator interviewees in NI experienced pressure from within their institutions to be research active with a strong emphasis on publications in high ranking journals to enhance REF performance. While their southern counterparts also experienced pressure to publish, this emanated more from competitive individualism with varying degrees of institutional pressure. Some RoI faculty noted the increasing importance being attached to research profiles both for (initial) academic appointments and subsequent promotions. However, the emphasis on research in the report of the international review panel with its proposals for the establishment of institutes of education (Sahlberg, Furlong & Munn, 2012) may well suggest that similar institutional research reviews may not be too far off in the RoI. We are aware that in the case of two universities at least, internal quality reviews have recommended international benchmarking of research output, and such requirements are likely to intensify, despite as well as because of austerity.

The increasing performativity of ‘publish or perish’ and the associated workload models and monitoring, as part of New Public Management, have the potential to distort roles and responsibilities when peer-reviewed journal articles and research funding rather than teaching and student engagement are privileged in the promotion stakes. Nevertheless, while there is increasing evidence that the necessity to be research-active is an accepted orthodoxy, there appears to be little consideration or awareness of what that entails, either at an institutional level or a national level in RoI, given the lack of a research policy, a lacuna identified in the recent report. (Sahlberg, et al., 2012).

It is worth noting that in the context of the recommendation in the RoI to develop a research policy, as well as to increase research capacity and critical mass (Furlong & Munn et al., 2012), a significant minority of ITE faculty rated their research experience as satisfactory or poor. It is also of interest that, while most respondents had studied research methods, they were considerably more familiar with qualitative and mixed methods and action research than with quantitative methods. Indeed, the primary focus of interviewees and survey respondents in both jurisdictions was on action research and reflective practice, while respecting the importance of balance between quantitative and qualitative approaches, capacity-building, and critically also, funding. If, as the recent Sahlberg report (Sahlberg, et al., 2012) suggests, the RoI teacher education system lacks ‘critical mass’ when it comes to research expertise, the evidence presented regarding the lack of research expertise within the quantitative paradigm provides further support for that argument as does the absence of collaborative research. It also speaks to the issue raised above regarding the profile of teacher educators where traditionally a premium has been placed on teaching experience over research capability. Consequently, a more strategic approach to
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Q 5. What are the perspectives of key actors (e.g. Course Leaders, teacher educators) regarding the role of research in ITE programmes in the Republic of Ireland/Northern Ireland. What are the key differences/overlaps/potential synergies?

I. One third of all Course Directors described their own research competence as ‘satisfactory’ or ‘poor’ while two out of five rated their research experience as ‘satisfactory’ or ‘poor’ with just 12% in RoI and none in NI rating their experience as excellent.

II. While Course Directors (61%) seemed to be somewhat less convinced than ITE faculty in general about the value of education research for teachers in schools (66%), many of them would like to have more time to devote to education research.

III. Almost half the Course Directors feel that their institution promotes a collaborative approach to research ‘to a great extent’ or ‘quite a lot’ while the remainder feel this only happens ‘a little bit’ or ‘not at all’.

IV. While interviewees indicated that research collaboration was promoted more in NI than RoI, Course Directors in the RoI were more positive about the extent to which their institution promotes a collaborative approach to undertaking research.

V. For instance, all of the NI respondents feel that there is a research culture in their institution ‘to some extent’, with 50% of RoI respondents feeling similarly. No Course Director indicated that they feel that there is ‘no research culture’ within their institutions.

VI. 86% of RoI CDs saw reflective practice as a ‘very important’ aspect of ITE compared to 60% in NI.

Summary

Course Directors’ responses were broadly in line with those of other teacher educators in both jurisdictions. However, their testimony appears to confirm the view that being course leader – or having managerial/leadership roles within the academy – is inimical to being research productive. Their questioning of the relevance of research to teachers and their on-going CPD seems to run counter to the increasing perception that it is necessary as a critical element of ITE and the cultivation of evidence informed practice.

Discussion/Implications

What emerges from the above is a significant discrepancy between teacher educators’ perceptions of their research capability and what the role and the academy expects; a considerable gulf to be bridged. In this regard, in the RoI, the Sahlberg report is very timely when it draws attention both to the necessity for a research policy and its funding, while evidence in response to other questions signals the necessity for a systematic analysis of the sector that goes well beyond the ‘big picture’ review undertaken in that report. In this regard, it is concerning that teacher educators appear to question the relevance of educational research for teachers at the very time when evidence informed practice has become axiomatic from a policy perspective. These competing and conflicting perspectives need to be reconciled as part of the process of building systemic capacity for a more vital and vibrant teacher education sector, not merely ITE. While such considerations may not be quite as stark in an NI context, there too these considerations need to be constitutive of building a more secure and sustained future for ITE and ultimately the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

Q. 6 On the basis of the evidence provided, how is the notion of ‘research capacity-building’ in initial teacher education to be understood on the island of Ireland and how does this dimension of ITE compare with that in England, Scotland and Wales?

