



‘Working-class’ student teachers: Not being encouraged at school and impact on motivation to become a teacher

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Diversifying Ireland’s relatively homogeneous teaching population has been a policy concern for over a decade in the context of the rapid transformation of Irish society and schooling. This paper draws on the Access to Post-primary Teaching (APT) project, funded by the Higher Education Authority, which supports the participation of those from lower socio-economic groups in initial teacher education at one of the seven universities in the Republic of Ireland. The research component of the project involves an in-depth qualitative (interview-based) study examining APT participants’ perspectives and experiences relating to their education to date and their engagement in the Professional Master of Education programme. Data are analysed using grounded theory techniques including open and focused coding and categorising. The focus in this paper arises from an initial analysis of round one interviews with the first group of APT participants. An important category generated connects participants’ frequently negative school experiences (not feeling encouraged at school, generally and regarding future careers - including teaching) to their perspectives about reasons for a lack of diversity in the teaching profession, and to how their own (frequently social justice-based) motivation to become a teacher fits therein. This focus will guide a discussion about attracting, supporting and preparing a diverse student teacher population.

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Introduction and Context

The lack of diversity in the teaching profession as an international phenomenon (Schleicher, 2014) has been of concern in Ireland since the early 2000s (cf. Department of Education and Science, 2002). Ireland's teaching population has remained homogeneous; being predominantly white, female and of majority-group social class and ethnic backgrounds (Authors, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018). Such demographics stand in stark contrast to school populations which have increasingly diversified since the 1990s due to immigration and the impact of the 'Celtic Tiger' (Devine, 2011). Until recently, national widening participation (WP) policy focused solely on increasing access for certain under-represented groups to higher education (HE) in general (cf. HEA, 2004), in contrast to the international context which has, for some time, extended widening participation concerns to the postgraduate and employment spheres, with particular reference to WP in the professions (Macmillan, Tyler and Vignoles, 2015).

The most recent National Access Plan (2015-2019) (HEA, 2015), however, identified the need to support access to the teaching profession for certain under-represented groups, further adding to calls from the Teaching Council (2008, 2011) and the academic community (Lynch and Lodge, 2004; Moran, 2008; Conway et al., 2009; Author, 2011). The *Diversity in Initial Teacher Education* (DITE) national research project established Ireland's first national evidence base with respect to patterns of participation of various socio-demographic groups amongst applicants and entrants to initial teacher education (ITE) in Ireland, confirming the significant under-representation of, *inter alia*, certain lower socio-economic groups, nationality/ies and ethnic groups (Authors, 2015; 2016; 2018) and the over-representation of females in ITE in Ireland. In 2016, the Department of Education and Skills launched the *Programme for Access to Higher Education* (PATH) (administered by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Strand 1 of which provided €2.4 million for projects related to diversifying ITE for target groups in the National Access Plan.

The Access to Post-primary Teaching (APT) project¹ is funded under PATH 1 (see above), and aims to support the participation and retention of those from lower socio-economic groups in post-primary ITE. Data from the DITE project suggests that the extension of ITE programmes in Ireland (for example, to two years for postgraduate post-primary programmes) since 2014 has negatively impacted the representation of those from lower socio-economic groups due to the significant additional costs which frequently are not covered by the State grant for eligible individuals. In the period coinciding with the change from the last one-year postgraduate post-primary ITE programme (2013/2014), to the new two-year PME programme (2014/2015), Authors (2015) reported a statistically significant decrease in those from lower socio-economic groups (Unskilled. 6.1% to 2.8%) entering postgraduate post-primary ITE programmes. Teacher educators' professional experience with relevant students and prospective applicants confirms that the two-year programme is prohibitively expensive. Relevant students also struggle post-entry, often resorting to working long hours, deferring Year Two to work and save for fees and living costs, or withdrawing. Through the APT project, a range of financial and personal supports are provided to participants, and through their year two Practitioner Research Projects, participants work to support their pupils' developing future education and career planning, including in relation to teaching as a career. APT participants complete a number of research interviews over the course of their programme, and this paper draws on data gathered during their first round of interviews. Individuals were eligible to apply to the APT project if they had entered undergraduate level via a pre-entry access course or the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR). Eligibility for Access or HEAR was taken as a 'proxy' for lower socio-economic status.

