An exploratory study of the impact of the involvement of teachers of SPHE, CSPE and PE in the new Wellbeing Programme at Junior Cycle. A teaching perspective.

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The author hereby declares that this thesis is entirely her own work. No element of the work described in this thesis has been previously submitted for any degree in the University of Limerick, or in any other institution.

Signiture: _______________________________
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## Glossary

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASTI</td>
<td>Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuous Professional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSPE</td>
<td>Civic Social &amp; Political Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOH</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHS</td>
<td>Education and Health Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HiAP</td>
<td>Health in All Policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JCT</td>
<td>Junior Cycle for Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCCA</td>
<td>National Council for Curriculum and Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
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<td>PLC</td>
<td>Professional Learning Communities</td>
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<td>RSE</td>
<td>Relationships and Sexuality Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPHE</td>
<td>Social Personal &amp; Health Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>TUI</td>
<td>Teachers Union of Ireland</td>
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The junior cycle Wellbeing Programme was introduced in post-primary schools in September 2017. The Wellbeing programme combines the subjects of CSPE, SPHE and PE. Guidance Education has also been identified as an area of learning to be included in Wellbeing. Students will engage in 300 hours of wellbeing and this is to increase to 400 hours by 2020. This new area of learning will provide students with an opportunity to enhance their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing (NCCA, 2017 p.8). The teachers of SPHE, CSPE and PE are now responsible for this new area for learning. The primary aim of the research is to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers involved in implementing Wellbeing and consequently illuminate the potential this new arrangement has on the opportunities provided to students to enhance their wellbeing. This research was carried out with six participants, all of whom are involved in Wellbeing implementation. The research was carried out using semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were designed to focus on three areas identified by the NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines (2017) as important areas for consideration when implementing Wellbeing. These are Collaboration, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Planning for Wellbeing. Thematic analysis was used to analyse and categorise the findings from the interviews. The findings from this study (a teacher perspective) identified that the participants involved in this new area of learning are generally positive about this arrangement. However there are some concerns about certain factors that could potentially impact on students’ opportunity to enhance their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing. Finally, the findings from this research could be used to inform policy practice in schools and also future policy and practice within Guidance Education due to its inclusion in the Wellbeing programme at junior cycle.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research topic that is to be explored within the context of relevant theory and practice. The following sections will discuss the context and justification for the research. It will provide a description of the positionality of the researcher. An overview of the methodology will be presented. The aims and objectives of the research will be outlined. Finally, this chapter presents a plan for the thesis.

1.1 Context and Justification for the Study

In 2010 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) carried out a consultation process in *Innovation and Identity: Ideas for a new junior cycle* (2010) with regard to change within junior cycle education. One of the key areas that emerged from this consultation process was the “concern for the wellbeing of young people at this critical stage of their journey from childhood to adulthood in a complex and challenging environment” (NCCA, 2011, p.3). In 2015 the NCCA’s *Framework for Junior Cycle* explicitly identified Wellbeing as a curricular area that would comprise the three subject areas of CSPE, SPHE, PE and Guidance Education. Other modules and learning experiences through other subject areas can also be included alongside these subject areas and Guidance in order to provide 300 hours timetabled for Wellbeing at junior cycle. This will be increased to 400 by 2020 (NCCA, 2017)

The NCCA stated that this new programme will:

> Make the school’s culture and ethos and commitment to wellbeing visible to students...it will include learning opportunities to enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of students. It will enable students to build life skills and develop a strong sense of connectedness to their school and their community.

(NCCA, 2017, p.8)

The implementation of Wellbeing at junior cycle will primarily be the responsibility of teachers of CSPE, SPHE and PE along with the Guidance Counsellor. This new programme therefore identifies a new area of focus for all involved. The curricular content of the subjects included in wellbeing may not change, and in some cases may simply be re-structured in order to create a short course for that subject area. However, these teachers now have a new
area of responsibility whereby they play an important role in ensuring that students experience opportunities that enhance their wellbeing. The primary aim of the research is to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers involved in implementing Wellbeing and consequently highlight the potential impact of these on the opportunities provided to students to enhance their wellbeing. It will specifically focus on the factors that are relevant to the teachers of Social Personal Health Education (SPHE), Physical Education (PE), Civic Social Political Education (CSPE), as these are the core subjects within Wellbeing.

The research aims to explore specifically three areas that have been identified within the Wellbeing guidelines (NCCA, 2017) as important areas for consideration when implementing Wellbeing in schools. These three areas are collaboration, Continuous Professional Development (CPD)/skill-set and planning.

1.2 Positionality of the Researcher

The positionality of the researcher is significant in the context of this particular research project. Thomas (2017) states that the researcher’s positionality should be stated at the outset of the research. The researcher has worked for nine years in the chosen post-primary school. The researcher has a personal interest in the research topic due to her involvement in Wellbeing through the subject of SPHE, and also as a trainee guidance counsellor as student wellbeing is central to this role.

The researcher carried out semi-structured interviews with six participants. These participants were work colleagues of the researcher and therefore it was essential that the researcher used reflexivity to ensure they critically reflected on their position. This ensured validity of the research (Thomas, 2017).

1.3 Methodology

An interpretivist paradigm was selected for the purpose of the research. This paradigm will allow the researcher to focus on “the subjective experience of the individuals studied and seeks to understand and describe what happens to them from their own point of view” (Robson, 2007, p.44). The researcher was primarily interested in the experiences and perceptions of teachers involved in implementing Wellbeing and consequently the potential
impact of these on the opportunities provided to students to enhance their wellbeing. The study therefore is about exploring, from these teacher perspectives, the factors that could potentially impact on the implementation of the Wellbeing programme and consequently on the pursuit of student wellbeing. In order to gain insight into these teacher experiences a narrative inquiry was used as it allows the participants of this research to tell a story of their direct experiences, and respond to questions in the semi-structured interview in a way that allows the participant to give rich, detailed accounts of experience or examples to illustrate their context in relation to Wellbeing provision.

1.4 Aim and Objectives

The primary aim of this research is to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers involved in implementing Wellbeing and consequently illuminate whether this new arrangement is providing the opportunity to students to enhance their wellbeing.

The specific objectives were to:

1. To review relevant literature in relation to policy and practice with regard to the implementation of the new Wellbeing programme at junior cycle.
2. To identify whether a collaborative approach to Wellbeing is being used in the implementation and planning of Wellbeing within the case study school, as set out by the Wellbeing guidelines.
3. To illuminate current perceptions of teachers within Wellbeing with regard to the competency/skill-set required for the programme.
4. To explore the impact of the role of school’s management on the implementation of Wellbeing at junior cycle.
5. To make recommendations that may inform practice, policy and further research.

1.5 Plan of the Thesis

Chapter 1: The introduction aims to set out the context and justification for the research. The methodology to be used is outlined alongside the positionality of the researcher. The aims and objectives are also outlined. A plan of the thesis is also presented.
Chapter 2: The literature review presents a critical evaluation of previous research and discourse on the research topic. It examines a variety of secondary sources of information that aims to provide a point of reference for the researcher’s own primary data findings.

Chapter 3: The Methodology chapter describes the theoretical and practical application of the research design. A rationale for the chosen research paradigm is presented. The primary and secondary research questions are listed. The method of data collection and analysis are also explained. Reliability, validity, reflexivity and ethical research practice are also addressed.

Chapter 4: The research findings are presented and categorised into 3 main themes which were prescribed by the researcher: Collaboration, Continuous Professional Development and Planning with Wellbeing.

Chapter 5: The Discussion presents a critical interpretation of the research findings along with the literature reviewed.

Chapter 6: The Conclusion of the research will summarise the main findings of the research. It will outline recommendations in terms of practice, policy and future practice pertaining to the Wellbeing programme in the post-primary sector.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research topic. It also highlights the context and justification for the research. The principle findings of this research aim to illuminate the experiences and perceptions of the teachers that are involved in teaching Wellbeing. The Wellbeing programme aims to “make the school’s culture and ethos and commitment to wellbeing visible to students. It will include learning opportunities to enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of students” (NCCA, 2017, p8). This exploration of teacher experience and perception within Wellbeing aims to identify whether this new arrangement at junior cycle, from a teaching perspective is providing that opportunity to students to enhance their wellbeing.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The aim of the research is to explore the factors that are impacting on teaching within the new Wellbeing programme at junior cycle and to explore how these factors are impacting on the delivery and implementation of this new programme in post-primary schools. Consequently the research aims to identify the potential impact of this new arrangement on the opportunity for students to enhance their wellbeing. The relevance of this research to Guidance Education can be made due to the place of Guidance within Wellbeing. The NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines (2017), state that Guidance education must be included within Wellbeing at junior cycle. As the guidance counsellor will play an important role in the planning and implementation of Wellbeing, the findings from this research will consequently be of relevance to Guidance departments in the post-primary sector.

The chapter will explore policies both national and international pertaining to wellbeing. It will also explore literature on relevant theories, educational circulars and publications from relevant bodies and organisations in the area of wellbeing. It will also focus on the research that underpins the movement to promote wellbeing in Irish schools. It will explore Wellbeing in junior cycle and the role of SPHE, CSPE and PE within the programme. It will explore the three areas of: collaboration, continuous professional development (CPD) and planning as being areas of importance for teaching within the Wellbeing programme. The role of the guidance counsellor and the whole-school approach being adopted by schools in implementing holistic education such as guidance and Wellbeing will also be explored.

2.1 Wellbeing and Policy - The Irish Societal Context

The Government, following one of the most extensive consultation processes undertaken, prepared the first ever National Children’s Strategy (2000). According to Bertie Ahern, the Taoiseach during that period, Ireland, like the rest of the world, had only just begun to try to fully listen to, understand and act in the best interests of all of its children (2000, p.2). The Strategy set out an ambitious series of objectives to guide children’s policy over the next ten years. The term wellbeing was explicitly referred to in this document where children’s health and wellbeing were stated as one of the main areas of children’s needs and concerns that must be addressed (ibid. p. 8). The National Children’s Strategy: Our children, their lives (2000)
also proposed a vision for Ireland where children are respected as young citizens...children are cherished and supported by their family and the wider community...and realise their potential. The strategy intended to set the foundation for change in relation to policy that impacted on the child with regard to fulfilling their childhood and realising their potential.

In 2013 the Department of Health set out a similar vision in its Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025. This framework through its goals and actions, states that all sectors coming together will ensure coherent policy and sustainable co-operative action for health and wellbeing. The vision set out in this framework specifies that health and wellbeing is “valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility” (Dept of Health, p.5).

The concept of an ‘intersectoral’ approach or a whole-system approach emerges in this framework as being very relevant to wellbeing in education. This ‘intersectoral’ approach proposes that health and wellbeing are not solely based on individual lifestyles and shifts the focus to societal factors and actions that shape our everyday lives. These whole-system approaches are often referred to as Health in All Policies (HiAP). HiAPs highlight that the determinants of health are modified by measures that are often controlled by other Government sectors. Education has been named as one of the broader societal determinants of health.

The Healthy Ireland Framework draws on existing policies but proposes new arrangements to ensure effective co-operation and collaboration and to implement evidence-based policies at government, sectoral, community and local levels. It is about each individual sector helping to improve health and wellbeing, multiplying all efforts and delivering better results.

(Dept of Health, p.6)

2.2 Research that Promotes Wellbeing in Education

While government departments provide frameworks to guide policy to ensure that the child’s voice is heard and that they can realise their full potential, research and studies around wellbeing in educational contexts are also essential to ensure appropriate supports are implemented. It is appropriate to begin with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention complements a rights based approach to wellbeing. This is important as it doesn’t only focus on educational outcomes, but it focuses on wellbeing in the here and now (NCCA, 2017, p.10). Smyth (2015, p.3) identifies international research showing an association between the quality of relationships between students and teachers
and student outcomes such as socio-emotional wellbeing and feeling a sense of belonging in school.

*Skills for Social Progress* states that “teachers can play a particularly important role in raising children’s self-esteem, motivation and confidence by the way they organise their teaching and learning” (OECD, p.83). When one considers the amount of time students spend in class each day, it could be suggested that the greatest opportunity to contribute to student wellbeing is within the classroom (NCCA, 2017, p.32).

A hugely influential survey in the implementation of the Wellbeing programme is the Headstrong *My World* survey. Among the 12-18 year olds surveyed the most powerful predictor of good mental health was the presence of ‘one good adult’ in their lives. For most of the participants their mother was the ‘one good adult’ however, for many it was their teacher. The participants that could identify such an adult were found to have higher self-esteem and a sense of wellbeing. For those participants that couldn’t identify with such a figure, there was a higher risk of depression, self harm, anxiety and acting out (NCCA, 2017, p.10). This survey focused on 12-25 year old participants and it identified this stage of a person’s life as being vulnerable. This has significant relevance to the post-primary education. As stated previously, post-primary education provides the best opportunity to provide support to these adolescents during classroom and school experiences.

Some specific data from the My World survey supports the need for programmes within post-primary education that aim to reduce mental health difficulties. An example is the reduction of adolescent positive coping strategies during at the ages 14 to 15, where the survey shows it at its lowest. The survey explains that positive coping strategies are problem focused. The Wellbeing programme in junior cycle provides an opportunity for teachers to provide support at these key developmental stages, so that the students experience wellbeing in the here and now, and can go on to realise their full potential.