There is a growing international clamour for evidence-driven, evidence-based, or evidence-informed decision-making. In a climate and context where ‘warehousing the schoolhouse’ (Lasky, 2012) is the orthodoxy and technological capacity enables the accumulation of vast quantities of data, practitioners need to be more discerning, to be ‘evidence informed’ and ‘not data driven’ (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 171). In terms of research interests and priorities, our informants appear to suggest that some aspects of research – such as reflective practice – are more important than others at the stage of initial teacher education. However, this is scarcely adequate. As a minimum, it could be argued that becoming critical consumers of large-scale research, its questions, design, analysis, and findings, with particular attention to possible implications for school and
classroom practice, is a necessity for all rather than a luxury for the few.

Given current levels of expertise within teacher education, as can be seen from the evidence presented in this report, such a requirement – as indicated in ITE criteria and guidelines recently published by the RoI Teaching Council (2011) – presents a major challenge to existing capacity. In the absence of resource commitments to addressing this issue, the creation of centres of excellence or institutes of education, as recommended by the Sahlberg Report, is most unlikely to build the necessary research capacity in the RoI context. The very recent decision by ITE providers in the RoI post-primary sector, in the context of the imminent two-year ITE programme, to provide a Level 9 Master’s programme as the entry qualification to second-level teaching is a landmark decision that will tax current capacity and resources to the limit.

More immediately, it is appropriate to ask, in order to prepare student teachers adequately for 21st century classrooms, is it necessary for them, as part of research awareness and capability, to conduct research and, if so, what should this entail? Depending on the response to these interrelated questions, there may be a considerable mismatch between the current capability among teacher educators and what is desirable from an ITE perspective. What is abundantly clear from other empirical research on educational change and capacity building (Cuban, 1998; Eisner, 1992) is that, no matter how adequate and sophisticated ITE programmes become, they are insufficient to over-turn the strong currents that flow within existing school cultures. The implication is that research and CPD must be tackled simultaneously with ITE if transformation of established school cultures is to progress. In the absence of sustained commitment to the CPD enterprise, including adequate financial resources, reform without change, and certainly without improvement, is the most likely outcome.

While interviewees in both jurisdictions identified the need to critically unpack the meaning of ITE-based education research, there was a shared belief that student teachers should be exposed to modes of research in order to enable them to become critical thinkers, reflective practitioners and engage with testing and current policy developments. At present, it is of note that the PGCE courses offered through NI institutions are at Masters level and thus provide credit towards further Masters level degree study, requiring research capability and in most instances an empirically-based dissertation. Additionally, if Level 9 Master’s qualifications are to become the norm, many of the questions raised by this baseline study regarding the nature and prevalence of research within ITE programmes can no longer be ignored. Prescriptions by the Teaching Council regarding the amount of school placement time in schools for ITE students will be difficult to reconcile with the research demands of a Master’s programme. Consequently, the necessity for student teachers to become researchers as well as critical consumers of research will intensify. Nevertheless, this new policy environment provides opportunity also to engage with placement schools and collaborating teachers thus traversing the initial/CPD boundary while cultivating a sense of communities of practice where even neophyte practitioners bring something to the professional development table while contributing also to a departmental and whole school capacity-building exercise, consistent with school self-evaluation requirements. However, such partnerships too require investment of time and resources if they are to yield the outcomes desired.

The issues raised by the current study - in terms of policy and practice of teacher education and the consequences for research quality and capacity in teacher education research - need to be contextualised within wider national and international debates (See BERA Research Intelligence, 2011). The following concerns have been raised in the UK context: the downturn in student teacher intakes for ITE and CPD, the reduction in recruitment of education staff, and diminishing core research funding (Davies, 2011; Deuchar, 2011; Christie et al., 2011) and indeed Europe (Lundahl, 2011, Rey, 2011). This anxiety has led to the setting up of a Working Group by BERA, in conjunction with the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) to examine, report on, and provide recommendations on such concerns (Christie et al., 2012). While debate is more muted in the RoI context, the recent Sahlberg [already referred to several times] highlights the necessity for a research policy in education supported by adequate funding to enable this to be undertaken.

The stimulus for this BERA development was the English White Paper, The Importance of Teaching. This Paper proposed changes in ITE and the CPD of teachers which were considered to threaten the viability of education departments in English HEIs and have a knock-on effect on the development of education research more broadly in the UK. Similar to a number of survey respondents’ and interviewees’ views in this study, the BERA-UCET
working group raised crucial questions that did not have ready-made answers. One concern that resonates with the current study and these broader debates is the disjuncture experienced by teacher educators in their roles between `educator’ and ‘researcher’ where the pressures and dissonance are not easily reconcilable. Also the lack of reliable and significant research funding was a common theme. Thus, Christie et al., (2011) asked: ‘If excellent teaching and excellent research are logically distinct, is it unreasonable to expect strong teacher education programmes to flourish in institutions that attract little or no core research [QR] funding?’ Given these problems, the authors, similar to respondents across Ireland, were concerned about whether it was in fact possible for all teacher educators to be excellent researchers. They questioned if it was sufficient that teacher education programmes, ‘be taught by those who are able to analyse, synthesise, critique, interpret and, importantly, contextualise research findings in ways that promote the kind of research-mindedness that should characterise all effective teaching?’ They concluded that, at this critical juncture, at a minimum, it is necessary, as a damage-mitigating exercise to teacher education and research cultures, to develop cohesion and networks while working doubly hard to maintain close links between educational researchers and policy-makers. The latter should be aimed at demonstrating the value of educational research (Christie et al., 2012, p35-37). In some respects, such sentiments are also echoed by the Sahlberg report but building critical mass and research capacity within the teacher education community in RoI should not be at the expense of other elements of ITE.