¹ The wider APT project is a joint project of one of the seven universities in the Republic of Ireland and a College affiliated to the university. The university aspect focuses on increasing participation of lower socio-economic groups in the two-year postgraduate Professional Master in Education (PME) programme. This paper only draws on the university aspect of APT.

In this paper, following a brief overview of relevant research and the project's methodology, participants' perceptions are examined in relation to not feeling encouraged or supported during their schooling, particularly in terms of their future career options, including teaching, and how such experiences differentially construct teaching as a possible or viable career option for those from 'disadvantaged' and more 'privileged' groups.

Literature Review

Relatively little about the perspectives and experiences of student teachers and teachers from lower socio-economic groups is known; there is a significant dearth of research in the area internationally. Important work from the English context conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s (cf. Maguire, 1999; 2001; 2005; Burn, 2001), however, constitutes a useful base. Two key themes emanate from this body of research and a limited number of other relevant studies. These are briefly discussed below before considering the research on lower socio-economic groups' experiences in education more broadly.

Experiencing class-based discontinuities in ITE and into the workplace

Research from England (cf. Maguire, 1999; 2001; 2005a,b; Burn, 2001) suggests that 'working-class' students 'battle' their way through ITE and into the teaching workplace. This body of research suggests that they experience significant discontinuities in joining the middle-class teaching profession and in their experiences in schools (as student teachers or teachers), particularly in relation to markers of working-class identity including dress and accent, and related feelings of inferiority and a lack of confidence. They wrestle with difficult feelings regarding having to reject or leave behind their class culture (Maguire, 1999; 2005a,b) and, in the school context, they are frequently 'pigeon-holed' and allocated to lower 'ability' groups and 'difficult cases' (Maguire, 2005a,b). In Ireland, almost nothing is known about the experiences of those from lower socio-economic groups who enter ITE and teaching. In the ITE

context, Keane (2017) reported one teacher from a lower socio-economic group (who subsequently left the profession) who recounted significant discomfort in ITE (programme level) relative to her peers when discussing issues of poverty, alluding to their lack of critical understanding.

Having social justice-oriented and/or altruistic motivations

The benefits of a more diverse teaching population for various groups, schools and society are well-established (cf. Keane and Heinz, 2015). In terms of social class, research has found that working-class teachers positively impact working-class pupils, through emphasising high expectations for all, critically questioning the role of education in reproducing class-based inequalities (cf. Maguire, 1999, 2001, 2005; Burn, 2001), and having more social justice-oriented teaching motivations than others (cf. Heinz, Keane and Foley, 2017; Keane, 2017). For example, in the Irish context, Keane (2017) found that previous (challenging) life experiences influenced the development of altruistic motivational career orientations for students from lower socio-economic groups. Students who had entered HE via an access programme attributed their stated desire to 'give back' and 'help others like me' (through their work as solicitors, social workers and teachers) to their previous own negative life and schooling experiences. In the context of teaching specifically, Heinz, Keane and Foley (2017) quantitative study exploring student teachers' career motivations using the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice Scale indicated that student teachers from lower socio-economic (unskilled) groups rated 'making a social contribution' as a significantly more important motivational factor than those from Professional workers, Managerial and Technical, Non-manual, and Semi-skilled backgrounds. Interestingly, the study also found that those from lower social class groups rated the social status of teaching more highly than those from higher socioeconomic groups.

Lower socio-economic groups' negative experiences of education

It is now widely acknowledged that students from lower socio-economic groups generally report quite negative experiences of schooling relative to their more privileged peers. In the Irish context, they experience higher levels of absenteeism and early school leaving, lower academic engagement and achievement and report significantly more negative relationships with teachers (Millar, 2017; Keane, 2011b; Smyth et al., 2004; Lynch and Lodge, 2002; Lynch, 1989, 1999). Low teacher expectations and various forms of 'ability' grouping are frequently cited as school processes which further embed the inequalities they experience (Smyth and McCoy, 2011). Career guidance in schools has also been cited as a factor contributing to the under-progression of lower socio-economic groups to HE; those with lower levels of family history of HE participation tend to be more reliant on information provided at school level (Reay, David and Ball, 2005). Research has found that they report generally negative experiences of career guidance in school, including being directed away from HE options (Smyth and Banks, 2012; McCoy and Byrne, 2011). However, little or nothing is known about how those from lower socio-economic groups who are successful in progressing to ITE themselves experienced school, and how such experiences impacted their perspectives about access to the teaching profession.