### 2.3 Junior Cycle Reform and Wellbeing

Over twenty years ago, the first reports on the new unified Junior Certificate programme introduced in 1990 suggested that “the mismatch between the re-designed curriculum and terminal examination had resulted in the lower secondary system resetting itself back to the
status quo despite the new labelling” (NCCA, 2011, p.4-5). This was mostly due to the assessment reforms associated with the new curriculum not being delivered. In 1999/2000 the NCCA and the Department of Education jointly led a series of nationwide debates on the future of junior cycle curriculum and assessment. As a consequence the NCCA began a process of “re-balancing Junior Certificate subject syllabuses in an effort to address what is seen as an over-crowded curriculum” (ibid., p.5). Concerns regarding the “wellbeing of young people at this critical stage of their journey from childhood to adulthood in a complex and challenging environment” also emerged from this consultation process. It also emerged that junior cycle education has “three distinct stages: a first year about settling in, a third year dominated by the examination and a second year where students can either become more or less connected to school” (NCCA, 2011 p.4). This disengagement was reported not to be a phase or a glitch but a process that will deepen in senior cycle and continue beyond schooling. The idea of a new Framework for Junior Cycle was consequently proposed where some elements of junior cycle were for all students and all schools and other elements could be designed by schools to suit their individual needs. The Framework intended to offer students a “junior cycle experience that was both a follow-on from primary education and a preparation for senior cycle but that was first and foremost connected to the lives and learning of 12-15 year olds” (ibid., p.3)

*The Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015) provides for the new area of Wellbeing at junior cycle as an attempt to “enable students to build life skills and develop a strong sense of connectedness to their school” (NCCA 2017, p8). The Wellbeing Guidelines for Junior Cycle is a key document for all schools. It sets out guidelines for a whole-school approach to wellbeing.

### 2.4 Adolescence a Key Stage in Development

The knowledge around the psychology of adolescent development can provide us with an opportunity to understand the variety of contexts and processes that are impacting on students throughout secondary school. It has already been identified that the age from 12 to 15 is a crucial time to maintain a connection between students and school. Developmentally adolescence is a complex time and there are many factors that are impacting at this time.
2.4.1 Bronfenbrenner an Ecological theory on development

Bronfenbrenner explains development in terms of “relationships between people and their environments or contexts” (Boyd, Bee, 2002, p.45). These environments are categorised into three layers or systems each having a level of influence on the person, the micro-system, exo-system and macro-systems. The micro-system is the closest level of influence on the person or “biological context”. It is made up of the person’s family, friends, community and school. The biological context is the person or individual who has a specific genetic make-up and at a specific developmental stage, for example. This ecological theory around development of the person “provides a way of thinking about development that captures the complexity of individual and contextual variables” (ibid., p.47). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory has helped developmental psychologists categorise environmental factors and think about ways in which they influence individuals.

2.4.2 Erikson and the Psychosocial theory on development

Erikson’s psychosocial theory addresses another developmental factor impacting on the development at adolescence. His description of the main adolescence dilemma or crisis-identity versus role confusion has been particularly influential in order to arrive at a mature sexual and occupational identity. The key at this stage is to avoid role confusion and develop an integrated sense of self, in order to achieve identity. While Erikson’s theory is critiqued as it may oversimplify the stages of development to a single crisis, it does however identify that a crisis does exist. When both Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory and Erikson’s psychosocial theory are considered within an educational context, it can be proposed that schools play an important and influencing role in the successful navigation of adolescence development.

2.5 Why Wellbeing within SPHE, CSPE and PE?

To fully understand Wellbeing at junior cycle one must understand the rationale for the inclusion of SPHE, CSPE and PE as the subject areas that mainly comprise the Wellbeing programme. The guidelines for Wellbeing state that student wellbeing can be “enhanced when important aspects of wellbeing are the subject of teaching and learning in specific curriculum areas” (NCCA, 2017, p.17). The guidelines also highlight the important of planning for Wellbeing in the curriculum and assigning space on the timetable. In doing this the schools’ commitment to wellbeing becomes visible, and it communicates to students, teachers and parents that wellbeing matters (ibid, p.46).
Teachers of SPHE, CSPE and PE now find themselves with an overall responsibility for this new area of learning. The Junior Cycle and Reform, Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation (2015) released by the Teachers’ Union of Ireland, Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland and Department of Education and Skills identifies collaboration and Continuous Professional Development as areas of importance in order to implement the change required to bring about Junior Cycle Reform. The statement makes explicit that “enabling professional development and collaboration between teachers...lie at the heart of this agreement.” It also identifies the important role of the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) that will enable teachers to use the NCCA standards collaboratively with other teachers in the school” (TUI, ASTI, DES, p.6). Collaboration, CPD and Planning have previously been identified as important areas for consideration by the NCCA Guidelines (2017). This research aims to explore how these three areas are impacting on teaching within Wellbeing and as a consequence on the opportunity for students to enhance their wellbeing.

2.5.1 Civic Social Personal Education- CSPE
CSPE is an important part of Wellbeing. In particular CSPE focuses on the importance of connectedness; that student wellbeing and the wellbeing of others are connected. An ecological understanding of wellbeing can be developed in CSPE where students can identify that the relationship between themselves, others and the environment. CSPE also prompts students to consider the many social, political, cultural and economic factors that affect individual and collective wellbeing.

CSPE is an important part of a wellbeing programme within junior cycle as it enables students to grow in awareness of how their wellbeing is connected to the wellbeing of others, locally and globally. It also develops students’ sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of others.

(NCCA, www.curriculumonline.ie)

2.5.2 Physical Education
Six indicators for wellbeing have been identified in the Guidelines for Wellbeing: Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware. PE is the most suitable and most appropriate curricular area for students to access the first indicator- Active. This indicator requires students to consider how active, confident and skilled they are physically. PE also
provides an opportunity for students to identify the connection between physical and mental health. Healthy Ireland framework states that “legislation, regulation and policy direction will be progressed across Government Departments to facilitate the implementation of multi-stakeholder policies and evidence-based actions for improved health and wellbeing” (NCCA, p.19). The framework proposes that plans to promote increased physical activity levels across the population need to be developed as part of the Government strategy to improve overall health and wellbeing in society, thereby justifying the importance of Physical Education in the pursuit of student wellbeing.

2.5.3 Social, Personal and Health Education SPHE

SPHE provides opportunities for teaching and learning that is directly related to health and wellbeing, and this subject has always had an important place in the pursuit of wellbeing. Geary and McNamara (2003, p.13, 14) state that a high level of facilitation skills, the comfort to explore topics closely related to the lives of young people and personal development and awareness are required when teaching SPHE. This sets SPHE apart from CSPE and PE with regard to the type of teaching and learning that is experienced in SPHE. Teachers of SPHE are directly concerned with student wellbeing as a result of the nature of SPHE and the curriculum requirements. However, in the majority of cases teachers complete initial teacher training without qualification in SPHE (NCCA, 2017, p.54). The Wellbeing Guidelines state ‘that teachers should be facilitated in attending ongoing continuing professional development opportunities, thereby developing the school’s professional capacity in these areas’ (Ibid, p.54).

2.6 Collaboration, Continuous Professional Development and Planning within Wellbeing

The areas of collaboration, continuous professional development and planning were identified as the main areas to be researched for the purpose of this study. Collaboration has been identified as a key area for consideration when implementing the Wellbeing programme at junior cycle. Barfield states that collaboration lets teachers move beyond their own individual viewpoints by working with peers... and thus lessens their dependency on outside experts (Barfield, 2016, p222). This creates an opportunity for teachers “to learn from each other, sharing and developing their expertise together” (Hargreaves, 1994, p186). This collaborative approach between the SPHE, CSPE and PE departments will ensure that a “shared vision” and “collegial” approach to Wellbeing is achieved.
The Wellbeing guidelines also identify the importance of professional development for all to ensure that they have a deep conceptual understanding of the Wellbeing programme and that they are confident in using pedagogical approaches that will enhance and build students’ wellbeing (NCCA, 2017, p.29). Palmer (1997, p.15) states that “we teach who we are”. This is an essential consideration for all teachers in preparation for their involvement in the Wellbeing programme. A teacher’s own values and understanding and appreciation of wellbeing will ultimately impact on their own wellbeing and that of their students. Therefore, the success of Wellbeing at junior cycle is strongly connected to appropriate CPD and training for all teachers in this new curricular area.

2.7 Guidance within Wellbeing

Watts and Kidd (2000, p.489) define guidance as a “range of processes designed to enable individuals to make informed choices and transitions related to their educational, vocational, employment and personal development.” Watts and Kidd also went on to characterise guidance into the three areas of personal, educational and vocational guidance. It is through the personal guidance strand that the guidance counsellor is placed to take a primary role in relation to the pursuit of student wellbeing. The guidance counsellor has a key role in supporting the “moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students” (Education Act, 1998, Section 9 (c)).

While the guidance counsellor is best placed to take a primary role in relation to the pursuit of student wellbeing a whole school approach to guidance has emerged in the post-primary sector. This resulted due to the 2012 budget cuts which resulted in schools being directed to manage guidance provision from within their standard staffing schedule (DES, 2012, p.4). Prior to this, post-primary schools were allocated ex-quota guidance counselling hours which allowed schools to provide guidance outside of the teacher student ratio (DES Inspectorate, 2009). This meant that some responsibility for guidance would be passed on to the ‘regular teachers’. Galvin (2012, p.21) defines the regular teacher as someone “who does not perform specific roles such as Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principals or Year Heads”. This is relevant to the proposed research in that, it is not unprecedented that guidance counsellors experience the involvement of ‘regular’ teachers in guidance provision, a part of which is associated with the student wellbeing.
Consideration for the recommendations made by the Department of Education, on how ‘regular’ teachers should be involved in whole school guidance provision, is certainly relevant in the context of the inclusion of teachers of CSPE, SPHE and PE in the Wellbeing programme. Both are situations whereby teachers have been allocated new responsibility in an area that is mainly non-examination in nature and aims to facilitate a more holistic education. Seed (1992, p.42) states that holistic education is about “engaging with the whole person of each child.” This whole-school approach that is to be adopted within Wellbeing will require teachers to work collaboratively in order to achieve a coherent and shared vision with regard to student wellbeing. It will also require a certain level of CPD to ensure that teachers have the right level of knowledge, understanding and skills in order to deliver this new area of learning in an effective way. As a result of this students are provided with an opportunity to enhance their wellbeing.

2.8 Teacher Wellbeing and Professional Learning Communities

The NCCA guidelines for Wellbeing at junior cycle identifies teacher wellbeing as being crucial to “putting wellbeing on the school map” (2017, p.29). The guidelines also propose ways that teachers can consider and enhance their own wellbeing. The quality of teacher and student relationships, a teacher’s sense of connectedness and belonging to their school and policy issues and school culture will are identified as having an impact on teacher wellbeing. Professional development is identified as being essential if teachers are to gain a deep conceptual understanding of wellbeing. Teacher wellbeing and the areas identified that enhance teacher wellbeing are key to the success of Wellbeing in the post-primary sector. Ultimately, how each school sets about creating a positive and supportive environment for its teachers, will inadvertently impact on the provision of wellbeing in that school.

Wellbeing in school starts with the staff. They are in the front line of the work and it is hard for them to be genuinely motivated to promote emotional and social wellbeing of others if they feel uncared for and burnt out themselves. (Weare, 2015, p.6)

Supportive environments can be encouraged through collaboration, training and development and other collegial supports such as department meetings. Professional Learning Communities or PLCs are positive ways to support professionals. The PLCs can be particularly effective in dealing with changes with regard to professional roles. The professional learning community is defined by what the words state; the professional or
teacher are those individuals who are responsible and accountable for delivering an effective instructional program to students so that they each learn well. Professionals show up with a passionate commitment to their own learning and that of students, and share responsibility to this purpose. Learning is the activity in which professionals engage in order to enhance their knowledge and skills. The community refers to individuals coming together in a group in order to interact in meaningful activities to learn deeply with colleagues about an identified topic, to develop shared meaning, and identify shared purposes related to the topic. (Hord, 2009, P.41)

Owen (2017) states that professional learning communities (PLCs) have been “recognised as highly effective in supporting teachers in changing their beliefs and practices”. The introduction of Wellbeing in junior cycle will require all teachers in the post-primary education system to rethink teaching strategies, approaches used in assessment, feedback and the importance of positive student/teacher relationships. The content of what teachers are teaching may not change, but consideration for student wellbeing as set out in the Wellbeing guidelines (2017) will have an overall impact on what is being taught. Research in the area of positive learning communities by Owens (2017) identifies connections between characteristics of PLCs and positive psychology connections. These positive psychology connections can support can enhance teacher wellbeing.

Through positive psychology elements such as nurturing positive emotion and a greater sense of purpose for teachers within PLCs, there are benefits for teacher professional learning but also potentially for student learning and wellbeing. (Owens, 2017, 403)

The professional learning community has a particular relevance to the introduction of Wellbeing as a curricular area, as research identifies PLCs as being highly effective in supporting teacher learning. They also help teachers “build new skills”, help “change beliefs and classroom practices” and “support improvement in teacher wellbeing” (Owens, 2017, p. 403).

The characteristics associated with an effective PLC can be useful in identifying certain activities that teaching communities can engage in, that will promote a positive and successful experience when implementing new programmes, using new teaching pedagogy or bringing about change in any form to bring about improvement. Some of the characteristics identified by Owens (2017) are: a shared vision by all teachers, collaboration, engagement in
practical activities, distributed leadership and professional growth and collegial learning. If teacher wellbeing is central to the students own experience of wellbeing, the development of PLC characteristics within the post-primary sector will inadvertently have a positive impact on making wellbeing visible within the school. Teachers must therefore, engage collaboratively, have a shared vision of wellbeing, engage in CPD and develop necessary skills that are required to facilitate Wellbeing and invest in long-term active reflective and growth-promoting approaches to Wellbeing, to bring about the positive psychology influence on teacher wellbeing.