The current study determined that practitioner research / action research or applied research were considered to be core to teacher education programmes [see 7.2 above] and also of significance to teachers and schools but often viewed as low status in research terms. Beckett and Struthers (2011) however suggest that practitioner research across the UK is becoming increasingly politically viable as a ‘bona fide approach to educational inquiry, even in the face of growing criticism against the general quality and rigour of practitioner research’. They see the challenge for practitioner researchers being to work consciously and more strategically together through existing or new and expanded networks of learning communities committed to this approach. These authors consider the key issue for practitioner researchers [including teacher researchers] is to find ways for their work to ‘speak to’ policy initiatives, especially in relation to the ‘what works’ agenda where practitioner research could and should influence policy as part of a two-way process. While such advocacy may be entirely apposite, it leaves unaddressed and unresolved the larger issue about the role of research, and indeed different kinds of research in ITE programmes and as integral to the work of teacher educators, with implications also for recruitment and promotion.

These concerns resonate with statements made by interviewees North and South, who expressed various forms of isolation or marginalisation with regard to practitioner research. While referring to its immense practical value for students, teachers and schools’ improvement they felt it was viewed as low-status in the broader field of educational research and with little or no time or concerted effort available to develop it as a recognised body of disciplined work. Many of the survey respondents and a number of the interviewees indicated that, as a way forward, this kind of research requires a more systematic, rigorous approach that demonstrates its legitimacy. The UK has active networks and special interest groups of practitioner researchers such as the BERA Practitioner Special Interest Group (SIG), the NTRP or TERN (from which NI ITE professionals can benefit if they elect to). Finding ways in which to build like-minded practitioner research communities is something that could be expanded more strategically across the island of Ireland if there was a will. SCoTENS, the ESAI or indeed the recently established IoERI are already established fora for extending and developing further the idea and practices of networks and partnerships to build practitioner research capacity, teacher research (and indeed other forms of research).

One goal hinted at in both jurisdictions is for practitioner researchers to create a policy agenda to improve the impact factor associated with this form of research. The fact that the GTCNI have already built a teacher education research repository (AARTS) as a means of disseminating high quality practitioner research could also be capitalised upon in conjunction with the Teaching Council in RoI, for example. While such initiatives may be perceived as positive breakthroughs, they largely address the issue of practitioner research and this leaves teacher educators in something of a no man’s land – Janus faced – positioned between the realities of school cultures and the pressures for improvement, and the criteria for promotion within their own institutional contexts. While these competing interests are not readily reconciled, the teacher education community itself would be foolish not to address such tensions directly.

The issue of research confidence in teacher education staff is not just an issue for NI and RoI faculty. Scotland
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and Wales, as small UK nations, also face these challenges and have made various attempts to enhance teacher education capacity, often characterised as something of an ‘upward struggle’, and where there are some lessons to be learnt for the educational research communities across the island of Ireland. Scotland has been at the forefront of trying to address the research capacity/quality issue but Deuchar [2011, p. 8] says that ‘there remains a continuing lack of confidence among those staff who have come from long-established school-based careers to face the expectations of engaging in research’. Nevertheless, a systematic approach to building research capacity was undertaken by a variety of means that included significant investment of the Applied Educational Research (AERS) [which had mixed reviews of its impact] and more recently through the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA). These initiatives have included the creation of an ‘Emerging Researchers Network’ as part of its capacity-building portfolio. However, what is of interest is that challenges remain in terms of persuading new and inexperienced academic and practitioner researchers to engage in these networking and capacity building opportunities (Deuchar, p8, 2011).

The Welsh system has worked hard for a period of time to build research expertise across an array of [isolated] teacher education colleges where the number of active education researchers is relatively low and where expertise and funding has largely been centralised in one university after the 2008 RAE in the UK. In the 2001 RAE, 77 education researchers were entered from Wales; by the 2008 RAE, the figure had dropped to 37 (Davies, 2011). Networking between Welsh educational researchers had become increasingly important in order to achieve research funding and peer support. In response, the Welsh Education Research Network (WERN) was initiated by grass roots researchers as a capacity building initiative funded by ESRC and HEFCW (Higher Education Funding Council for Wales) between 2007 and 2009. WERN provided financial support to researchers in Wales, which enabled education researchers to work together to draft and submit funding proposals, carry out research projects and receive mentorship from experts in their field (Davies and Salisbury, 2009). However lack of ongoing funding restricted the development of this initiative and despite a number of active ongoing projects and relationships between institutions, Davies (2011, p.11) describes WERN as providing ‘a short-term respite for Welsh education research’. By contrast, no such respite exists in the RoI. As indicated above, the absence of an education research policy and attendant funding often results in teacher educators (wishing to be seen as research-active) engaging in small scale qualitative studies that frequently fail to gain traction either with practitioners or policy makers. Nevertheless, and despite current austerity, there is potential in the context of creating critical mass by merging the number of providers into Institutes of Education. It is an opportunity that teacher educators must avail of even if this entails advocacy work for which there is little time, and with economic austerity where such advocacy work is frequently categorized as special pleading.

