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## How Do Doctoral Research Academics Perceive Their Research Activities to be of Benefit to Undergraduate Students

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***How do Doctoral research academics  
perceive their research activities to be of benefit  
to undergraduate students?***

A thesis submitted to Dublin Institute of Technology in part fulfilment of the requirements award of Master (M.A.) in Third Level Learning and Teaching.

by

**James Mc Cauley**

July 2010

**Supervisor: Ms Martina Crehan**

**DIT Learning, Teaching & Technology Centre**

***Declaration***

I hereby certify that the material which is submitted in this thesis towards award of **Masters (M.A.) in Third Level Learning and Teaching** is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part fulfilment of the award named above.

*Signed* .....

*Date*.....

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Compliments also to my fellow classmates for their supportive, congenial and professional attitude at all times

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late brother, Pat Mc Cauley, who died April, 2005

## **ABSTRACT**

The principal aim of my research is to investigate the perceptions of Doctoral research academics regarding the benefit of their research activities to undergraduate students. Through in-depth interviews, the research aims to establish the level of communication that Doctoral researchers initiate with their undergraduate students about their research activities as well as the extent to which they know if these students perceive these activities as positive or negative. The extent to which students proactively queried such academics about their research activities is also examined. Two main types of activities were identified as having a positive impact: topic specific ‘cutting-edge’ knowledge was perceived as being beneficial as well as the broad-based liberal learning ethos that such academics brought to their teaching. Doctoral researchers research methods skills were of benefit, especially to dissertation students. A caveat for both however, was that they should not be ‘pitched’ at inappropriate levels, relative to student abilities. Another problem identified was the non- availability of such staff to undergraduates at various times.

College management and academics should work together in ensuring that there is a link between what Doctoral-research academics do when it comes to teaching undergraduates. Pedagogical training that engages these students in challenging research through ‘communities of practice’, and aligning college research policy to student curriculum should all be considered. The work and expertise of these academics needs to be targeted and disseminated at this large student cohort so that they gain maximum benefit from all Doctoral research work.

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## Introduction

The overall aim of the research in this dissertation is to explore how Doctoral research academics perceive their research activities to be of benefit to undergraduate students. The ensuing paragraphs provide a guide to how this dissertation finds the answer.

Chapter One outlines the context of and rationale for the research from my own professional perspective. In addition, it addresses the context from the international and Irish educational viewpoints. Specifics regarding the key research aims and objectives, its' de-limitations and ethical considerations are also dealt with in this chapter.

Chapter Two and Three are concerned with the literature central to my research question. As the first component of my Literature Review, chapter two explores the broad-based view on *academics* perspectives of the research-teaching nexus. Given their centrality, aspects of key concepts like research, teaching and knowledge are also dealt with. The core questions of the perceived benefits and difficulties that can arise for Doctoral researchers as teachers of undergraduates are also discussed. Possible future scenarios in respect of these completes chapter two.

As the second part of my Literature Review, chapter three is concerned with literature that identifies the perspectives of *undergraduate students*. The experiences, expectations and concerns they have regarding academic lecturers as their teachers are also examined. Their experiences compared to those of Doctoral-research academics are hence discussed.

Chapter Four deals with the critical area of research design, methodology and methods. The research-problem, aims and objectives are re-stated at the outset, before addressing the epistemology and theoretical perspective of my research. The chosen methodology of qualitative research using depth interviews is reviewed, with the rationale for using same explained. Other issues regarding the scope of my research as well as the key overall literature consulted completes the chapter.

The heart of the dissertation is in this fifth chapter, titled 'Analysis of Findings'. By utilising the research tools as identified in Chapter Four, I sought to capture as much relevant information as possible from my six interviewees. The findings from these interviews are analysed using the six core research objectives as broad themes for analysis purposes. The core question of: *How do Doctoral research academics perceive their research activities to be of benefit to Undergraduate students?*, is obviously the over-riding objective. In consequence, all my questioning and probing during the primary research sought to elicit my interviewee views and opinions with reference to this central question. The analysis of my six interview transcripts also endeavoured to establish if there were any links to the secondary research themes and topics identified from my review of the literature.