**Exploration of the experiences and perceptions of teachers within Wellbeing**

A specific focus of the proposed research is identifying the experiences and perceptions of teachers involved in the Wellbeing programme. When exploring the experiences and perceptions the researcher will be trying to ascertain the level of competency reported by teachers involved in Wellbeing. In the context of this study the competency will refer to appropriate educational training to teach and facilitate groups where the objective is not only to increase knowledge or measure ability of a specific task as required for examination purposes, but to provide opportunities to enhance student wellbeing.

The CSPE and PE classes will have less focus on the personal development aspect of wellbeing, however SPHE deals with more sensitive personal development areas such as emotional health and relationships and sexuality education. It could be proposed that certain counselling skills and experience in group counselling are required to teach in this context. Corey and Corey (2006, p. 329, 330) suggests that when working with adolescents in a group certain challenges will emerge for the leader of the group. Motivating the member to become an “active participant” (Corey, Corey, 2006, p.331) is a key challenge for the teacher. Corey and Corey (2006, p.331) also suggest that the leader must clearly state any guidelines for conduct during the session and the need and ability to be creative during the sessions to keep things going in a meaningful direction. “Creating trust, dealing with resistance, facilitating action, sustaining interest and including as many members as possible” is also identified by Corey and Corey as being essential for a meaningful experience when in the group. The nature of group processes, dynamics and the developmental requirement involved may require previous experiential group participation (Ohrt, J. et al., p.213). Corey (2012) suggests that facilitators who deal with their own fears and resistances, and experience these in a group context, better understand the importance of trust and cohesion for the group.
Geary and McNamara (2003, p.13, 14) state that a high level of facilitation skills, the comfort to explore topics closely related to the lives of young people and personal development and awareness are required. The guidance counsellor will have gained this type of training, but teachers of CSPE, PE and SPHE may not have the required skills or specific training required that leads to personal growth such as increased self-awareness and self-understanding and also promote emotional development and positive mental health. Therefore, reported competency from the teachers that are involved in Wellbeing will illuminate an essential component of the impact of the involvement of these teachers within Wellbeing.

**Conclusion**

Wellbeing is everyone’s responsibility and it is to be supported at every level of society, *Healthy Ireland Framework, (2013-2025)*. Post-primary education in Ireland provides an excellent opportunity to promote wellbeing of the young people of Ireland. Research in the area of wellbeing identifies the importance of focusing on the promotion of wellbeing during the crucial stages of adolescence. Wellbeing in junior cycle aims develop skills that will enable young people of Ireland to deal with the “normal stressors of life” (NCCA, 2017). However, as Wellbeing is a new curricular area in junior cycle, consideration must be given to the supports and processes in place to ensure that teachers are best placed to facilitate the Wellbeing programme. Implementing any new curricular area is complex and requires extra training and CPD for teachers. However, Wellbeing is a new curricular area that requires more than skills development and CPD. Collaboration, teacher wellbeing and a whole school approach to wellbeing must play its part in the development of an effective Wellbeing programme in junior cycle.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The primary aim of the research is to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers involved in implementing Wellbeing and consequently highlight the potential impact of these on the opportunities provided to students to enhance their wellbeing. This chapter aims to outline the methods and methodology chosen to carry out the proposed research. It will identify the primary and secondary questions that will underpin the study. This chapter will also identify the rationale around selection methods, data collection and the analysis chosen for this research.

3.1 The Primary Question

Consequently the research aims to identify the potential impact of this new arrangement, from a teaching perspective, on the opportunity for students to enhance their wellbeing. The involvement of teachers in Wellbeing from the curricular area of SPHE, CSPE, PE and Guidance is unprecedented, and these teachers now have responsibility for a new curricular area. This exploration aims to identify key issues and factors identified by participants in the study, so as to guide ‘best practice’ within teaching that consequently promotes and provides opportunities for students to enhance their wellbeing. The relevance of this research to the guidance counselling context is upheld through the consideration of the role of the guidance counsellor in the post primary sector. Traditionally the guidance counsellor is responsible for student wellbeing within schools. According to the DES, guidance in schools should comprise of “personal and social...guidance” (2016, p.7). Finally, the implications of this research are also made relevant to the guidance counsellor through the direct involvement of guidance within the Wellbeing programme.

The Secondary Questions

1) What are the key issues involved in the provision of Wellbeing at Junior Cycle, as identified by teachers involved?
2) What are teacher perceptions with regard to competency in this new area of Wellbeing?
3) Is there a certain set of skills, knowledge or professional qualification required to be involved in the area of Wellbeing?
4) What are the opinions of teachers involved in wellbeing with regard to responsibility of management in the pursuit of student Wellbeing?

5) What is the opinion of management with the regard to the teacher’s role in their involvement in Wellbeing?

3.2 Methodology

Alastalo (2008, p.26) states that methods are ways that the researcher gathers and analyses data. Methodology does not simply refer to the chosen method for the proposed study but is a discussion as to why it is chosen (Thomas, 2017). The ‘why’ should always relate back to the purpose of your inquiry (ibid. 2017, p.104).

3.2.1 Research Methodology- Narrative Case Study

The intention of this case study is to explore the factors that are impacting on teaching within the new Wellbeing programme at junior cycle and to explore how these factors are impacting on the delivery and implementation of this new programme in post-primary schools. Consequently the research aims to evaluate this new arrangement as an opportunity to enhance student wellbeing from a teaching perspective. The introduction of the subject areas of CSPE, PE, SPHE and Guidance to the new Wellbeing programme will result in teachers that were not previously directly responsible for student wellbeing, being involved in this new curricular area.

3.2.2 Research Paradigm

Blaikie describes a research paradigm as a broader framework of theoretical or philosophical perspectives (2007, p.12). A paradigm describes the ways in which we think about and research the world (Thomas, 2017). There are two main schools of thought in relation to carrying out research; the positivist approach and the interpretative approach. The positivist approach can also be categorised as quantitative and refers to a “framework for making sense of the world that exists independent of our ways to get to know it” (Braun, Clarke, 2013, p.334). The interpretivist was chosen by the researcher as it revolves around people and according to Thomas (2017, p.110) is “not straightforwardly perceivable because it is constructed by each of us in a different way”.

Thomas (2017) states that knowledge is everywhere and it is socially constructed, he also suggests that all kinds of information are valid. He proposes that “we have to immerse
ourselves in the research context in which we are interested... talking to people in dept and attending to every nuance of their behaviour, every clue to the meaning they are investing (Thomas, 2017, p.110). The interpretative approach or qualitative analysis is a framework that allows for theorising meaning and making sense of data. The interpretive approach will allow the researcher to focus on “the subjective experience of the individuals studied and seeks to understand and describe what happens to them from their own point of view” (Robson, 2007, p.44). It provides an opportunity for direct observation of the participant and an opportunity to clarify areas of uncertainty that may emerge and thereby co-constructing descriptive data (Thomas, 2017).

However, the researcher needs to be aware of the limitations when using this paradigm. In contrast to the positivist approach, the results from the interpretivist paradigm may not be transferable to other populations. Interpretative research does not claim that generalisability or causation can be provided. Thomas (2017, p.113) identifies what it does instead is to “take from the local experience and illuminate and influence the local experience: it helps to influence the practitioner-researcher’s own developing practice”. This is relevant to this research as the researcher is a practitioner within the area being explored. Finally, the researcher’s has an unavoidable position within the research which has potential to influence the findings. Thomas (2017) recommends that the researcher state their positionality within the research and to maintain a rigorous approach throughout.

3.3 Narrative Inquiry in Qualitative Research

Narrative Inquiry allows researchers to study the ways humans experience the world. Connelly and Clandinin (2016, p.2) state that;

the main use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives... This general notion translates into the view that education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other’s stories.

At the outset narrative inquiry must allow all the participants to have a voice. Elbow (1986, cited in Connelly and Clandinin, 2016) talks about the “believing game” which is a way of working within the relationship between the researcher and the participants, that involves a process of self-insertion in another’s story as a way of coming to know the other’s story and as giving the other voice. Narrative inquiry will allow the participants of this research to tell a story of their direct experiences, and respond to questions in the semi-structured interview in
a way that allows the participant to give rich, detailed accounts of experience or examples to illustrate their context in relation to Wellbeing provision.

Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to consider the participant as an individual, with a specific set of experiences, interests, hobbies and set of values. All of these impact on each participant differently and therefore the researcher would expect that each participant will have different stories or narrative with regard to the new Wellbeing programme. Clandinin (2000, p.25) states that;

Behaviours, for example, were expressions of an individual’s stories within a particular context at a particular time. Because behaviours were narrative expressions, it is important to consider the characters who were telling the stories, the times at which the stories were lived, the times stories were told, the places in which the stories were lived and told, and so on.

When the researcher considers each participants story as unique to the participant context, it will ensure that inaccurate generalisations, or automatic acceptance of participant experiences are not accepted within the research. Clandinin also distinguishes between narrative truth and narrative relativism. The distinction between the two is an essential component of qualitative research. Relativism proposes that participants all have “their own interpretation of events...Taken to this point, narrative inquiry loses its narrative quality because the tension between experience and the meaning we make of it lost” (2000, p.85) According to Clandinin “mere relativism cannot do” and with the use of field texts in the form of journals, field notes and or conversations, the researcher can limit relativism, and lean more towards achieving ‘narrative truth’ (Ibid. P.93).

3.4 Research Design-Case Study

Yin (2003, p.14) states that the case study is a “comprehensive research strategy” that comprises an all-encompassing method that includes the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis.

A case study was chosen as the design for this research to explore the factors that are impacting on teaching within the new Wellbeing programme at junior cycle. The aim of this research is to identify how these factors are impacting on the delivery and implementation of this new programme in post-primary schools. Yin states that as a research strategy “the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political and related phenomena.” It will enable and facilitate the
exploration of the “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (ibid, 2009, p.13). The case study research provides the opportunity to explore “complex relations and processes and the influence of contextual factors to inform policy and practice within a discipline” (McLeod, 2010, Stake, 2004 cited in Hearne, Geary et al, 2016). Ultimately the proposed research aims to evaluate how the new Wellbeing programme at junior cycle as an opportunity to enhance student wellbeing from a teaching perspective.

The exploration of participant experience in the new Wellbeing programme aims to identify the factors that are impacting on the provision of the programme within the case study school. Thomas (2011, p.21) states that the case study can provide a “rich picture with many kinds of insights”. The variety of teachers now involved in the Wellbeing programme, from differing subject areas and experiences means that the factors that are impacting on this new curricular area may be varied—for example specific to the subject area, the teacher’s own philosophy of education and other contextual factors. The case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003, p.2).

Stake (2000) has identified three different types of case study: the intrinsic case study which simply describes a case, the collective case study where a number of cases are studied in order to investigate some general phenomenon and the instrumental case study where a case is studied in order to provide insight into an issue.

The use of a purely intrinsic case study is resisted by many qualitative researchers. Silverman (2005, p.127) states that if you “simply ‘describe a case’, you may rightly get the response: ‘so what?’” The collective case study would not apply in the context of the research outlined due to the time constraints and deadlines outlined. It is intended that the case study for the purpose of this research will be instrumental. In exploring the factors that impact on the pursuit of student wellbeing within the context of the new junior cycle Wellbeing programme, it is intended to provide insight into the experiences of teachers and factors that are impacting teaching involved in this new area. The instrumental case study intends to study the case in depth however; the main focus is on something else (Silverman, 2005, p.17). In the case of the outlined research the ‘something else’ is the use of this research by potential stakeholders and or the case study school to identify potential key factors that directly impact on the pursuit of student wellbeing within the context of this new curricular area. The case study therefore can potentially illuminate areas that are successful and or areas
where improvements or change is required in order to enhance the provision of the Wellbeing programme, so that student wellbeing is consequently enhanced.

3.5 Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The chosen method of data collection for the intended research to be carried out is through the use of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. Thomas states that the appropriateness of the methodology and data collection is to be carefully considered. Cohen et al. (2007) recommends the use of two data collection methods however the research was limited due to time constraints, in this instance only one method of data collection was chosen.

3.5.1 Data Analysis Method

The transcription of each of the semi-structured interviews, the notes from the field work and the research journal that was maintained throughout the fieldwork phase of the research provided the data to be used for this research. Thomas describes analysis using the interpretivist model as “seeking understanding and insight adopting the assumptions of interpretivism” (2017, p.244). The constant comparative method and the use of theme mapping would assist in the analysis of data. This method proposes that making the data with codes-abbreviations, names, marks and/or colours-that describe its important facets (ibid, p.245). Themes or categories will eventually emerge, and these become the essential building blocks of the analysis. However, the researcher must ensure that the meanings that emerge “are being constructed by the participant” (Thomas, 2017, p.245) and the researcher.

3.5.2 Sampling

The research was granted approval on the 16th April, 2018 by the EHS committee, University of Limerick. The sample of participants to be included in the study was chosen purposefully. The sample comprised teachers involved in Wellbeing at junior cycle through their subject areas. The school’s guidance counsellor was also chosen to participate as traditionally student wellbeing forms an integral part of the role of the guidance counsellor. Finally a member of the school’s management was chosen to participate so as to represent their involvement in the provision and implementation of the new programme.