The current study points to a growing awareness among teacher educators in both jurisdictions about the importance of research for their own careers and its presence and importance within ITE programmes. This is a major step forward, while leaving many questions unanswered regarding the wider context of evidence-informed practice, thus, in turn giving rise to questions about educational research policy and practice in general and the critical role to be played by teacher educators in building the evidence-base of teaching and learning, leading to sustainable improvements at a time of systemic transformation in times of economic austerity. From a RoI perspective, the newly emerged policy of Institutes of Education must not be allowed to become a conduit for rationalization only. Teacher educators need to provide the leadership that makes this opportunity a more ambitious project, and persuade public and policy makers of the necessity to invest in that future despite current economic strictures.

Implications for policy and practice

While the road to the future is always under construction, thus not entirely predictable, nevertheless, if Ireland (North and South) is to flourish in the emerging trans-national, global economy, there is general agreement that the quality of our respective education systems is critical to how we will fare. It is for this reason that teacher education has become a major policy focus. What the authors consider appropriate and legitimate within the confines of this study and its limitations is to identify key stepping stones for policy makers and practitioners alike, whereby they choose their own futures. Nevertheless, we consider these stepping stones to be appropriately warranted given the evidence presented here, while leaving open the manner in which these may be configured. At the risk of appearing to be reductionist, while seeking nevertheless, to give focus and purpose to reform agenda
in both jurisdictions, we anticipate that the following summary chart is a useful means of shaping future oriented policy and practice conversations at various levels, while cautioning that this is no substitute for a more thorough familiarity with the detail of the report.

At the risk of appearing to be reductionist, while seeking nevertheless, to give focus and purpose to reform agenda in both jurisdictions, we anticipate that the following summary chart is a useful means of shaping future oriented policy and practice conversations at various levels, while cautioning that this is no substitute for a more thorough familiarity with the detail of the report.

Summary of research questions, findings and implications for policy and practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions &amp; Emergent Themes</th>
<th>Synthesis of evidence</th>
<th>Possible policy/practice implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 1. What are the underpinning assumptions regarding concepts of research in initial teacher education in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland?</td>
<td>• Teacher educators generally in both jurisdictions attach importance to increasing ITE students’ competence in research; • Considerable variation in expectations regarding what familiarity with research entails in ITE with a predisposition to reflective practice and action research that may or may not be sufficient</td>
<td>• There is need for a significantly greater articulation of the role of research in ITE and for the implications of this role for teacher educators to be reflected in policy and practice. This should include an articulation of what ‘research informed’ practice entails • Address the issue of the meaning of research informed practice from the perspective of the continuum of teacher education teaching and advance the professional profiles of teacher educators to match this expectation/ambition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 2. How is research (across a range of forms) incorporated and deployed across a sample of initial teacher education programmes and with what educational/professional/practical purposes?</td>
<td>• While there is evidence that research is being promoted and undertaken by ITE students, consistent with Q 1 above, there is considerable variation within programmes and jurisdictions as to what is most appropriate for NQTs • While some consider reflection and action research sufficient to meet the research requirements of NQTs, the evidence is far from universal in this regard • Teacher educator workloads are generally such as to prevent adequate time for research</td>
<td>• There is need for informed debate about the nature and extent of appropriate and meaningful research engagement and awareness within ITE programmes • Workload models in teacher education need to take more seriously the requirement to be research productive with appropriate policies and supports in place to give real substance to this ambition</td>
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| Q 3. To what extent are the efforts of ITE faculty in developing research capacity supported by the culture of their institutions? | • Student teachers generally are not buying in to the research culture of their institutions  
• Research culture and practice within and between institutions varies significantly e.g. between university and non-university institutions  
• In the RoI in particular, there is stronger evidence of a lack of collaborative research that may be a legacy as well as evidence of a lack of policy and funding | • Institutional research culture needs to be systematically reviewed along with workloads  
• Collaborative research needs to be encouraged and fostered by a variety of means |
| Q 4. What is the research capability (as determined by a range of research indicators and stakeholder perceptions) of the teacher education community (ITE) in the two jurisdictions? | • The evidence indicates that a sizeable proportion of teacher educators are not research active, or less than optimally research active  
• A significant ‘finding’ regarding research capacity is a lack of confidence and expertise particularly in the conduct of quantitative research  
• The research capacity levels of student teachers are generally regarded as low. | • The apparent discrepancy between the demands on teacher educators to be research active and the supports available to make this a reality needs to be addressed.  
• Workload, institutional research culture and collaborative professional support need to be reviewed collectively if research capability among all teacher educators is to be increased. |
| Q 5. What are the perspectives of key actors (e.g. Course Leaders, teacher educators) regarding the role of research in ITE programmes in the Republic of Ireland/ Northern Ireland. What are the key differences/overlaps/potential synergies? | • There appears to be a particular lack of research expertise among ITE course leaders  
• The persistence of a culture of individualism among research active RoI teacher educators appears to inhibit rather than enhance research capacity generally in the sector | • There is need for a systematic review of staffing and research capacity within the sector with a view to creating much greater synergy between what is desirable and what pertains currently. Such a review will enable the articulation of a policy and set of practices aimed at systematically recruiting, retaining and promoting teacher educators so as to build research capacity over time |
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Research Questions & Emergent Themes

Q. 6. On the basis of the evidence provided, how is the notion of “research-capacity-building” in initial teacher education to be understood on the island of Ireland and how does this dimension of ITE compare with that in England, Scotland and Wales?