Methodology

As part of the APT project, participants complete two individual, semi-structured interviews over the course of their PME programme, about participants' perspectives on their motivations for entering the teaching profession, their schooling and HE experiences, their ongoing experiences in the PME programme, including in relation to school placement, and their perspectives about diversifying the teaching profession. The APT project Group 1 ('Athy') participants (11), all of whom are female, commenced the PME in the 2017-2018 academic year and are currently in year two of the programme. Group 2 participants ('Blake') have recently (September 2018) commenced year one. This article draws on the

data from the first round of interviews conducted with the Athy group when they were nearing the end of PME Year 1. As per project criteria, all APT participants entered their undergraduate HE programme (at various HE institutions in Ireland) via a pre-entry access programme or HEAR. The participants were offered a PME place at the university through the standard Postgraduate Applications Centre (PAC) system having met application requirements.

Situated in the interpretive paradigm, this in-depth qualitative study employs individual, semi-structured interviews as a data collection method. Data were transcribed verbatim and grounded theory coding techniques, including open (line by line) and focused coding, categorising, and memoing (cf. Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Author, 2015) were employed during data analysis. Data collection and analysis are ongoing, and this paper focuses on a strong category generated from initial analysis relating to the (Athy) participants' schooling experiences and how these relate to their motivations to become a teacher. Pseudonyms are employed throughout.

Participants' Schooling Experiences and Motivations to become a Teacher

While many participants initially reported generally positive school experiences, most emphasised that they had encountered a lack of academic and career guidance support in post-primary school. In some cases, participants were directly discouraged by career guidance teachers from pursuing a career in teaching. Yet, rather than being deterred, the participants overcome these negative experiences and, often with the assistance of 'that one helpful teacher', successfully pursued their goal, and used their recollections of negative experiences to strengthen their developing social justice orientations to teaching.

Remembering a lack of support and low expectations of 'disadvantaged' students

Not feeling encouraged by teachers. In considering their school experiences, participants focused on relatively negative relationships with their teachers, not in terms of outright conflict but rather with respect to not feeling supported or not believing that they could ask for support. For example, Elizabeth reported that she “never did well” and “just had no interest whatsoever”. She described quite negative experiences with her teachers, noting that she “didn’t feel I could talk to any of the teachers or confide in them or anything”. She believed that her lack of interest led her teachers to “leave you sitting at the back of the class, and they focus on the people ... that want to do well ... and don’t try to motivate [you]”. Similarly, Louise linked not enjoying school to being seen as a low achiever and not being encouraged by her teachers. She felt she was regarded “as a bad student” because she “wasn’t doing so well” academically and did not feel she could ask for assistance. This impacted on her motivation and her attendance suffered.

... that's why I don't go back and do teaching practice in my school, cause it was such a negative experience, I couldn't relax or feel like I could ask for help because I never felt like I could ask for help at school. (Louise)

Two participants linked their memory of a lack of individual academic student support for those who were struggling to teachers’ focus on covering the curriculum and rote learning:

... like if you were struggling in class they just moved on, you know, there was never a case of, you know, "Ok, you're not quite getting this," it was a case of moving through the curriculum so that they had the goals done ... (Jane)

... it was very focused on rote learning ... teachers were trying to get the curriculum covered ... learning things off by heart wasn't really benefiting me ... the teacher was just so focused on getting the higher students the high grades

'Working-class' student teachers

and just didn't really care about the others, you know, the people that were struggling (Catherine)

Louise described being taught in a very traditional and didactic manner and was very critical of this approach, resolving to “do the opposite of the way I was taught” as a teacher herself.

A number of the participants were critical of their teachers' negative beliefs and low expectations about the academic capabilities and life possibilities of those from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds.