In order to access the sample an information letter was sent to the gatekeeper of the chosen school, outlining the intended study. The letter outlined the criteria for the participants
required for the research. Cohen et al. (2007) describes purposive sampling as “deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased”. In the case of this research sampling had to be purposive in order to access participants that were directly involved in the Wellbeing programme. Once the gatekeeper granted permission, six participants were selected and provided with information letters about the research consent forms to be signed prior to engagement with research.

3.5.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

The six participants were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview; these were conducted in April and May, 2018. Three frameworks or sets of questions were drafted in order to gather information from three different categories of participants: the teachers involved in Wellbeing at junior cycle, the guidance counsellor and a member of management.

The semi-structured interview allows the movement and fluidity within the interview, yet the researcher should ensure that it is a “carefully controlled conversation” (Robson, 2007, p.74). Thomas states that an interview with a schedule increases a systematic direction for the participants. Semi-structured interviews will contain a number of broad, open-ended questions. They are flexible and they allow the researcher to adapt to themes that may arise throughout the interview process. Thomas (2017, p.202) states that interviews involve “...interviewees will respond to you, in bodily presence, in an entirely different way from the way that they would have reacted to questionnaires”. There are many considerations when using interviews for example, they should be dialogical in nature, open-ended when dealing with opinions and facts and the building of trust is also essential. A deeper insight can be gained through the interview, and nuances and complexity can be illuminated when relevant to research. Reactions to questions for example body language, facial expressions or tone is also very relevant and the researcher can use these as cues to gain more insight into the topic thereby helping to provide richer, contextual data (Hennink et al, 2011, p.131). This can be achieved through the use of a journal and maintaining field-notes.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

When using the interpretivist/qualitative paradigm reliability and validity can be difficult achieve. The researcher can use criterion to help maintain a standard of both. Lincoln and Cuba’s (1985, p.300) four point criterion identifies four principles for validity in
interpretative inquiry. They are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of data. When carrying out the proposed research this four point criterion will help maintain validity and reliability as it will underpin each stage of the research.

The ‘truth value’ or credibility of the findings will be ensured through honest research on the part of the researcher. This will be achieved through consistent, meticulous data collection methods (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Transferability is “not the naturalist’s task to provide an index of transferability, it is his or her responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgements possible on the part of potential appliers” (Ibid, p316). They recommend a thick description of the phenomenon. This allows explicit connections to the cultural and social contexts that surround data collection, so that readers of the research can make transferability judgements themselves. Dependability ensures that the research findings are consistent and repeatable. Finally, conformability ensures that the research findings are based on the participants’ narratives rather than the researcher’s biases. The use of reflexivity will ensure that the researcher is aware of their personal, social and cultural contexts in which they are situated in order to interpret the research findings without potential biases (Etherington 2004).

3.7 Reflexivity

Reflexivity involves re-evaluating your assumptions and bias in relation to the issues involved in your research from the outset and throughout the research. According to McLeod the re-evaluation of the following will address rigour in relation to existing bias

“...professional background and allegiances, pre-existing assumptions and experience of doing the study, as a means of being transparent about any potential sources of bias. The researcher may also describe the new discoveries or unexpected findings that emerged during the study.”

(McLeod, 2010, p.33)

With regard to the proposed study any bias or assumptions in relation to the Wellbeing programme with regard to the pursuit of student wellbeing, must be acknowledged and set aside. Journaling, note-taking and introspection will be applied so as to address researcher positionality within and throughout the research. Thomas (2017, p.151) defines positionality as the researcher having an “undeniable position and this position affects the nature and observations and interpretations that they make.” The researcher within this research had two roles where potential biases with regard to the new Wellbeing programme needs to be
considered: SPHE co-ordinator where SPHE is now included in the Wellbeing programme and a trainee Guidance Counsellor where student wellbeing is central within that role. Reflexivity will be ensured throughout the research process through the use of note-taking, journaling and supervision. Transcripts will be viewed by the research supervisor to ensure that the interpretation of data and data analysis remains unbiased.

3.8 Triangulation

The method of data collection outlined was the use of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. The researcher must consider that viewing from several points is better that viewing from one (Thomas, 2017, p.152). Triangulation ensures that research is ‘viewed’ from more than one point. In the research triangulation will be achieved by including participants from a different positions within the case study school, in order to view the research from “several directions” (ibid, p.152). The literature explored and also the field-notes kept by the researcher will also ensure that the research is viewed in a variety of perspectives.

3.9 Ethical Considerations within the Research

McLeod (2010) states that non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy, fidelity and justice are the fundamental ethical principles that underpin research. Cohen et al (2011) state that the ethical principles that underpin guidance are also relevant and should underpin practitioner research. The National Centre for Guidance in Education identifies “respect for the rights and dignity of the person, competence, responsibility and integrity” (NCGE 2008, p.2) as the fundamental ethics that underpin guidance provision. Also, the Institute of Guidance Counsellors have set out ethical standards by which all members must adhere to. These standards again state that respect and the rights of the client must be upheld, competence and professional standards must be applied and that practitioners use a systematic framework for dealing with ethical dilemmas (IGC 2012). These ethical standards will underpin the research throughout all of the stages and processes.

The research participants selected for the research were teachers of SPHE, CSPE, PE and guidance, and also a member of management within the case study school. Anonymity was a crucial aspect in carrying out the research, and an essential part of ensuring ethical standards were maintained throughout the research. Confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process ensures that the “data they provide will be handled and reported in such a
way that they cannot be associated with them personally” (Mertens 2010, p.342). Cohen et al (2000) states that confidentiality ensures that participant’s right to privacy is maintained.

Participants were asked to volunteer for the research. According to Bell and Waters (2014, p.178) informed consent ensures that participants freely choose to participate in research. Informed consent for the purpose of this research was obtained in writing and signed once a letter of information was read and understood by each participant. It is essential that ethical consideration is given to potential “harmful effects on the research to participants” (Cohen et al, 2000, p.292). Prior to engaging in research with any of the participants they were made fully aware of the purpose of the research and they understood their rights (Bell and Waters 2010, p.148). This was ensured through explaining the purpose of the research, what will be done with the data gathered from research and how the data will be stored.

3.10 Conclusion

The aim of the methodology chapter was to set out the paradigm that best fits the type and nature of research to be carried out. The qualitative paradigm will be used through within a case study design; this will allow for an in-depth exploration of the selected participants with regard to the research topic. Narrative inquiry has been identified as the research philosophy that informs the pursuit of the qualitative semi-structured interviews. It is intended the sufficient regard will be applied to validity, reliability, ethical process and researcher reflexivity throughout all stages of the research process.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the data analysis method used in this case study and also the findings from the research carried out with the six participants. The six participants all have some involvement in the new junior cycle Wellbeing programme, ranging from teachers of subjects within Wellbeing, the guidance counsellor as guidance has been identified as a curricular area to be included in wellbeing and a member of management that has direct involvement in the implementation of the programme within the school.

The research was designed to specifically focus on three key areas of consideration for the successful implementation of Wellbeing, as set out by the NCCA guidelines. These three areas have become the main themes that emerge in the research. However, due to the variety of participants (teachers, guidance counsellors and school management) sub-themes have also emerged as having significance for the effective delivery of Wellbeing within the post-primary sector.

The three main themes that emerged from the case study were

1. Collaboration within Wellbeing
2. CPD- Competence/ Skill set for Wellbeing
3. Planning and Timetabling of Wellbeing

The subthemes will be discussed throughout the chapter and alongside the main themes as they are in most cases connected to the main themes.

4.1 Data Analysis Strategy

Thomas (2017, p.244) states that when you gather data in words “you are seeking to use those words in descriptive or illuminative analysis of the situation in which you are interested.” The interpretivist paradigm seeks to “understand and insight” (ibid.) The constant comparative method was applied in order to identify ideas and insights, and identifying comparisons by “going through the data again and again and comparing each element, phrase and sentence with all the other elements” (ibid., p.244). The research interviews were transcribed and used alongside field notes and research journal. The interviews were listened to over and over during the transcription phase so as to get a sense of themes and subthemes as they emerged.
Thomas (2017) identifies the importance of describing how the themes and subthemes are connected. Network analysis assisted the researcher in organising and illustrating the themes and subthemes that emerged in the data. According to Thomas (2017, p.245) “network analysis shows how themes are related to one another in a nested arrangement, with each branch holding a range of other ideas.” It will visually represent, in a hierarchical way, the ideas that emerge from the data. Throughout this chapter excerpts from the interviews will be highlighted to help illuminate the themes that have been identified (Robson, 2007). The main themes or overarching themes and subthemes discussed in the findings will be as seen in Fig. 1.1

The main focus of the case study was determined by the NCCA Wellbeing guidelines which identify specific areas of consideration for schools and teachers in successfully implementing the new programme. Three areas of consideration were chosen by the researcher to become the main focus of the case study and subsequently the main themes that emerged from the data. These three areas were chosen as they would generally impact on each of the participants in their involvement in the Wellbeing programme. The subthemes that emerge from the research are not relevant to all participants or all contexts explored in the research, however they may be relevant within specific subject areas such as SPHE, PE or CSPE. Also, subthemes may only be relevant to the specific roles of the participants such as teacher, guidance counsellor or school management.

The case study is an exploration of the experiences and perceptions of teachers involved in implementing Wellbeing and consequently the potential impact of these on the opportunities provided to students to enhance their wellbeing.
When discussing the findings throughout this chapter the participants will be anonymised through the use of pseudonyms. The case study school is also anonymised.

4.2 The Participants

The participants of the research were identified and purposefully selected as teachers involved in Wellbeing at junior cycle through the subjects of PE, SPHE and CSPE. The school’s guidance counsellor was also chosen as Guidance was identified as an area to be included in Wellbeing. Finally, a member of the schools management was included in the research as one of the main themes that emerged was planning and timetabling and management within the case study school. Management are primarily responsible for timetabling and the overall implementation of Wellbeing.

There were six participants in total. Four of the participants were teachers and some teachers were involved in more than one subject area within Wellbeing. Two of the teachers represented PE, one teacher represented CSPE, two of these participants represented SPHE and three of these are also involved in other modules within Wellbeing. Finally one guidance counsellor and one member of management participated in the research. Fig. 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms of Participants</th>
<th>Maura</th>
<th>Margaret</th>
<th>Christine</th>
<th>Karl</th>
<th>Adam</th>
<th>Denise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role within Wellbeing</td>
<td>Teaching CSPE</td>
<td>Member of school management</td>
<td>Teaching SPHE</td>
<td>Teaching PE</td>
<td>Teaching PE and SPHE</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Theme 1- Collaboration within Wellbeing

The NCCA guidelines clearly state that due to the inclusion of three distinct subject areas: SPHE, CSPE and PE, a collaborative approach to planning the Wellbeing programme is essential to ensure “that there is a shared vision, coherent approach and opportunities for collegial support across the three areas” (NCCA, 2017, p.54).

Each participant was asked about collaboration within Wellbeing in the case study school. Two out of the six participants felt that they worked collaboratively within wellbeing and the remaining participants stated that they did not collaborate at all or that the collaboration was informal and not all together at the same time.
Following are some of the responses when asked if the participants worked collaboratively within wellbeing:

Maura: “No! That doesn’t mean that we don’t want to but we are not at the moment.”

Karl: “I think so but we mightn’t be working with specific teachers... Everybody is willing to push their own side of it and develop their own side and then try to bring it together at the end.”

Denise: “Well, we do! I do! In this school there is a very good channel of communication and am, as a staff we work very well together in looking after our students.”

Christine: “I suppose this year has seen the first year of us working collaboratively and that has been in formulating some sort of a plan as to where Wellbeing will be going in the school.”

Collaboration within wellbeing emerged as an overarching theme however it was strongly linked to the theme Planning and Timetabling and will be discussed also under this theme.

4.3.1 **Industrial Action/Industrial Agreements**

emerged as a subtheme within collaboration such as:

1) Concern over the impact of the Croke Park hours on teachers willingness to engage in any collaborative planning outside of the ten hours set aside already through this agreement.

2) ASTI directive to its members not to participate in CPD related to new Junior Cycle and the impact this has had on a collaborative approach to Wellbeing.

Margaret: “At the moment everything has become so much the hours, the hours, the hours. It’s one of the negatives of the Croke Park thing. But, for us it is very much within that ten hours and what people out of goodwill will do at lunchtime or whatever.”

Participants generally agreed that the Croke Park hours are not effective in promoting collaboration. It seems that the hours create a sense of resentment amongst staff, where some of the participants see the use of the hours as unhelpful and limiting to staff on how they can use their time. Management in the case study school create sub-committees whereby teachers can come together to collaborate on certain projects. However, it emerged in the data that overall this was not successful, as there was a general feeling that teachers collaborated
because they had to, not because they wanted to. Margaret also suggested that leadership within the staff with regard to collaboration might help promote professional collaboration, yet there remains uncertainty around how that could achieved.

Margaret: “I tried to a certain degree with the committees last year, that you set an end goal, that by the end of the year this is what we would like to see happen...but the success of groups is very dependent on having a good leader within it, because otherwise if you are coming back and having to ask ‘have you that, have you that, what do you think of? Will we meet up?’ Then it becomes ‘oh here she comes again.’ We don’t want it to be that.”