• In the RoI in particular, there continues to be a lack of debate regarding research capacity not just in ITE but within the entire policy spectrum of ‘the teaching continuum’ and what may entail as well as demand of teacher educators
• Initiatives taken elsewhere point to possible future directions for teacher educators on the Island of Ireland

Emergent Themes:
Staffing Ratios/ student recruitment
Recruitment Profiles/ Promotion

• Staffing ratios are more favourable in NI than in RoI
• Teaching experience generally required of teacher educators in both jurisdictions with promotion to Senior Lecturer being more attainable in NI

• Staff student ratios to be kept under review in both jurisdictions;
• The possibility of a more diversified profile of potential teacher educators to be considered, while avoiding a two-tier career structure within teacher education.

Possible policy/practice implications

• The evidence here, consistent with responses to Q 5 immediately above, strongly suggests that teacher educators need to articulate their concerns to policy-makers regarding current research capacity and direction, while looking to international practices that are suggestive of possible initiatives.
• Teacher educators need a more public and coherent voice and an advocacy role in shaping the future of not just ITE but the ‘teaching continuum’

Concluding comments

While there are many concluding comments that individually and collectively we find tempting to add at this point, we resist the urge, and confine ourselves to the following. Given current fiscal realities, the moment is far from opportune to embark on ambitious reforms of ITE. However, it is from these current realities that the future must be created. Thus, we hope that the evidence presented here is encouraging of teacher educators, policy-makers and practitioners alike, to work collaboratively towards building the kind of future the evidences suggests is vitally necessary. With this outcome in mind, and your individual and collective commitments to building that future, our efforts and contribution will have been worthwhile.
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Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) [http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/further-and-higher-education/higher-education/role-structure-he-division/he-research-policy.htm](http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/further-and-higher-education/higher-education/role-structure-he-division/he-research-policy.htm).


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Northern Ireland Education Research Forum (NIERF) http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/32-statisticsandresearch_pg/32_statistics_and_research-research_pg/32_statistics_and_research_researched_funded_by_the_department_of_education-2.htm


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Strategic Forum for Research in Education (SFRE Northern Ireland) www.sfre.ac.uk/northern-ireland/


Appendices

Appendix 1

Phase 1 Course Director interview schedule
Educational Research in ITE: Interview schedule with ITE course leaders

Background information
- Size of cohort
- Concurrent/Consecutive (i.e. nature of ITE programme)
- Balance between education, subjects and practicum

Perceptions of research and its importance

1. How is research viewed by your ITE colleagues?
2. How do you understand research?
3. How do you understand research-capacity/ building?

ITE programme

4. Do the ITE programme aims include reference to research?
5. To what extent is the actual programme informed by research?
6. What models/types of research if any underpin the ITE programme(s)? (action inquiry, reflective practitioner etc)?
7. Is this realized differently in the case of differing subject areas?
8. How important is it for student teachers to develop:
   - research skills;
   - an appreciation of research
   - critical perspectives
   - basic capacity to undertake an inquiry?
9. The GTCS [RoI/NI] have laid down a list of desired outcomes / competences? Are you happy with the emphasis given to research? Do you go beyond the requirements?
10. Does your institution have a requirement for some sort of research dissertation? Is it in subject discipline or education? How /what research preparation is provided for students? Nature of supervision?
11. Are students required/encouraged to:
   - Read research papers/reports?
   - Evaluate research studies?
   - Write about research?
   - Learn the skills of?
   - Understand differing forms of research?
   - Undertake /conduct research inquiries?
   - Engage in collaborative research inquiry?
12. What, if any, are the assessment requirements in relation to research?

13. Does the Inspectorate etc. refer to research in its evaluations of the ITE programmes?

14. Are students encouraged to attend education seminars/conferences? Do they attend?

15. What proportions of graduates go on directly on to research? Why?

Staffing

16. Where are your ITE staff mostly recruited from? How would you describe the research capacity of your staff? Have things changed in recent years? If so how?

17. How would you describe research capability/capacity/confidence across the ITE staff in your institution?

18. How important is research in terms of promotion for staff? (promotions policy)

19. How does research influence their perceptions of their role as ITE tutors?

20. Insofar as staff perceptions vary, what might be the underlying explanations?

21. Workload policy for ITE staff? Are aspirations changing in this respect?

22. What research capacity building/support is available for staff initially and ongoing staff development

23. Encouragement to do research within/beyond the institution? e.g. collaboration etc

24. Publications records? Extent to which staff use their own and their colleagues’ research?

25. Availability of funding for research capacity-building? For engaging in research? Most likely sources?

Other

26. When/where is the relationship between teaching and research discussed in your institution?

27. Value placed on teacher development [ITE] versus research in your institution?

28. Any other comments?
Appendix 2

Phase 2 On-line survey
SCOTENS Survey questionnaire

PLEASE NOTE, RESPONDENTS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO COMPLETE ALL QUESTIONS BECAUSE VARIOUS ‘SKIPS’ ARE AUTOMATICALLY BUILT-IN DEPENDING ON ANSWERS PROVIDED