Sometimes they think "Ok, she's from a disadvantaged background, she's definitely less capable," when they're not. Um, it's OK to come from a disadvantaged background ... don't treat them so, as if they're less able. (Louise)

... in secondary school ... everyone knew everyone ... I think you're almost judged on where you came from and who you are even before you even submitted your work ... you know if someone did do well or someone did achieve something it was like "Wow, like I never expected that of them" or whatever. (Katie)

Jane was critical about what she perceived as “an attitude” from school staff about students from disadvantaged families and/or areas, which she regarded as “a form of bullying” and “disheartening” to witness:

... there was definitely kind of an attitude which I hated of the students that were from more disadvantaged areas or disadvantaged families, and it would of been known like in the area like "Ok, they're all, you know, like on the dole," ... definitely kind of an attitude towards them that was so negative ... it was evident in the class, like it was so obvious it was a form of bullying ... "Oh what's your name? Oh, ok, you're one of those like," it was real disheartening even for all the rest of us to watch ... (Jane)

Katie also reported low expectations from teachers related to their future capabilities in terms of careers such as teaching:

... other teachers would just assume that ... you wouldn't be able to like you know get such an amount of points or you wouldn't be interested in something such as teaching. ...sometimes when you come from a background where maybe teachers in the school might be a bit prejudiced, they just don't like identify you as someone that might go for teaching. So they wouldn't encourage you ... (Katie)

Louise recalled being actively discouraged from pursuing teaching by her English teacher at school when she raised it as a possibility:

Like I did initially want to be a teacher in secondary school ... it was a teacher that I had talked to about what I want to go on to do ... I was told "No, definitely not, I think that you should be, go into like events management and stuff like that". ... 'cause I wasn't doing well in his class. And then, I was completely off the idea ... (Louise)

Criticising career guidance. In considering their school experiences, the participants were most vocal and critical, however, of the amount and/or nature of career guidance they had received in school. They complained about their career guidance teachers being "terrible" (Catherine) and not having and/or relaying correct information about access routes to HE or about relevant programmes and requirements. They reported not being given adequate guidance, and in some cases not being encouraged to consider HE options at all:

... there wasn't much emphasis with the guidance counsellor in the school...We got an appointment, we got one appointment in Leaving Cert...it was a 15 minute appointment....She would literally ask you what your two favourite subjects are, type them into...the Halifax website, and then generate like five pages of 'these are possible careers for you. (Jane).

... we had a career guidance teacher who didn't seem to know much herself about things ... there's not enough ... it was only in that year when I repeated [Leaving Certificate] that I found out about the HEAR scheme ... students should be informed, because they're not informed ... maybe a class a week or a class every two weeks you know, talk about their subjects what they want to do. (Maria).

There is not enough support in career guidance in secondary school to even guide the student to what they want to do, let alone to teaching. There really isn't. I know they go to University days and stuff like, it's, it's not the same as someone going in and talking about it and telling them what they could do ... Everybody can go to college, it's not just, "Oh no, you go work." (Brigid)

A number of the participants reported being actively discouraged from pursuing teaching when they raised it as a possibility, instead being encouraged to opt for more 'suitable' employment options, or having back-up plans for HE programmes requiring fewer Leaving Certificate points:

... the dream was squashed in [name of school] because of a career guidance teacher ... we did, you know the assessment tests of what you would suit best? She said I'd be best suited as a secretary ... she's still hired there, so she's still giving the same advice. (Brigid)

I remember going towards the career guidance teacher and telling him ... he wasn't that supportive, he was more or less saying ... have like second options. ... he was just saying "Ok, well the points are very high, it's a tough course ... Jobs wise, it tends to be like who you know," ... I was like, "Geeze ... I don't know anyone in that profession, so probably it won't suit me" ... he didn't like say "Oh yes, go for it, this is what you can do, this is what you need, this is where you can go" ... No, instead he kind of just more or

less said, "Ok, right, and your second option could be?" (Katie)

... Like a lot of teachers would say ... you go onto a Career Guidance teacher, "Oh what do you want to do?" "Teaching." "Yeah, right." "You're not doing that. You're not capable of doing that." ... you definitely do need some sort of support like. (Aoife)

Having one teacher who believed in them

Significantly, a number of participants emphasised the importance of *having had one particular teacher* who had believed in them and who had actively encouraged and supported them. While Brigid reported most of her teachers "didn't like me ... I was too opinionated", she got on well with her English teacher, and this teacher encouraged her to consider teaching as a career even though she had been previously discouraged by her career guidance teacher. Catherine also recalled the impact of one (also an English) teacher on her, who actively encouraged her desire to become a teacher:

I had a teacher who really inspired me while I was in school ... my English teacher ... I could see that she actually really cared about us. ... one day she asked me where I wanted to be in the future ... I told her that I had an interest in becoming a teacher, my grades were good, but I didn't know if I had it in me, and she really inspired me. She told me I could be whoever I wanted to be, and she actually outlined different ways about going about becoming a teacher... (Catherine)