Some participants also suggested that the rolling out of the first year of Wellbeing was impacted negatively by the ASTI directive for its members not to participate in any CPD in relation to the new Junior Cycle and consequently teachers within Wellbeing generally continued to teach their subject without any formal collaboration or planning for the first year.

Margaret: “… the whole ASTI stand-off, really this year is the first year where people have been involved in any way-shape-or-form am, JCT haven’t put up Wellbeing as one of their areas yet. So to a degree a lot of the learning and a lot of the training that’s going on is people on a voluntary basis or the PDST type stuff will be put up again this year...I would have concern around the joint approach that we have, or we should have, because I don’t think we have it yet.”

4.3.2 Collaboration as an Opportunity for Collegial Support and Teacher Wellbeing

All participants agreed that collaboration is an important aspect of teaching within Wellbeing and the majority of participants made a connection with collaboration as providing an opportunity for collegial support and teacher wellbeing.

Christine: “The fact that it is no longer just left to female teachers. We not only have three male teachers on board so it makes it much more equal and working in an all boys school it’s much more balanced to have three males on board to be delivering Wellbeing... You know sometimes SPHE and RE can be very solitary and that it is much more beneficial to have people sitting together and putting their ideas down and having some sort of a plan.”

Christine identifies collaboration within Wellbeing as means of accessing support for planning within this new curricular area and also touches on how this curricular arrangement
supports teacher wellbeing as it creates less solitary working environments than previously experienced outside of the Wellbeing context.

Maura: “I think you can push each other on and the school can develop. I think that new strategies, new insights…”

Maura suggested that collaboration within a school could lead to encouragement of the teachers around new (teaching) strategies and insights into various methods of teaching or planning and other activities that happen within a school. This suggests that collaboration would lead to positive implementation of new strategies or programmes, thereby positively impacting on Wellbeing at Junior Cycle.

When Margaret was asked about the role of management within teacher wellbeing an interesting link was made between willingness of staff to collaborate within the staff and teacher wellbeing.

Margaret: “This is where the new Junior Cycle is doing a bit, trying to get people to talk together because for so long teaching has been ‘this is my kingdom, these are my four walls…’ and they have their own little group of friends and might have no contact with other people on the staff...But if you can have people working together that are working together with a bit more community feel to it...there’s a bit of fun and enjoyment...how you are emotionally when you come in to work is instantly improved.”

4.4 Theme 2- Continuous Professional Development (CPD)/ Skill-set for Wellbeing

CPD has been identified as an important area for consideration within Wellbeing. The researcher has identified the importance of CPD within Wellbeing to be two-fold. Firstly the fact that Wellbeing at junior cycle is a new curricular with a new focus for teachers namely six key areas, known as indicators of Wellbeing, whereby a new skill-set or competency may be required. These indicators were identified and explained in the literature review. The second reason that theme two becomes relevant is due to the situation whereby in the majority of cases, teachers are completing initial teacher education without qualification in CSPE or SPHE. As a consequence the NCCA guidelines have stated that “in both these areas teachers should be facilitated in attending ongoing continuing professional development opportunities, thereby developing the school’s professional capacity in these areas” (NCCA, 2017, p.54).
These indicators are central to wellbeing and the NCCA suggests that these indicators can be used in a variety of ways:

To review current provision for learning in wellbeing, to plan teaching and learning within a school’s Wellbeing programme, to plan conversations about how the school’s Wellbeing programme might best support young people’s wellbeing and well-becoming with stakeholders including students, parents and teacher... (NCCA, 2017, p.44).

These six indicators are Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware. Teachers are expected to, as part of Wellbeing, ensure that students gain an opportunity to develop and or enhance these within the classroom. Interestingly, it has emerged from the research that the participants are not overly familiar with these indicators. This is due to non-engagement in CPD of any kind with regard to the Wellbeing programme as of yet within the case study school. The following excerpts will illuminate reasons for non-engagement to date with CPD for Wellbeing.

When Maura was asked to what extent she was familiar with the Indicators of wellbeing she replied: “I’m not involved in the new CSPE at the moment.”

Maura is not familiar with the Indicators as she has not had formal training in the new programme and also she has not taught CSPE as of yet under the new Wellbeing programme and therefore has not researched the guidelines or familiarised herself with the content and outcomes of the programme. However, Maura raised a very interesting point with regard to prioritising of CPD for staff in relation to what Maura describes as her first subject. Maura explained what she meant by first subject: “I suppose for people like me where CSPE is only on one day a week, so even if you are looking at it from a timetabling perspective, my timetable is predominantly made up of English so it would have made sense to prioritise English over CSPE.” Maura went on to explain that “in schools from a management point of view was that they had to put people in for CPD for the new JC. I suppose the management had to decide which subject they wanted to focus teachers on because they only had an opportunity to send teachers to one CPD day this year and a second one next year.”

What seems to emerge from this is a sense of hierarchy in relation to subjects with regard volume of classes being taught on the behalf of the participant. Consideration must also be given to non-availability of CPD in Wellbeing for schools during the first year of the
programme 2017/2018, where other subjects were prioritised by the JCT. This will be explored further in the discussion chapter.

Christine, Adam and Karl also reported that they were not familiar with the indicators; to one being vaguely familiar with the indicators, again this is a consequence of not having received CPD. When Adam was asked if he has had engaged in CPD in Wellbeing he stated “no.” When he was asked if he was familiar with the indicators of wellbeing, he replied “not very, no.” Karl’s response to having received CPD was “no” and he elaborated that he thinks it would benefit him as he stated “I don’t have a clue what I’m doing”. Christine stated that it was also due to her non-involvement in junior cycle Wellbeing during 2017/2018. She stated “it is pending but I don’t have junior cycle this year so therefore I haven’t received any training in Wellbeing.”

4.4.1 Competence

The research findings identified that perceived competence within Wellbeing seemed to be inextricably linked to CPD.

Some participants were asked “to what extent do you feel competent within the new Wellbeing programme.” This question was not relevant to all participants for example the member of school management and also one member of staff that was not directly involved in Wellbeing at junior cycle since its inception.

All participants stated that they did not receive CPD specifically for Wellbeing. However, three of the participants attend regular CPD with regard to the subject they teach within wellbeing. Interestingly, four out of five of the teachers reported that they felt competent within Wellbeing. Competency was attributed to subject expertise or subject area; experience within the subject area and in Christine’s case due to teaching Religious Education whereby a pastoral care role had lent itself the nature of Wellbeing. Christine felt that the holistic nature of her pastoral care role that she was involved in through Religious Education contributed to her perceived competency within Wellbeing as the Wellbeing programme also focussed mainly on the development

Christine: “...what I am relying on is my 23 years experience in teaching religion and SPHE...I am hugely interested in the whole area of wellbeing, and I have driven a number of initiatives in the school to do with mental health.”
When Adam was asked about competency he replied that yes he did feel competent and this was due to his interest in a lot of the topics that are covered in SPHE such as diet and exercise, mental fitness and general wellbeing.

Adam: “My interests and hobbies like sport and diet and things like that. So I would have taught my students things that I would have learned through that.”

When Maura was asked about competency she stated: “In relation to CSPE very competent but other aspects not necessarily...if I was talking about SPHE or PE I wouldn’t because I don’t have any background in it at all.”

Karl’s response to competency was “I don’t know what I am doing...if I’m doing a short course do I have to write up a new scheme of work?” He feels that there is huge uncertainty with regard to how his subject fits into the Wellbeing programme, what exactly should be covered. Karl also noted that ‘there is no structure to anything and people are feeling very left out on their own, to their own devices.’ Karl also noted that he feels “for the first few years there’s going to be ‘guinea pig’ years and we are going to have to feel our way through it and it will adapt and develop in its own way for our school.”

Five of the participants were asked: “Do you think that wellbeing requires different skills and or knowledge to other subject areas on the junior cycle programme?”

Four out of the five participants felt that a different skill-set and approach was required in order to ensure effective engagement within Wellbeing, however one participant, Maura, felt that the skill-set used to teach within other subjects would be sufficient in all subjects within Wellbeing except PE.

Maura: “if you are talking about...reaching your potential...you could do that through a personal essay or by expression or classroom discussion and respectability in the classroom. You can touch on it in other subject areas, though not necessarily the physical side of it.”

However when I asked Maura if any specific skills or other areas of teaching Wellbeing would benefit from further development she added that she replied: “perhaps anything to do with minding self, maybe there should be further training for teachers in relation to psychology or adolescent psychology. I think it would be hugely beneficial so that teachers can have a better understanding of where students are at.”
Christine, an SPHE teacher, stated that being competent with regard to Wellbeing was more about the teacher having an awareness of the dynamic within SPHE. Where creating a safe space for students to focus on areas outside of the curriculum is prioritised over the formal assessment focus of examination subjects. “It is a forum for students to contribute a little bit more and to give their personal experiences about things and to relax a bit more and be more open. So it allows you a much more open forum, better room for including more methodologies...more discussion.” The dynamic referred to in this instance (for SPHE classes) is the recommended experiential learning cycle (Kolb) and this will be explored further in the discussion chapter.

Competency with regard to the level of training around Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) emerged as a concern for the SPHE teacher and guidance counsellor. The RSE component of SPHE was identified and explained in the literature review chapter.

Christine: “I think that the whole area of RSE needs to be revisited and teachers need to be retrained and they need to be brought up to speed on information in relation to consent, the law, resources and STI’s...Teachers need to be retrained in all that because it has been a while since formal training has been done on RSE.”

It emerged that the personal development aspect of SPHE requires a certain level of understanding of developmental psychology on behalf of the teacher. Both of the aforementioned participants have qualification in this area. Yet, the concern remains that teachers of SPHE are not required to have a formal education or training within for their teaching qualification to teach in this area, and it remains a factor that could potentially impact on the opportunities provided to students to enhance their wellbeing through the Wellbeing programme. For example research that was carried out with pre-service teachers identified that 30.6% of female teachers intended to teach it and only 19.5% of male teachers intended to teach it (Mannix-McNamara et al. 2012, p211). Therefore, if management who are responsible for identifying teachers to teach in specific subject areas do not ensure the right people are in the right areas, it could potentially impact on the quality of SPHE provision.
**4.5 Theme 3- Planning in Wellbeing**

Planning for the implementation of Wellbeing is essential and of particular significance in the developing period of Wellbeing and so it became one of the main questions within the research.

The data that emerged from the interviews can be further broken down into the following subthemes: the role of management within planning for Wellbeing, timetabling for wellbeing and finally collaborative planning within Wellbeing.

**4.5.1 The Role of Management within Wellbeing/Timetabling**

Planning in this context refers to all activities that involve organising and implementing the Wellbeing programme in the case study school. Planning involves management, teachers and the guidance counsellor. The subthemes that have emerged are timetabling for Wellbeing, the role of management in implementing Wellbeing and collaborative planning.

The NCCA guidelines (2017, p. 46) state that “classes should be timetabled to allow for quality learning and teaching.”

The case study school has made some changes to the timetable to facilitate Wellbeing within the school. Currently three hundred hours are required for Wellbeing, however, this is to increase to four hundred hours by 2020. So, rather than wait for 2020, the school has put down five periods of Wellbeing for all of the year groups, one CSPE, SPHE, a double PE and one guidance/wellbeing module. The school reduced English on the timetable from five to four periods to give the extra period for Wellbeing. This suggests that sufficient change was made to meet the required criteria for Wellbeing on the schools timetable.

The NCCA also state that teachers of CSPE and SPHE should be

> Assigned to these subject areas with prior knowledge. When teachers are assigned who have interest and commitment to this area, they are more likely to provide a broad and balanced experience of learning, particularly in SPHE where difficult and more challenging areas could be avoided. (2017, p.54)

The participant representing management within the case study school was asked “what factors are considered when choosing teachers to be involved in this new area of Wellbeing?”
Margaret: “Interest definitely, and personality as well. I have to say there are some that are very suited to doing this kind of programme and there are others who are not. Interest...one of the questions asked is, you know on the timetable feedback sheet is about the areas that you would like to be involved in... a caring about the student as a person not about a provider of results. Am, a genuine interest in the student.”

The participant also stated that in most cases teachers would be assigned subjects of CSPE and SPHE with prior knowledge. However, in the cases where they may not, management would try to ensure that teachers chosen would have identified interest in the subject area through timetable feedback sheets.

Margaret: “There are some people that have an interest in the area...you know they would be suited to it. Am, in relation to CSPE part of it those who do the History and Geography type subject areas tend to be good there.”

This would also suggest that there is adequate consideration given when choosing the teachers to be involved in Wellbeing. What emerged from the data is that management within the case study school has a good understanding of their staff, their interests and hobbies and also on a personal level, where teacher attributes partly influence suitability within Wellbeing.

Margaret: “An ability to understand, flexibility... an ability to see the grey as opposed to the black or white. Not looking at it as ‘I must get through this amount of content’, there is an adaptability there. You want people as well, who are going to be quite motivated and driven themselves.”

This identifies the importance of management having a good understanding of their staff. The case study school has approximately 330 students and is an average size secondary school in Ireland, with 28 teachers. The potential challenge for management may be in larger schools however, where there are twice/three times the numbers of teachers and students, where attaining this level of understanding of their teachers might be more difficult.

4.5.2 Collaborative Planning

Collaboration has been discussed previously as an overarching theme yet collaborative planning has relevance within the theme of Planning within Wellbeing. The Department of Education in the Circular Letter 0015/2017 identified the provision of professional time for
teachers to allow teachers to engage in professional collaborative activities to support teaching, learning and assessment. This has been facilitated through the reduction of 33 teaching periods to 32 teaching periods, in a school with a timetable laid out in 40 minute periods.