Q1 Which type of institution do you work in?
- University [1]
- College of Education affiliated to a university [2]
- College of Education [3]
- Institute of Technology [4]
- Other (Please specify) [5] _______________________________________________________________________

Q2 Post held
- Professor [1]
- Associate Professor [2]
- Reader [3]
- Principal Lecturer [4]
- Senior Lecturer [5]
- Lecturer [6]
- Teaching Assistant/Fellow [7]
- Other (Please specify) [8] _______________________________________________________________________

Q3 What is your current employment status?
- Full-time [1]
- Part-time [2]

Q4 What is your gender?
- Male [1]
- Female [2]
- Other (Please specify) [3] _______________________________________________________________________
- I do not wish to answer [4]

Q5 Is your institution located in......
- Northern Ireland [1]
- Republic of Ireland [2]

Q6 How long have you been working in Initial Teacher Education (ITE)?
- 0-5 years [1]
- 6-10 years [2]
- 11-15 years [3]
- 16-20 years [4]
- 21+ years [5]

Q7 Are you currently a Course Director for an Initial Teacher Education programme?
- Yes [1]
- No [2]
Q8 How many full time faculty are working in teacher education in your institution
   ○ 1-5 (1)
   ○ 6-10 (2)
   ○ 11-15 (3)
   ○ 16-20 (4)
   ○ 21-25 (5)
   ○ 26+ (6)

Q9 How many students are enrolled annually on the ITE programme for which you are Course Director?
   ○ 15 or less (1)
   ○ 16-50 (2)
   ○ 51-100 (3)
   ○ 101-150 (4)
   ○ 151-200 (5)
   ○ 201-250 (6)
   ○ 251-300 (7)
   ○ 301+ (8)

Q10 Is your ITE activity mostly in......
   ○ B.Ed [Primary] (1)
   ○ B.Ed [Post-Primary] (2)
   ○ PGCE/PGD [Primary] (3)
   ○ PGCE/PGD [Post-Primary] (4)
   ○ Other [Please specify] (5) ________________________________

Q11 Is your ITE activity mostly in......
   ○ B.Ed [Primary] (1)
   ○ Concurrent ITE [Post-Primary] (2)
   ○ PDE [Primary] (3)
   ○ PDE [Post-Primary] (4)
   ○ Other [Please specify] (5) ________________________________

Q12 If you contribute to the EDUCATION STUDIES aspect of the ITE programme, please specify what area(s)

Q13 If you contribute to the SUBJECT DISCIPLINE aspect of the ITE programme, please specify what area(s)

Q14 Approximately what percentage of your academic year is devoted to each of the following?
   ○ Teaching and teaching-related duties for ITE students (1)
   ○ Supervision of students on placements (2)
   ○ Supervision of student dissertations (postgraduate level) (3)
   ○ Administrative duties (4)
   ○ Activity related to research (5)
   ○ Other [Please specify] Membership of External Bodies e.g. Teaching Council, External Examiners, Committees (6)
   ○ Supervision of student dissertations (undergraduate level) (7)
   ○ Teaching and teaching-related duties for students other than ITE (8)

Q15 What is your highest qualification?
   ○ Doctorate (1)
   ○ Masters degree in Education (2)
   ○ Degree in Education (3)
   ○ Diploma in Education (4)
   ○Certificate in Education (5)
   ○ Other [Please specify] (6) ____________________________
Q16 Where did you complete this qualification?
- N.Ireland [1]
- Republic of Ireland [2]
- Great Britain [3]
- Other (Please specify) [4]

Q17 How much teaching experience do you have at Primary School level?
- None [1]
- 1-5 years [2]
- 6-10 years [3]
- 11-15 years [4]
- 16-20 years [5]
- 21+ years [6]

Q18 Can you say why you hold the view that research is not part of your brief?

Q19 How much teaching experience do you have at Post-Primary School level?
- None [1]
- 1-5 years [2]
- 6-10 years [3]
- 11-15 years [4]
- 16-20 years [5]
- 21+ years [6]

Q20 Have you previously studied research methods?
- Yes [1]
- No [2]

Q21 Do you consider your expertise to be stronger in relation to quantitative or qualitative methods?
- Quantitative [1]
- Qualitative [2]

Q22 What are your three main areas of interest as a researcher?
- 1. [1]
- 2. [2]
- 3. [3]

Q23 Which of the following research methods have you previously studied?
- Mostly quantitative methods [1]
- Mostly qualitative methods [2]
- Mixed methods [3]
- Practitioner/Action Research [4]

Q24 How would you rate yourself in relation to conducting research?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent (1)</th>
<th>Very good (2)</th>
<th>Satisfactory (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My experience [1]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My competence [2]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q25 Please select whichever one of the following statements best represents your view
- I would like to have more time to devote to research [1]
- I am content with the amount of time that I am devoting to research [2]
- I do not see research as part of my brief [3]
Q26 What reason[s] would you put forward for not having more time to devote to research?