Louise, who had disliked school and did not feel encouraged by her teachers in general, also talked about one teacher who encouraged her, and made teaching seem like a possibility, because she was able to see him as 'normal' and he made teaching seem achievable:

... all my teachers gave up on me bar one, his was the classes I would go to, and I think he was the one I only kind

of related to because he was the, [pause] only person that I would [have] seen as sort of normal, all the other teachers would be like "Yeah, I'm a teacher, I done really well, I'm a high achiever," whereas he was like "... it just sort of happened." So I related sort of to him (Louise)

In contrast, Rita was one of the few participants who described her overall post-primary school experiences in a very positive light, including feeling supported by all her teachers. She noted: "I've had a great journey in education ... all my teachers have been great and they've always given me any opportunities that I needed". She recalled how one teacher in particular had encouraged after she was disappointed about her mock examination result in her subject. This encouragement significantly motivated Rita as it raised her academic self-belief:

... just because she kept ... telling us how good we could do. Like I remember when I got my mock result back, and I was really disappointed with what I got. I was really disappointed. And she was like, 'But you know you're better than this,...that was just a bad paper, you're not gonna do that again in June.'...Like after that then, I was like 'Yeah, I am better than that like. If she thinks I'm better than that, then I definitely am'.

Impact of negative school experiences on perception of teaching as a career

... discouraging students from becoming teachers. A number of the participants argued that it was understandable that negative experiences of schooling in general, and of negative relationships with teachers specifically, would result in a young person from a disadvantaged background ruling out teaching as a future option. For example, Anna explained that some students "might have had a bad experience at school, so they don't want to do that [teaching as a career]". Katie considered this issue at some length and emphasised that students who had negative schooling experiences

only associated teachers and schools with such negativity and therefore would not consider teaching as a career option:

... like a lot of these kids that do come from disadvantaged backgrounds ... they're not motivated, maybe because of what's happening at home ... in the classroom the teacher's constantly giving out to them, constantly shouting at them, constantly giving them extra work, detention ... they're like "I hate the teacher," you know, "I hate the school," so there's no way they're gonna end up thinking about ever going back into the school again ... they just never consider that role. They just want to get as far away from college or school as possible. (Katie)

Similarly, Louise argued that students from under-represented backgrounds may not "see themselves in their teacher" if their own experiences with teachers were negative and emphasised: "well, they're not going to think about teaching as a career if all their teachers aren't helpful".

Catherine, reflecting on her school placement experience in year one, also connected negative school experiences with students ruling out the possibility of a teaching career. She recalled talking to a group of students who were filling in their CAO applications and asking them if they would consider becoming a teacher:

... they were doing CAO applications ... I was like "Would anybody think about becoming a teacher?" And they were like, "Oh, no" ... "because I don't like learning," and "I don't like school" ... they have this kind of an image of school as a place ... they don't like it ... they just have a negative portrayal of school. (Catherine)

Katie contrasted this type of school experience with the more positive experience she felt was associated with "more privileged" students who may then consider teaching as a career in much more positive terms:

... children who are maybe a little bit more privileged ... they're getting grinds, they're getting tuition, they're going home to a house where there's support. They have pencil cases they have everything you know. They're not hungry sitting in school. The teacher knows that if there's a class trip they're gonna go. And they're having a great experience, it's all very positive. So when they look back on ... school as being something positive so they say "Yeah, that's what I wanna do" (Katie)

In this regard, Aoife commented on the importance of "having a laugh with [your students] and talking to them about things like football, and relating to them, it can make a difference to them" which may lead to them thinking that "'Oh, you know, teaching's not all that bad'". Interestingly, Anna, who reported that she "loved school ... it's like something I look back on really fondly" felt that this positive experience "probably did have an influence on my choice to do teaching".