The research participants were asked whether they felt they benefited from this extra time in order to facilitate collaboration within Wellbeing. Overall, the participants felt that the professional time was not used optimally and there was a variety of factors that emerged here. Firstly, lack of CPD in Wellbeing meant that teachers were not confident in their knowledge of the Wellbeing programme and this impacted on their willingness to collaborate. This impacted on teacher vision with regard to Wellbeing and some lacked a sense of direction with regard to what they wanted to achieve and therefore struggled with planning. Many of the participants focussed on their subject area as opposed to the cross-curricular planning that would encompass all subjects and modules that make up Wellbeing.

What emerged from the data with regard to collaborative planning in the case study school was a genuine difficulty with regard to collaboration due to the factors outlined. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from the interviews with the six participants. The three overarching themes presented were identified by the NCCA as being significant in the implementation of the Wellbeing programme. The subthemes that emerged from the data illuminated in more detail how these factors were impacting the implementation on Wellbeing in the case study school. The findings highlight areas that may need further development and they also highlight areas that successfully support the implementation of Wellbeing. These findings will be explored further in the discussion chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical analysis of the primary research findings within the context of the literature that was presented and explored in the literature review. The research question aims to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers involved in implementing Wellbeing, and consequently to illuminate any potential impacts there may be on the opportunities provided to students to enhance their wellbeing. The research focussed on three specific areas identified in the NCCA guidelines for Wellbeing as being important areas of consideration for the implementation of Wellbeing: Collaboration, CPD and Planning. These three areas became the main themes of the research findings and sub-themes emerged directly from these.

The discussion chapter will address the following research areas that underpinned the research:

6. To review relevant literature in relation to policy and practice with regard to the implementation of the new Wellbeing programme at junior cycle.
7. To examine the factors involved in the participation of teachers of CSPE, SPHE and PE in this new programme.
8. To illuminate current perceptions of teachers within Wellbeing with regard to the competency/skill-set required for the programme.
9. To explore the impact of the role of school’s management on the implementation of Wellbeing at junior cycle.

5.1 Findings

The findings suggested that there is an overall positive response from teachers involved in delivering the Wellbeing programme. The findings also identified areas from a teaching perspective that could indirectly impact on the pursuit of student wellbeing through this new programme. The Findings that emerged from the data are categorised as follows:

1) Collaboration as an opportunity for collegial support and teacher Wellbeing/Collaborative Planning
2) Industrial Action Impact on Implementation of Wellbeing
3) Teacher knowledge around the indicators of Wellbeing as set out by the Wellbeing guidelines
4) Competence and skill-set for Wellbeing
5) Planning- Role of Management within Wellbeing

5.2 Collaboration

Collaboration in an educational context involves “deciding goals together with others, sharing responsibilities, and working together to achieve more than could be achieved by an individual on their own” (Barfield 2016, p.222).

The NCCA guidelines (2017) identified collaboration as an important area for consideration when implementing the Wellbeing programme. This is mainly due to the involvement of the teachers of CSPE, SPHE and PE in a new curricular area where the teachers are sharing responsibility for student wellbeing. The guidelines state that collaboration will ensure a “shared vision, coherent approach and opportunities for collegial support across the three areas” (NCCA 2017, p.54).

The Wellbeing programme was introduced in all schools in September 2017. The research was carried out at the end of the school year, during the month of May 2018. The data that emerged from the semi-structured interviews strongly suggests, with three out of four teachers involved in Wellbeing, that collaboration within Wellbeing is not currently practiced within the case study school. When Maura, a teacher of CSPE within Wellbeing, was asked if teachers involved in Wellbeing work collaboratively she replied “No. That doesn’t mean that they don’t want to. But we are not at the moment.” Maura also went on to explain the potential benefits of collaboration stating that “collaborative teaching is hugely beneficial, I think you can push each other on and the school can develop...new strategies, new insights.”

The insider research position meant that the researcher understood the current situation around collaboration within Wellbeing. In the field-notes that were maintained by the researcher during the interview stage, it was noted that “there was a sense of understanding around the lack of collaboration within Wellbeing. Lack of CPD for Wellbeing along with other factors such as the ASTI directives in relation to training for new junior cycle, meant that formal collaboration wasn’t happening.”
Christine, an SPHE teacher, felt that the involvement of all of the subject areas meant that her involvement in Wellbeing would be less solitary than her previous context whereby she was teaching SPHE and Religious Education, in a department with only two staff members at times. While Christine did not refer to any concrete examples of working collaboratively to date with the teachers within Wellbeing, she portrayed a confidence in knowing that she has a department of teachers there to support future planning around Wellbeing. “It’s a good thing going forward; you are no longer working on your own...sometimes SPHE and Religion can be very solitary and that is much more beneficial to have people sitting together and putting their ideas down and having some sort of a plan”(Christine).

In Chapter two, the literature identified the Professional Learning Community as a successful environment that effectively supports teachers with regard to change in beliefs and practices, and building new skills. These Professional Learning Communities are described as ways that individual professionals come together in a group in order to interact in meaningful activities to learn with colleagues about an identified topic, to develop shared meaning, and identify shared purposes related to the topic (Hord, 2009, p.41). The literature also identifies that the Professional Learning Communities are “highly effective in supporting teachers in changing their beliefs and practices” (Owen 2017). The data that emerged from the research suggests that there is a general overall positive outlook on collaboration however factors such as timetable restrictions (not off at same time as colleagues) and lack of understanding around Wellbeing and how it is implemented, is negatively impacting on achieving this collaborative approach. The Professional Learning Community proposes that it is the individual professional that is responsible for creating this community, whereby they show up with a passionate commitment to their learning and that of students, and share a responsibility for this purpose. The findings from the research would suggest however that even when there is a desire to create a supportive working environment similar to the PLC, it will only occur when the circumstances within that environment allow it.

The NCCA Guidelines (2017) identifies the importance of teacher wellbeing within the context of the Wellbeing programme. Collaboration has also been identified as an opportunity for promoting teacher wellbeing. The guidelines state that “positive professional working relationships have been identified as essential for teacher wellbeing” (ibid.,p.29). These relationships can be developed through the small actions and episodes such as talking
with colleagues between classes, sharing ideas and stories at break times and exchanging resources (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Barfield (2014, p.223) states that “this sense of trust and collegiality is fundamental to the authenticity and success of collaboration.” Collaborative practice within Wellbeing is important for the creation of collegial trust and support that is recommended in order to effectively implement the new Wellbeing programme and subsequently create an opportunity for a shared vision and coherent approach across the three areas of CPSE, SPHE and PE (NCCA, 2017, p.54).

The researcher also noted in the field-notes that accompanied the research that there was a sense that:

Teacher felt left behind as a result of their involvement in the Industrial Action brought about by the ASTI directive for non-involvement in junior cycle training, and this was impacting on teacher confidence with regard to collaboration and leadership within Wellbeing.

5.3 Industrial Action as a Consequence of Junior Cycle Reform

The literature identifies efforts made on behalf of the NCCA and the Department of Education and Science with regard to change on the future of junior cycle curriculum and assessment. This lead to the publishing of two documents: Progress Report: Issues and Options for Development (NCCA 1999) and The Junior Certificate: Issues for Discussion (DES 1999). Following these and as result of the discussions that took place at the time, the NCCA began a process of “re-balancing Junior Certificate subject syllabuses and create more space for active learning and student engagement” (NCCA 2011, p.5). Subsequently the idea for Framework for Junior Cycle was proposed and the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) provides for the new area of learning at junior cycle called Wellbeing. However, the implementation of this new junior cycle was met with resistance and resulted is the ASTI union members voting in favour of industrial action.

The introduction of the new junior cycle programme saw the introduction of teacher involvement in assessment at junior cycle. Teachers were concerned about involvement in state examination assessment. These concerns emerged through the teacher unions and lead to balloting of members on this issue. On September 2015 the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI) members voted to reject the document entitled “Junior Cycle Reform- Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation.” On September 25th, 2015 the ASTI standing committee issued a directive to its members prohibiting its members from engaging with aspects of the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle. This was to
include attendance at CPD for the Framework and participation in any aspect of Classroom Based Assessment (CBA). It was evident from the research carried out for this study that this would have a direct impact on the implementation of the Wellbeing programme. In the case study school all of the participants in the research had currently not attended CPD for Wellbeing as a result of the aforementioned directive. The school had participated in CPD for subjects such as English, Geography and Maths for example, but to date Wellbeing was not offered by the JCT (Junior Cycle for Teachers).

The findings also identified that there was a prioritisation of the subjects that were considered ‘examination’ for junior cycle over the Wellbeing programme. Schools in the post-primary sector had to implement the Wellbeing programme within schools from September 2017. However, as a result of the ASTI directive for non-engagement in CPD or training with regard to junior cycle reform, many schools had to implement this programme without the necessary training for teachers. Research states that where teachers are involved in implementing change within education, that it cannot happen without the teacher ‘believing’ that the change is going to be beneficial. Richards et al (2000, p.2) states that if teachers actually try out a particular innovation which does not initially conform to their prior beliefs where the principle proves helpful or successful then accommodation of an alternative belief is more possible than in any other circumstance. Without the necessary training or CPD there is a real danger that teachers involved in this new learning area of Wellbeing will revert back to how they have been teaching before the introduction of the new programme. Karl, the PE teacher in the study, noted that due to lack of clarity around Wellbeing those teachers are only willing to “push their own side of it and develop their own side of it.” CPD could potentially be the opportunity that genuinely challenges teacher beliefs around how they have been teaching. It can provide an opportunity for teachers to try out the innovation within the new Wellbeing programme and illuminate how it can be successful. Thereby increasing and enhancing the success of the new programme.

5.4 Teacher Knowledge of Indicators of Wellbeing

The Wellbeing programme emerged as a consequence of many debates and consultations around junior cycle education. One of the issues that emerged as a result of these consultation processes was the “concern for the wellbeing of young people at his critical stage of their journey from childhood to adulthood in a complex and challenging environment” (NCCA, 2011, p.3). The NCCA guidelines identifies that there are six Indicators of Wellbeing. It is
recommended that schools design their own Wellbeing programme so that they have the flexibility to develop one that suits their students. The guidelines also state that all schools are working towards a “shared vision and set of indicators which describe what is important for young people and their wellbeing” (2017, p.44). These indicators make explicit what is important for students and teachers and therefore should be central to the implementation of Wellbeing. The findings from the research identified that the participants are not familiar with these indicators. Teachers within Wellbeing are continuing to teach the subjects of SPHE, PE and CSPE; however these indicators of Wellbeing are not explicitly part of the planning or focus within these subjects. Participants did demonstrate an understanding of what student wellbeing is, and knowledge of the indicators emerged here without some of the participants realising that they were explaining some of the indicators. Karl referred to wellbeing as being about “relationships” and “connections”, both of these are indicators of wellbeing. This situation will potentially impact on the implementation of Wellbeing by the teachers involved and subsequently on the students. If students are not afforded an opportunity, for example, to display respect or be respected, or an opportunity to connect with people, is there an opportunity to enhance wellbeing lost? One would have to agree that there is. Therefore, this is an area that needs to be addressed through further training and CPD opportunities for all involved.

5.5 Competence and Skill-Set for Wellbeing

Teacher competency in relation to Wellbeing was chosen by the researcher to be one of the themes to be researched. The researcher stated this reason was two-fold. Firstly the fact that Wellbeing at junior cycle is a new curricular area with a new focus for teachers which have been set out as indicators of Wellbeing. As mentioned earlier, these indicators set out a new vision and direction within the subjects of SPHE, CSPE and PE. This new vision and direction will require new knowledge and potentially new skills in order to facilitate the requirements within Wellbeing. The second reason that competency was a focus of the research is due to the situation whereby in the “majority of cases, teachers are completing initial teacher education without qualification in CSPE or SPHE” (NCCA 2017, p.54). As a consequence the NCCA guidelines have stated that “in both these areas teachers should be facilitated in attending ongoing continuing professional development opportunities, thereby developing the school’s professional capacity in these areas” (ibid., p.54). The findings from the research identified that teachers felt competent within their subject area, however within
the Wellbeing context, they felt they needed more support and CPD. The area of Relationships and Sexuality Education within SPHE was an area identified that required more training and support. Christine felt that “the whole area of RSE needs to be revisited and teachers need to be re-trained and they need to be brought up-to-speed on information in relation to consent, the law, resources...” Maura also identified that that she felt competent with regard to her subject CSPE however she stated that there are some areas within teaching Wellbeing that need further development: “There should be further training for teachers in relation to psychology or adolescent psychology. I think it would be hugely beneficial so that teachers can have a better understanding of where students are at.” Developmental psychology in adolescence was explored in the context of Wellbeing in the literature review. It identified adolescence as a complex developmental process. Identity formation is a crucial part of this developmental stage. An understanding of this stage would certainly positively enhance teaching within Wellbeing, as identity achievement can be supported through the opportunities that are provided to our students through the six indicators of wellbeing: Active, Aware, Responsible, Resilient, Respected and Connected. Consequently it provides an opportunity to enhance student wellbeing.