Q27 Is there an annual budget to support education research activity in your Institution?
- Yes
- No

Q28 Does your institution expect you to present conference papers?
- Yes
- No

Q29 Does your institution support your attendance at conferences?
- Yes, but only if I am giving a paper [1]
- Yes, even if I am a delegate only [2]
- No [3]

Q30 In what way[s] does your institution support you?

Q31 How many of these types of publications have you had in the past three years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refereed journal articles (1)</th>
<th>Co-authored or edited books (2)</th>
<th>Non-refereed journal articles (3)</th>
<th>Reports/briefing papers (4)</th>
<th>Conference papers (5)</th>
<th>Book chapters (6)</th>
<th>Single authored books (7)</th>
<th>Other (Please specify) (8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None (1)</td>
<td>1-2 (2)</td>
<td>3-4 (3)</td>
<td>5-6 (4)</td>
<td>7 or more (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q32 Use the slider below to indicate approximately how much research funding have you been awarded over the past three years as an individual researcher?

______ Pounds
______ Euros

Q33 Use the slider below to indicate approximately how much research funding have you been awarded over the past three years as part of a consortium or collaboration?

______ Pounds
______ Euros
Q34  To what extent does your institution promote a collaborative approach to undertaking research?
- To a great extent (1)
- Quite a lot (2)
- A little bit (3)
- Not at all (4)

Q35  Do you have easy access to research-related staff development opportunities?
- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q36  If you do have access to research-related staff development, what form does this take?

Q37  What do you think is the role of research in ITE?

Q38  How would you rate the importance of research in relation to each of the following specific aspects of ITE in your institution?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Important (1)</th>
<th>Important (2)</th>
<th>Neither important or unimportant (3)</th>
<th>Unimportant (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General preparation for teaching/schooling (1)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist subject methods (2)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching practicum (3)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation studies (4)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective practice (5)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other [Please specify] (6)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q39  How important do you think it is to develop the research capacity (knowledge and skills) of student teachers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge (1)</th>
<th>Very important (1)</th>
<th>Important (2)</th>
<th>Neither important nor unimportant (3)</th>
<th>Unimportant (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills (2)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q40  Can you elaborate on your reason(s)?
Q41  Specifically, how important do you think it is for student teachers to develop their KNOWLEDGE of each of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very important (1)</th>
<th>Important (2)</th>
<th>Neither important or unimportant (3)</th>
<th>Unimportant (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative research methods [1]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research methods [2]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-methods research [3]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner/Action Research [4]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing research reports [5]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature searching [6]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting research reports and/or evidence [7]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify) [8]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q42  Specifically, how important do you think it is for student teachers to develop their SKILLS in each of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very important (1)</th>
<th>Important (2)</th>
<th>Neither important or unimportant (3)</th>
<th>Unimportant (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative research methods [1]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research methods [2]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-methods research [3]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner/Action Research [4]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing research reports [5]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature searching [6]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting research reports and/or evidence [7]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify) [8]</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
<td>⬜</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q43  How would you describe the value of education research for teachers in schools?
- ⬜ Very valuable (1)
- ⬜ Valuable (2)
- ⬜ Of some value (3)
- ⬜ Of no value (4)
Q44 In your opinion, whereabouts in a teacher’s career does an understanding of education research provide added value? Can you please elaborate on your answer?

Q45 Are student teachers currently taught education research methods within the ITE programme?
   Yes (1)
   No (2)

Q46 How many hours are devoted to research training in total within the ITE curriculum?
   ○ _____ Hours devoted to research training [use slider] [1]

Q47 Please answer the following specific questions about reflective practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q47</th>
<th>Yes (1)</th>
<th>No (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you introduce ITE students to the literature on reflective practice? (1)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you view reflective practice as a form of research? (2)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q48 To what extent is reflective practice important in your programme?
   ○ Very important (1)
   ○ Important (2)
   ○ Neither important nor unimportant (3)
   ○ Unimportant (4)

Q49 Do your ITE students complete a dissertation? (you may elaborate on your answer if you wish, e.g re certain groups of students)
   ○ Yes [1] ____________________________________________________________
   ○ No [2] ____________________________________________________________

Q50 In what discipline[s]?
   ○ Education/pedagogy [1]
   ○ Subject discipline [2]
   ○ Other (Please specify) [3] ____________________________________________

Q51 What support is given to students undertaking a dissertation?
   ○ Taught research module(s) [1]
   ○ Online research module(s) [2]
   ○ 1:1 supervision [3]
   ○ Group supervision [4]
   ○ Training on ethics [5]
   ○ Other (Please specify) [7] ____________________________________________

Q52 To what extent is there a research culture within your institution?
   ○ To a great extent (1)
   ○ To some extent [2]
   ○ Only to a little extent (3)
   ○ Not at all [4]
Q53  How involved are ITE students in the research culture of your organisation?
- Very involved [1]
- Involved [2]
- Involved a little [3]
- Not involved [4]
- There is no research culture in my institution [5]

Q54  Are ITE students encouraged to attend external seminars/lectures/conferences, as part of their ITE?
- Yes [1]
- No [2]

Q55  At present, how well prepared would you say that your ITE students are to...........