...wanting to help students 'like them'. In terms of the impact of their own school experiences on their perception of teaching as a career, for the participants in this study, a strong motivation to help students 'like them' was expressed. Their own negative memories of not being encouraged and/or supported had remained in their consciousness but had sparked a desire to be approachable and relatable to their students, to actively engage all of their students in their learning, and to demonstrate belief in their capabilities and to support and inspire them in terms of their future plans:

... I think it's very important for students to, like I said, be able to talk to the teacher, not be scared going into the classroom ... I don't know why I felt that I couldn't talk to my teachers ... I wouldn't mind now if the students knew a bit about myself. If they asked me any questions I'd be happy to say like or where I come from ... it's important that they know even if you did come from disadvantaged area or a background and if they're struggling, that they

too can do better. That they can still be something... just to help them be the best that they can be. (Elizabeth)

.. I hoped to be able to inspire students and to become a role model ... to em motivate them to want to learn and to enjoy the learning experience ... if they enjoy learning now they're going to want to progress and learn and learn. And I suppose, it might motivate them to want to become educators themselves (Catherine)

When asked by her sister why she wanted to become a teacher, Aoife explained that, "I just wanna kind of help people." She felt she could do so "by teaching them... making differences in the classroom... [by] being the best version of [herself] as a teacher by catering to the students' needs and the diversity in the classroom".

Louise underscored the importance of teachers being seen by their students as helpful and "making a difference" and felt this would allow students to view teaching as a career option in a more positive light.

Um, if they can see you making a difference in their life, they'll consider it more ... "Oh, she was really helpful, she made a difference, I wanna be like her." (Louise)

Using the example of social care, Anna made the broader point that having had a past positive experience with something or someone in a particular profession would orient one positively towards that profession, and linked this back to teaching.

... a lot of kids from disadvantaged areas, like a lot of them that go to college end up doing like social care, cause they're like "Oh, I went through this experience with counselling and it really helped me so now I want to do that." I think maybe if that element of teaching ... it's said a lot, "Oh you're helping people" ... if you kind of went

more into the personal side of like helping ... that might kind of attract more people...

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, it has been shown that many of those from lower socio-economic groups who successfully progress to HE and on to ITE at postgraduate level report having had negative experiences of post-primary school, which is not an uncommon finding for those from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds (cf. section 2). In spite of not feeling encouraged or supported by their teachers, including their career guidance teachers (who in some cases actively *discouraged* them from pursuing a career in teaching), the participants managed to maintain their desire to progress to HE and into teaching, and successfully navigated their way through a HE system relatively alien to them (given their lack of family history of HE participation).

Teachers' low academic and career expectations for 'disadvantaged' students is well documented (Author, 2011b, 2012; Rist, 1970; Archer and Leathwood, 2003; Rosenthal and Jacobsen, 1968). McCoy and Byrne (2011) found that one of the factors which impacted on the lack of self-belief of those who did *not* progress to HE was their previous negative school experiences, including perceptions of unfair treatment by teachers and low teacher expectations. McCoy and Byrne argue that for this group, HE was regarded as "an extension of school ... and hence to be avoided" (p. 149). This perspective (of negative school experiences putting one off anything which resembled it) was also expressed by this study's participants. Reflecting on the under-representation of those from lower socio-economic groups in teaching, the participants were clear that negative schooling experiences – especially those relating to student-teacher interactions - impacted directly on many pupils by leading them to rule out any possibility of a teaching career. As noted by Harford and Gray (2017), one's experiences of schooling as a child and young person impact on student teachers' (and teachers') professional identity formation (see also, Sugrue, 1997; Lortie, 1975). Careers education occupies a pivotal position in

overcoming or entrenching class-based inequalities in society. It has been argued that career guidance may promote more equal life chances, social equity and social mobility (Archer et al., 2014; Sultana, 2014) especially where significant provision is available to students from a young age (Welde et al., 2016). However, the potential role of career guidance in reproducing class-based inequalities in society is well-established (cf. Willis, 1977), and research frequently has found that students from lower socio-economic and minority groups are critical of their career guidance experience. Wanting ‘more and better’ (Moote and Archer, 2018) career guidance is a common finding in research with young people about the subject (cf. Smyth and Banks, 2012). In their mixed-methods study of 13,000 students’ views on careers education provision in England, Moote and Archer (2018) concluded that provision may be exacerbating inequalities relating to class (as well as ethnicity and gender). Bias has been found in careers’ teachers’ expectations for students from different ethnic, class and gender groups (Archer, Hollingworth and Mendick, 2010). The provision of career guidance has also been found to vary significantly across schools (McCoy et al., 2006), and those schools attended by middle-class students generally provide more support throughout the HE application process (Mullen, 2009). Similar to what has been reported in this paper, Smyth and Banks (2012) noted students’ (attending a ‘disadvantaged’ school) reports of guidance teachers’ low expectations, of being encouraged to have more ‘realistic’ aspirations than degree programmes and of being put off HE more generally, often in favour of lower status post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. This is particularly problematic given that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more reliant than their middle-class counterparts on school-based guidance, as they have less access to information about HE given that their families may have little or no history of HE participation (Reay, David and Ball, 2005). In this context, the impact of the 2012 educational cuts on the availability of career guidance in schools in Ireland is notable (Leahy, O’Flaherty and Hearne, 2017).