5.6 Role of Management within Wellbeing

The researcher included a member of school management in the case study school in the research in order that a broader picture was provided with regard to the implementation of Wellbeing at junior cycle. Planning was one of the overarching themes within the research and the role of management is directly linked to this theme. The NCCA guidelines for Wellbeing states that a collaborative approach to planning for Wellbeing should exist. This involves the “whole school community... that a once-off planning meeting is insufficient in supporting the planning, implementation and review of the school’s Wellbeing programme” (NCCA, p52). The findings previously discussed with regard to collaborative practice suggest that there is a difficulty around planning due to timetable restrictions and lack of understanding and direction within the context of Wellbeing. The semi-structured interview with the management participant aimed to highlight management’s perspective, in an effort create solutions or improve practice by addressing all areas of involvement.

The Wellbeing guidelines specifically outline important areas for consideration when planning for CSPE and SPHE. These considerations are linked to the planning process and are the responsibility of management in the case study school. They firstly recommend that
teachers should be “assigned these subjects with prior knowledge. When teachers are assigned, who have an interest and commitment to this area they are more likely to provide a broad and balanced experience of learning” (NCCA p54). The guidelines also identify the importance of providing opportunities for staff to attend CPD in the areas of SPHE and CSPE. In the majority of cases, teachers are completing teacher training without formal qualification in CSPE and SPHE. This is essential in order to promote development in the school’s professional capacity in these areas.

These are two examples of how important the planning process is within Wellbeing. The findings from the research identifies that management has a system in place that helps to identify teachers that have the “interest and commitment” (ibid p.54). Margaret states that they choose teachers that “care about the students as a person, not about the person as a provider of results...a genuine interest in the individual.” Teachers also fill in “a timetable feedback sheet” which identifies “the areas that you would like to be involved in.” Margaret also states that they use this information along with other interest areas of teachers that links in with the nature of the subjects of CSPE and SPHE. Margaret has also explained that this process in choosing the appropriate staff seems to work as there has never been a situation where a teacher was unhappy about being timetabled for SPHE or CSPE and that “I would be anxious to avoid that.” This positively correlates to the findings from the other participants in the research where they all seemed positive about their involvement in their subject areas.

The participants all agreed that management has a responsibility to ensure that the right teachers are timetabled for Wellbeing. One participant noted their concern over including teachers that did not show an interest and the potential it could have for negatively impacting on the quality of teaching within Wellbeing. The case study school is an example of good practice around planning to avoid this. Maura however noted that “we are lucky in our school that the right teachers just happen to be but it could totally be different in another school.” Another participant noted that she experienced within the SPHE department over the years that teachers have been “thrown in there an unfortunately they don’t want to be there and that has had a negative impact on SPHE.”

Overall, the area of planning for Wellbeing by management is seen in a positive light. It is clear that sufficient consideration is given to the choice of teachers to be involved, and also there is an opportunity for teachers to identify interest in the areas of CSPE and SPHE in the timetable feedback sheet. These factors will positively impact on teaching within Wellbeing.
and thereby enhance and benefit the opportunity to improve student wellbeing. However, further consideration for planning and promoting CPD for Wellbeing amongst staff must be ensured in order to achieve the cohesive and shared vision as set out in the guidelines. It also needs to be noted that while the case study school employs a successful strategy for choosing teachers to be involved in the programme, not all schools operate in the same way. Identifying good practice within this research could inform and potentially improve practice in other schools.

Management identified concern over Industrial Relations agreements for example the Croke Park/Lansdowne Road agreement. Within this arrangement it was agreed that all post-primary schools will partake in an extra 33 hours per school year, outside of the school timetable to be used in a whole-school context. An amendment to this agreement stated that:

Having regard to the central purpose underlying the provision of additional time...an amount of time up to but not in excess of 5 hours (of the 33 hours) will be available for planning and development work on other than a whole-school basis and as approved by management.

(DES 2011)

While the case study school was able to facilitate up to 5 hours for collaborative planning under this new arrangement, management felt that this arrangement was, in a sense, counterproductive to the planning needs within the school. Management described the attitude to the 5 hours a “getting through” the hours requirement as oppose to engaging in quality planning. The researcher noted in her field-notes that she sensed “resentment around the 33 hour arrangement” and as an inside researcher she also had an insight into teacher opinions that would suggest that the Croke Park arrangement was counterproductive. Once teachers had completed the 33 hours outside of timetable requirement, there was a culture emerging around, ‘why should I do anymore?’ The researcher is not stating that this is happening in all schools, but there was an element of this in the case study school. The findings revealed that management felt that strong leadership within the subject departments might help move beyond the current situation, and that there was a committee working within the school that demonstrated this. Overall the impact of this Industrial Relations Agreement on collaborative planning was negative. While it allows for up to 5 hours to be used for planning within subject areas or other school activities, it is potentially creating a negative culture around the amount of time spent planning. Karl, a participant in the study stated that “everybody is willing to push their own side of it and develop their own side and then try to
bring it together at the end”. This is not the collaborative approach that the guidelines propose in order to achieve the shared vision and collaborative approach to Wellbeing. Therefore this arrangement is potentially impacting on the quality of planning and desire to be involved in this process. As the process of planning has been identified as an important area for the implementation of the Wellbeing programme, this arrangement, in light of what the research has identified, could negatively impact on teaching within the programme and as a consequence the opportunity to enhance student wellbeing.

5.7 Ethical Considerations within the Research

The researcher was given ethical approval to carry out this research from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University. The researcher, a trainee Guidance Counsellor will also adhere to the ethical principles as set out by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors Code of Ethics (2008) and the National Centre for Guidance in Education Research Ethics (2008) during all stages of the research study.

Information sheets were provided to the participants and consent forms were signed prior to engagement in the semi-structured interviews. Copies can be found in the appendices section of the thesis.

The researcher applied reflexivity throughout the research. A journal was maintained and field-notes were recorded after each interview to help address concerns with regard to the insider research position within the study.

5.8 Conclusion

While the research identified that the teachers involved in Wellbeing at junior cycle would see it as being a positive arrangement, there are some concerns around some factors that could potentially impact negatively on teaching within Wellbeing and consequently on the opportunity provided to students to enhance their wellbeing. The NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines highlight certain areas of importance for consideration in implementing Wellbeing. The three areas that were chosen by the researcher were explored and elaborated throughout the chapter. The factors identified such as lack of collaboration within Wellbeing, lack of CPD which is impacting on confidence and perceived competence within Wellbeing, Industrial Relations on planning for Wellbeing within the subjects of CSPE, PE and SPHE and also in a management context, means that the areas identified by the NCCA (2017) as
being important areas for consideration could potentially be areas that are negatively impacting on teaching within Wellbeing. However, in identifying and illuminating these areas, changes can be implemented within schools in order to reduce the negative impact these potentially have on the opportunity for enhancing student wellbeing.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to provide a conclusion in consideration of the aims of the research study. It presents the strengths and limitations of the study and highlights the recommendations for future policy and practice in light of the primary research findings and literature review.

6.1 Summary of Findings

The main aim of this study was to explore teacher experiences and perceptions of teachers involved in implementing Wellbeing and consequently highlight the potential impact of these on the opportunities provided to students to enhance their wellbeing. It specifically focussed on the factors that are relevant to the teachers of SPHE, PE, CSPE and Guidance, as these are the core subjects within Wellbeing.

A narrative case study design was chosen as the appropriate framework for the study as it allowed the participants to “tell the story of the experience” (McLeod, p190). According to McLeod, “in seeking to elucidate meaning, and tell a story, this tradition of case study research is much wider in scope than other case study genres” (ibid., p190). Three areas were identified by the researcher to be researched within the study. These three areas became the main themes of the research:

i) Collaboration
ii) Continuous Professional Development
iii) Planning

6.2 Collaboration

The findings that emerged from the theme of collaboration were as follows:

- Collegial support and teacher wellbeing
- Industrial Action and the impact of industrial relations agreements on collaboration
6.2.1 Collegial Support and Teacher Wellbeing

The findings from the research identified that the participants agreed that collaboration is an important aspect of teaching within Wellbeing and the majority of participants referred to collaboration as providing an opportunity for collegial support and teacher wellbeing. Research has indicated that teachers “teach who we are” (Palmer, 1997, p.15). The Teaching Council recognises “the importance of care of self so as to be able to care for others and, in that context, teachers’ wellbeing is vital if they are to effectively lead learning, and support students and facilitate students in this endeavour” (Teaching Council, 2016, p.18).

This research study revealed that the participants were not engaging in a collaborative practice within Wellbeing yet they agreed that it did provide an opportunity for collegial support. Maura stated that collaboration was an opportunity to “push each other on” and Christine agreed that “it is much more beneficial to have people sitting together and putting their ideas down and having some sort of plan and be able to discuss what works and what doesn’t.” What also emerged was a reluctance to engage in collaboration due to a lack of understanding around the joint or collegial approach required to implement Wellbeing. The literature explored Professional Learning Communities (PLC) as an example of a collaborative community. There are certain aspects and elements from the PLC that can inform and influence other communities so that they can create, using the PLC characteristics, a professional community that enhances collaborative practices, collegial support and professional practice.

6.2.2 Industrial Action and Agreements that Impact Collaboration

Members of the ASTI union were directed not to engage in any training of any kind in relation to Junior Cycle Reform. One of the main principles that emerged within the Junior Cycle Reform was to reduce the focus from one terminal examination as “it narrows the teaching and learning experience” (DES, ASTI, TUI, 2015, p.9). It identified a dual approach involving classroom-based assessment within classroom and a final exam at the end of the three years. However, some concerns emerged about teacher’s involvement in assessment that would contribute to state-examination results. After balloting its members the ASTI union voted not to engage in training for the new junior cycle. Subsequently the teachers that were members of the ASTI union were engaging in CPD. The Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) had accepted the arrangement. The new junior cycle was implemented in schools on a phased basis. This meant that ASTI members would be at an immediate disadvantage as a
consequence of not participating in CPD. The findings from this research identified how it has negatively impacted on teaching within Wellbeing for example participants reported that they were not aware of the indicators of Wellbeing. The Croke Park/Haddington Road agreement was also identified in the findings as having a negative impact on collaborative practice in the case-study school. Margaret, a member of school’s management, stated that it had become so much about “the hours, the hours”. This agreement sets out that teachers have to engage in an extra 33 hours per school year outside of the hours timetabled. The research consequently identified that the arrangement could potentially be contributing to a culture whereby teachers are more concerned about getting the extra hours completed as opposed to engaging in quality professional practices such as collaborative planning.

6.3 Continuous Professional Development

It has previously been discussed how Industrial Relations issues have impacted on the opportunities for teachers that are members of the ASTI union to engage in CPD. Another concern that emerged in the research study in relation to CPD was that the majority of teachers of SPHE and CSPE were teaching in this area without any qualification in the area. All of the participants from CSPE and SPHE (Christine, Maura and Adam) reported that they were not recognised by the Teaching Council as having qualifications in this subject area. It was identified in the Junior Cycle Reform: Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation that “the introduction of a new subject specification with an unfamiliar format will need to be supported with high-quality CPD and ongoing guidance” (DES, ASTI, TUI, 2015, p.8). In the case study school, none of the participants had engaged in CPD to date. CPD for Wellbeing would be made available to teachers in the academic year 2018/2019 by the JCT (Junior Cycle for Teachers). As a result in non-engagement in CPD teachers reported that they were not confident to lead the programme and initiate a collaborative approach. Karl stated that everybody were only wishing to “push their own side of it” suggesting that lack of CPD meant people were continuing to teach their own subject outside of the Wellbeing context. Finally, area of Relationships and Sexuality Education within SPHE was an area identified that required more training and support. Christine felt that “the whole area of RSE needs to be revisited and teachers need to be re-trained”.

6.3.1 Indicators of Wellbeing

To determine the level of competence reported by teachers within Wellbeing the researcher decided to choose an area of Wellbeing to focus on in the semi-structured interviews that
would reveal a level of understanding, on behalf of the participant, around Wellbeing. The Wellbeing guidelines state that the indicators “describe what is important for young people and their wellbeing...they make what is important explicit for teachers and students” (NCCA, 2017, p.44). Karl reported that he felt he needed CPD as he “hadn’t a clue” what he was doing. Two of the participants Maura and Christine noted that they did not familiarise themselves with the indicators as they had not been involved in Wellbeing directly in the academic year 2017/2018. However, both participants intend on being involved in the future. Maura stated that “I did attend CPD for philosophy.” A Philosophy module may be included within Wellbeing in the case study school. This leads to an area for consideration on behalf of management when they are deciding who should receive CPD for Wellbeing. The school will need to consider whether all teachers of CSPE, SPHE and PE, or only those involved at the moment are provided with an opportunity to engage in CPD. Overall, the area explored around CPD revealed a poor understanding around the indicators of Wellbeing. This was mainly attributed to lack of CPD. In the case of Christine and Maura it was due to lack of involvement in Wellbeing in the academic year 2017/2018.

**6.4 Planning in Wellbeing**

The NCCA Wellbeing guidelines state that “regular collaborative planning between CSPE, SPHE and PE teachers is needed to ensure that there is a shared vision, coherent approach and opportunities for collegial support across three areas” (2017, p.54). It has previously been identified that collaborative within Wellbeing has not been established to date in the case study school.

**6.4.1 The Role of Management within Planning**

The researcher included a member of management in the research in order to provide a full picture of the implementation of Wellbeing in the school. It was determined through the findings that management made the required changes in order to facilitate Wellbeing on the timetable. Currently three hundred hours are required for Wellbeing, however, this is to increase to four hundred hours by 2020. So, rather than wait for 2020, the school has put down five periods of Wellbeing for all of the year groups, one CSPE, SPHE, a double PE and one guidance/wellbeing module.