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very well prepared (1)</th>
<th>Well prepared (2)</th>
<th>Prepared (3)</th>
<th>Not very well prepared (4)</th>
<th>Unprepared (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read educational research reports</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate educational research studies</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write about educational research</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand differing forms of educational research</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake educational research enquiries</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in collaborative educational research activity</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in educational action research</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q56  How well do you think your graduating ITE students have developed their educational research skills?
- Very well [2]
- Well [3]
- Quite well [4]
- Not very well [5]
- Not at all [6]

Q57  In the current academic year, how much funding was available within the budget to support education research activity in your Institution?
Q58 Typically, how many Euros are available each year FOR EACH MEMBER OF YOUR FACULTY TEAM for each of the following?
- ______ Conference attendance
- ______ Research seed funding

Q59 Approximately what percentage of your graduating ITE students proceed to Masters or Doctoral study within a three year period of completion of their ITE?
- ______ % of students

Q60 What steps could/should be taken to increase the participation of student teachers in research activity?

Q61 What steps could/should be taken to increase the participation of teacher educators in research activity?

Q62 In your view, what are the main inhibitors of research activity within ITE in your institution?

Q63 Please insert (below) anything else you would wish to add about the topic of education research within ITE

Q64 If we wished to carry-out a follow-up interview with you, would you be in agreement?
- No
- Yes (Please add email address) ___________________

Q65 Thank you for completing this questionnaire.
Appendix 3

Sample Email letter for survey

Dear Colleague

I am writing to invite you to complete an online survey on your experience of and your views on the relevance of research-capacity building during teacher education programmes (primary and post-primary).

This project, between the University of Limerick, University College Dublin and Queen’s University, has been funded by the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS). Phase One of this research involved interviews with some Department Heads in both jurisdictions. These interviews helped inform this electronic survey that we are sending (via contacts) to all full-time teacher educators in the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland provider institutions. The aim is to draw some comparison of issues relating to place of research in teacher education programmes across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The online survey asks you approximately 50 questions which should take you about 10-15 minutes to answer. Some require simple tick-box responses, others offer you the opportunity to make a comment depending on your passage through and this will depend on your role (eg an ITE course co-ordinator) and also how you answer certain questions. Your participation in the survey is of course voluntary.

As a respondent, you will not be asked to identify your institution or supply your name (unless you volunteer to do so for any follow-on interview) and individual providers will not be identified in the final report. Data will remain confidential and we will also be careful to anonymise any comments. If you are willing to participate, please click on the link below:

https://acsurvey.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1F7AnZoZ3HCKKTa

I recognise that your professional life is very busy and that there is no good time to ask for your participation, so I appreciate in advance your willingness to take the time to undertake this survey.

However if you are unsure about any aspect of the study, please do not hesitate to contact me on email or by phone.

With thanks

School of Education
Appendix 4

Follow-up one-to one ITE interview schedule – research capacity building in ITE

1. What is your role in relation to the ITE programme?

2. What importance do you attach to research capacity among teacher educators and what role should ‘being a researcher’ play in the preparation of student teachers? What role does it play??

3. One third of RoI respondents rated their research experience as either satisfactory or poor on a five point scale. Would you like to comment on the research capacity of teacher educators in light of this?

4. The vast majority of respondents in both jurisdictions would like more time for educational research activity. What proportion of your ‘official’ working week is allocated to doing research? To what extent do you and your colleagues find it possible to combine teacher education with research activity?

5. Survey findings would suggest that teacher educators are more likely to have studied qualitative research methods and action research approaches than quantitative methods. What form of research is most important for teacher education/educators? Why?

6. What access do you have to staff development in relation to educational research and what is the frequency and quality of such access?

7. It appears that teacher educators are more likely to get research funding as individuals rather than for collaborative research – what is your experience in this regard? Which model is preferable?

8. What impact is the increased emphasis on publishing in refereed journals and making conference presentations having on teacher educators? What is the contribution of such activities to professional formation in ITE?

9. In your view, what is the perception of educational research among practicing teachers? What might teacher educators do to change this perception if indeed it ought to be changed?

10. Looking to the future what approaches to research capacity building in initial teacher education would you recommend? What are the policy implications of your recommendations?

Any other comment please?
### Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills (R/I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEL</td>
<td>Department for Education and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAE</td>
<td>Research Assessment Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF</td>
<td>Research Excellence Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSDA</td>
<td>Learning and Skills Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIES</td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTCNI</td>
<td>General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMMS</td>
<td>Trends in International mathematics and Science Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIRLS</td>
<td>Progress in International Reading Literacy Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BERA</td>
<td>British Educational Research Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITE</td>
<td>Initial Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLRP</td>
<td>Teaching and Learning Research Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD-CERI</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Centre for Educational Research and Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEA</td>
<td>Institute of Economic Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIERF</td>
<td>Northern Ireland Educational Research Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARRTS</td>
<td>Access to Research Resources for Teachers Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFRE</td>
<td>Strategic Forum for Research in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AERS</td>
<td>Applied Educational Research Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>WERN</td>
<td>Welsh Educational Research Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>NISRA</td>
<td>Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Unit of Assessment</td>
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<td>HEFCE</td>
<td>Higher Education Funding Council for England</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Education and Training Inspectorate</td>
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