Our data suggest, however, that negative schooling experiences can be overcome by the existence of ‘that one teacher’ who a student

perceives as being encouraging and caring. For several participants, having had one teacher who was supportive of their future plans impacted very positively on them, motivating them to continue in pursuit of their goals. Research has highlighted 'disadvantaged' students' emphasis on the importance of teachers being 'caring', which is demonstrated through their ongoing encouragement and active support (cf. Lynch and Lodge, 2002). Further, the participants also appeared to be consciously transforming their negative school experiences into something positive; their developing social justice-oriented teaching motivation – wanting to inspire and support other students like them – was rooted in having *not* been encouraged themselves. As we saw in section 2.2, previous research has found that 'working-class' teachers demonstrate social justice-oriented and/or altruistic motivations, and Author (2016) found that such motivational orientations in various professions, including teaching, are rooted in previous challenging life experiences, including at school. In this paper, we have explored the nuances of how not being encouraged or supported at school fostered in the participants a sharp and conscious desire to be 'other' (i.e. being relatable, supportive, helpful and making a difference) in their work with their own students. This was an important factor in the participants' motivation to become a teacher. While Lortie (1975) acknowledged the impact of teachers' 'biography' on their approach to teaching, and noted the long association of the 'service theme' with teaching, he found little evidence of teachers identifying this as their reason for entry into the profession. Research with working-class and minority (ethnic) teachers, however, demonstrates their common desire to effect change and contribute to transformation in the educational system (cf. Maguire, Su, 1997; King, 1993) and this is cited as one of their main motivations for teaching.

There are a number of implications for policy and practice emerging from this study. Fundamentally, the everyday experience of school for those from lower socio-economic groups must be improved. As previously argued (Author, 2011; 2018), continuous professional development (CPD) is urgently required for teachers on the role of student-teacher relationships and teacher expectations

in pupils' school experiences and achievement, and, in particular, the relationship of such factors to socio-demographic positionality. This work must include a focus on how all teachers and career guidance teachers can and should support *all* students' developing plans about future education and career options (irrespective of their own views about a student's apparent 'ability'), and ought to involve encouraging students to consider professional careers, including teaching, rather than trying to orient them towards more 'realistic' options – which was commonly reported in this study. Clearly, additional investment (including reversing the 2012 budgetary cuts) in career guidance, especially in DEIS schools, is required, because those from lower socio-economic groups are more reliant upon school for information about access to HE than their more privileged peers (see section 2). More awareness of 'alternative' HE entry routes (e.g. the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR), and the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) schemes, and Access programmes more generally) amongst teachers and guidance teachers is also needed. In terms of implications for ITE, the impact of 'that one supportive teacher' is significant, and more work with student teachers on this issue during ITE is recommended. Additionally, the potential of 'working-class' student teachers to be change agents on their programmes, through sharing their experiences with their ITE peers (as suggested by Su (1997) in relation to minority (ethnic) student teachers), thus helping them to develop critical consciousness about education and equality, is noted. However, given the discomfort frequently reported by lower socio-economic groups in being identified as such (Author, 2011a), ethical dilemmas around identity disclosure, and sensitivities therein, would first have to be carefully addressed.

This first paper arising from the APT project has commenced the process of disentangling the various factors, and the nuances therein, related to the under-representation of those from lower socio-economic groups in the teaching profession, a much under-researched area in the international context and one which has received little attention to date in Ireland. The participants stressed the significant impact of previous negative schooling experiences

as a deterrent to considering teaching as a viable or attractive career option for those from lower socio-economic groups in general. Interestingly, however, for the participants themselves, these negative experiences did not deter them, and with the support of 'that one helpful teacher', they actually formed the basis for the development of a social justice-oriented conceptualisation of teaching. Further research on these and related factors, and the implications for schooling, diversifying the teaching profession, and ITE more generally, is recommended.

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