The guidelines for Wellbeing also recommended that within the subject areas of CSPE and SPHE, teachers should be assigned theses with prior knowledge. This would help to ensure
that teachers have an interest and commitment to the area, particularly in SPHE where the difficult and more challenging areas could be avoided (2017, p.54). Management within the case study school have implemented a system whereby they ask all teachers to fill out a timetable request form. Teachers can identify areas of interest on this sheet and management can use this feedback to help choose appropriate teachers for inclusion within Wellbeing. Margaret states that they choose teachers that “care about the students as a person, not about the person as a provider of results...a genuine interest in the individual.” This would suggest that management need to have knowledge of the teachers within the school if they are to be able to determine these qualities about them. The case study school has a population of approximately 330 students and a teaching staff of 28. To acquire this level of knowledge in a bigger school could be a greater challenge for management.

6.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

A key strength within the research was the ‘single case study’ design. This allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth exploration of real-life events (Yin, 2009). The researcher’s positionality within the research was also a strength as they had a good understanding of the context around the research. There was also a personal interest on behalf of the researcher in Wellbeing at junior and lead to genuine engagement in the research topic.

This study aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers within Wellbeing. This new area of learning would include teachers of CSPE, SPHE and PE in a new area of learning. This study aimed to identify the “real-life” (Yin, 2009) experiences of teachers within this new arrangement in order to illuminate factors that are potentially impacting on the opportunities provided to students to enhance their wellbeing. These findings may provide an insight into the reality experienced by teachers and thereby provide an opportunity to enhance the opportunities for student wellbeing. It will also provide insight to Guidance provision, as Guidance Education is included in Wellbeing.

The positionality of the researcher needs to also be considered as a potential limitation within the research due to researcher’s subjectivity around the data and findings (Yin, 2009). The researcher used a reflexive approach throughout the study to counteract this. Three areas were chosen by the researcher as a focus for the semi-structured interview; this may have potentially reduced or excluded areas of importance, in relation to Wellbeing, being explored.
6.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations with regard to policy and practice can be made. The exploration of teacher experiences and perceptions within Wellbeing can illuminate areas that may require more support or development and also areas that are impacting positively and can thereby be recommended as good practice. The recommendations for policy, best practice and research are:

1. If a collaborative practice is recommended to implement a new programme in the post-primary sector support should be provided to teachers in this area in the form of CPD or workshops. This will help to ensure the value and positive contribution of collaboration is understood and promoted.

2. Management in schools must ensure that teachers within Wellbeing are, insofar as possible, timetabled to be off at the same time to ensure a space for collaboration.

3. An investigation by the Teaching Council into the situation where teachers of CSPE and SPHE are in most cases not qualified to teach in this area needs to happen and subsequently consideration for teacher training within these areas within third level institutions.

4. A review of the current Croke Park/ Lansdowne Road agreement needs to considered in light of the negative impact it is having on quality time spent on important professional practices such as collaborative planning.

5. A review of Relationships and Sexuality Education within SPHE needs to be take place as teachers involved are reporting a lack of confidence in the area; this is also linked to lack of training.

6. Prioritisation for support/CPD in schools where teachers were mainly ASTI members needs to occur in order to reduce the deficit that seems to exist in light of non-engagement with training for Junior Cycle Reform.

7. Further research on the experiences and perceptions of teachers within who are members of Teacher Union of Ireland (TUI) could potentially illuminate further the impact of non-engagement in Junior Cycle Reform.

6.7 Reflexivity in relation to personal learning

For the purposes of this study a reflexive approach was applied to help provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon keeping in mind the personal, social and cultural context of the researcher (Etherington 2004). Etherington’s fundamental model of
reflexivity promoted the use of self questioning, note taking and a research diary throughout all stages of the research.

This reflexive approach ensured that any preconceptions I had in relation to teacher experiences and perceptions did not influence the study. I believed that in general teachers were reluctant to collaborate as it was time consuming however, the findings reported that they had a positive attitude to collaboration and would do so if other factors were not impacting on the opportunity to do so. I was surprised at the positive attitude to Wellbeing in general, and teachers seemed enthusiastic about the benefits for students. I feel the research has helped me to realise that there is a story behind us all, reasons that we behave in a particular way. In relation to my professional development the research has created awareness around understanding the whole person and to keep an open mind.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter concludes this single case study. The main findings were summarised. It identified the strengths and limitations of the study. It identified recommendation in relation to future policy, practice and research related to Wellbeing at junior cycle. Finally, reflexivity of the researcher was discussed.
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Information Letter for Principal

Date: 25/04/2018

EHSREC No: 2018_03_26_EHS

Research title: To explore the impact of the involvement of teachers of SPHE, PE and CSPE in the new curricular area of Wellbeing at junior cycle. A teacher perspective

Dear Principal,

I am a student of the MA in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development programme in the School of Education, University of Limerick. I am undertaking a research dissertation on a topic related to the Wellbeing programme at junior cycle, under the supervision of Dr. Timothy Murphy.

The research aims to focus on the impact of the involvement of teachers that have been assigned responsibility for the new curricular area of Wellbeing at junior cycle. These are teachers from the subject areas of CSPE, SPHE and PE. The research must also include the school’s guidance counsellor to represent the guidance component of Wellbeing at junior cycle. Prior to this new curricular arrangement student wellbeing was central to the role of the guidance counsellor. As a trainee guidance counsellor I have a vested interest in student wellbeing and therefore which to research how this new arrangement impacts the pursuit of student wellbeing in the post-primary sector. I intend to carry out this research through the use of a case study, whereby I would gather data from one school only. I would be grateful if you would allow me to carry out the proposed research in your school and also allow me to seek consent for a maximum of eight teachers involved in the wellbeing programme from the
subject areas PE, SPHE and CSPE, and the school guidance counsellor, to participate in the research.

All information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. Interviews will be audio tape recorded and the data will be destroyed after analysis according to UL guidelines. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time prior to data analysis phase. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick. It is important to note that the school’s name and the name of the individual participants will not be used in the research and the school will not be identifiable to anyone other than those directly involved.

If you have any queries or require any further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:

**Researcher:** Sinead Ryan  
Email address: 16104692@studentmail.ul.ie

**Research Supervisor:** Timothy Murphy  
Telephone number: 061 202931  
Email address: timothy.murphy@ul.ie

This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee EHSREC no:___________________ If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact:

**Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**  
EHS Faculty Office  
University of Limerick  
Tel (061) 234101  
ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
Information Letter for Participant

Date: 26/04/2018

EHSREC no. 2018_03_26_EHS

Research title: To explore the impact of the involvement of teachers of SPHE, PE and CSPE in the new curricular area of Wellbeing at junior cycle. A teacher perspective

Dear Teacher,

I am a student of the MA in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development programme in the School of Education, University of Limerick. I am undertaking a research dissertation on a topic related to the Wellbeing programme at junior cycle, under the supervision of Dr. Timothy Murphy.

The research aims to focus on the impact of the involvement of teachers that have been assigned responsibility for the new curricular area of Wellbeing at junior cycle. These are teachers from the subject areas of CSPE, SPHE and PE. The research must also include the school’s guidance counsellor to represent the guidance component of Wellbeing at junior cycle. Prior to this new curricular arrangement student wellbeing was central to the role of the guidance counsellor. As a trainee guidance counsellor I have a vested interest in student wellbeing and therefore which to research how this new arrangement impacts the pursuit of student wellbeing in the post-primary sector. I intend to carry out this research through the use of a case study, whereby I would gather data from one school only. In order to gather this information I would appreciate if you would give me consent to participate in a face-to-face
audio-taped interview. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and be held in an appropriate setting at your school.

All information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. Interviews will be audio tape recorded and the data will be destroyed after the analysis process. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time prior to the data analysis phase. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick. It is important to note that your name will not be used in the reporting of the research. If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:

**Researcher:** Sinead Ryan
Email address: 16104692@studentmail.ul.ie

**Research Supervisor:** Timothy Murphy
Telephone number: 061 202931
Email address: timothy.murphy@ul.ie

This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee EHSREC no:______________ If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact:

**Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee**
**EHS Faculty Office**
**University of Limerick**
**Tel (061) 234101**
ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
Appendix C

UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
O L L S C O I L _ L U I M N I G H

Consent Form for Participant

EHS REC No: 2018_03_26_EHS

Research Title:
To explore the impact of the involvement of teachers of SPHE, PE and CSPE in the new curricular area of Wellbeing at junior cycle. A teacher perspective.

- I understand what this research project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I am fully aware of the procedures and of the risks and the benefits of the study.
- I am fully aware that the recording of the interview and the data generated from it will be kept confidential.
- I am aware that my identity will remain anonymous.
- I know that my participation in the research study is voluntary and I can withdraw my involvement at any time prior to the data analysis stage.

I hereby agree to take part in this study:

Signature:_____________________________________

Printed name:__________________________________

Signature of Researcher:_________________________

Date:_________________________________________
Appendix D

UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK  
O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H

Consent Form for Principal

EHSREC No. 2018_03_26_EHS

Research Title: To explore the impact of the involvement of teachers of SPHE, PE and CSPE in the new curricular area of Wellbeing at junior cycle. A teacher perspective.

I have read the project Information Sheet and understand in detail the particulars of the research project. I understand that the identity of the participants and the school will not be identifiable in the reporting of this research study. The conditions involved in the research which are designed to protect the privacy of participants and respect their contribution are:

1. Participation is entirely voluntary.

2. Participants are free to withdraw at any time prior to the data analysis stage and any contribution made will be subsequently destroyed.

3. The interviews will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the researcher and the supervisor. Excerpts from the interviews may be part of the final research dissertation but under no circumstances will names or any identifying characteristics be included in the report.

I hereby give my consent for ______________________ to carry out this research in the school.

Signature:_____________________________________

Printed name:__________________________________

Signature of Researcher:________________________

Date:_________________________________________
Research Interview Questions

EHSREC No. 2018_03_26_EHS

**Research Title:** To explore the impact of the involvement of teachers of SPHE, PE and CSPE in the new curricular area of Wellbeing at junior cycle. A teacher perspective.

**Research Questions for teachers of CSPE, SPHE and PE:**

1. What subjects do you currently teach?
2. Explain how you got involved in the Wellbeing programme in this school?
3. What component of Wellbeing do you teach?
4. CSPE, SPHE, PE and Guidance are identified as being the curricular areas that will make up the Wellbeing programme. To what extent are you satisfied that these subjects should be a part of this new curricular area of Wellbeing?
5. How many teachers are involved in Wellbeing in your school this year?
6. Does the school currently have a Wellbeing policy? If so, were you involved in creating it?
7. Have you received any extra training or CPD in Wellbeing?
8. To what extent do you feel competent to be involved in Wellbeing? Explain your answer.
9. To what extent are you familiar with the indicators of Wellbeing?
10. Can you give an example of one teaching methodology or class activity where one of the indicators of Wellbeing was experienced by students?
11. The junior cycle Wellbeing guidelines state that “student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community.” (NCCA, 2017) Do you think that teaching Wellbeing requires different skills and, or knowledge to other subject areas on the junior cycle programme e.g. English, Irish, Maths, Science etc. Explain your answer.
12. Can you identify any specific skills or other areas of teaching Wellbeing that you think would benefit from further training or development? If so, can you explain why?
13. Do all teachers involved in Wellbeing in your school work collaboratively? If yes, what are the benefits or drawbacks? If not, do you think you would benefit? Explain why.

14. Do you think that your own teaching qualifications and skills are currently sufficient to engage in this new curricular area of Wellbeing? Please give an explanation to support your answer.
Research Interview Questions

EHSREC No.2018_03_26_EHS

**Research Title:** To explore the impact of the involvement of teachers of SPHE, PE and CSPE in the new curricular area of Wellbeing at junior cycle. A teacher perspective.

**Research Questions for the Guidance Counsellor**

1. Are you currently directly involved in Wellbeing in junior cycle? If so, explain your role. If not what is your current position within Wellbeing?

2. Were you involved in the planning and or policy development within Wellbeing?

3. The junior cycle Wellbeing guidelines state that “student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community.” (NCCA, 2017) Do you think that teaching Wellbeing requires different skills and, or knowledge to other subject areas on the junior cycle programme e.g. English, Irish, Maths, Science etc. Explain your answer.

4. CSPE, SPHE, PE and Guidance are identified as being the curricular areas that will make up the Wellbeing programme. To what extent are you satisfied that these subjects should be a part of this new curricular area of Wellbeing?

5. Do you, as a guidance counsellor, have any concerns regarding the involvement of teachers of SPHE, CSPE and PE in student wellbeing? Explain.

6. How will this new curricular arrangement, of Wellbeing at junior cycle have an overall impact on the provision of guidance in the post-primary sector?

7. Have you received any extra training or CPD in Wellbeing? If so, please give detail.
8. To what extent do you feel competent to be involved in Wellbeing? Explain your answer.

9. Do you work collaboratively with the other teachers that are involved in the Wellbeing programme?

10. Can you identify benefits and or drawbacks that you as a guidance counsellor may have experienced as a result of the introduction of Wellbeing at junior cycle?

11. Can you identify a situation whereby student wellbeing has been noticeably enhanced by this new arrangement?

12. Can you identify a situation whereby student wellbeing was negatively impacted by this new arrangement?

13. Overall, to what extent are you satisfied that the new Wellbeing programme will benefit the overall pursuit of student wellbeing?