Finally, Chapter Six considers the information gleaned from my interviews. It provides appropriate conclusions and recommendations based on the six core themes of my research objectives. To conclude this chapter, recommendations pertaining to future research are also proffered.

# **CHAPTER 1: Research Context, Rationale & The Irish Higher Education System**

## **1.1 Context of research and rationale for Dissertation**

The reasons for commencing this research and seeking to find an answer to my research question are manifold. The obvious aim is to seek an answer to the core research question which is: “*How do Doctoral research academics perceive their research activities to be of benefit to Undergraduate students*”?. There are however myriad other grounds upon which I am undertaking this research from a professional practitioners perspective. (See 1.2 -1.4). Throughout my research, I will be taking cognizance of emerging issues that are pertinent to my research, all of which are occurring against a changing international and national background. In so doing, I will seek to highlight issues that provide answers to my research question. In order to contextualise this research question, the following pages set out the background and rationale to my research. The key research objectives as well as the limitations and the ethical considerations are also addressed.

## **1. 2 Professional perspective**

Work as a lecturer in an Institute of Higher Education in Ireland exposes academics to myriad professional developmental opportunities. The activities that cover this developmental gamut include short-time, one-off courses that improve ones teaching techniques through to formal postgraduate courses that includes Doctoral studies. The specific focus for this research however will be those academics who have completed or are working towards completion of a Doctoral thesis. It will seek to ascertain from these academics their perceptions of any benefits such research activity provides to undergraduates. In many respects, one could argue that the ultimate arbiters and beneficiaries should be the students. Academics are paid to engage with them, hence their learning experience, knowledge and abilities should be enhanced by way of this engagement. Central to whatever activity academics undertake should be the appreciation that student enrichment should be their key priority. Based on my six interviews with said

Doctoral academics, exploring the nature of these benefits to undergraduate students will be the main focus.

### **1.3 Context from an international educational perspective.**

At the heart of this dissertation is the notion of Research and Teaching as the twin tasks of universities, with the principal question to be addressed: *How do Doctoral research academics perceive their research activities to be of benefit to Undergraduate students?*. Asking questions about the nexus between the research and teaching is not a new phenomenon. In many respects they are supposed to be related, at least since universities adopted the Humboldtian idea about the purpose of the university. Indeed if addressed from a Humboldtian perspective, the essence of knowledge is the common pursuit of knowledge by teacher and student. Simons (2006, p. 38) posits:

The horizon to reflection upon the role of research and education (as general edification) is the idea of academic enquiry itself, with its aspiration to capture, through knowledge, reality in its totality, that is, the unity of the world. The main background is one of idealism, more specifically of an orientation towards truth that puts both teacher and student in the position of researcher.

This observation implies a unity of research and teaching. Clearly, as evidenced by the Humboldtian thinking as well as many other writings discussed hence, the debate about the nexus in higher education institutions is certainly not one that is confined to Irish academia; e.g.US (Boyer Commission, 1998) and UK (DIUSS, 2009). The debate on the sometimes natural and at other times, vexed link between the two in today's changing higher education institutions is ongoing. Overall, according to Brew (2003), some of these significant changes in higher education which have challenged the relationship between the two include:

- The move to a mass higher education system
- The amount of time available for teaching and research
- Changes in the nature of research and the nature of teaching
- Changes in the nature of knowledge
- The governmental policy towards the two and attitudes towards funding.

It is in the context of the above, alongside other changes in the higher education background nationally and internationally that this research was carried out. Other areas where Doctoral research may generally be deemed to be of benefit or otherwise to the academic life of teachers and their undergraduates will also be examined.

#### **1.4 Context from an Irish educational perspective.**

From an Irish perspective, the context of this research has to be viewed against a background of frequent discussion among academics and in the general media (Downes, 2009; Kelly, 2009; Walshe, 2006; Mc Carthy et al, 2009) about the link between research and teaching. Whilst much debate has taken place internationally among educationalists and others, the matter has taken on a particular resonance in Ireland because of recent governmental fiscal challenges within the public sector, of which higher education is a significant part.

The Mc Carthy report (2009), in terms of its scepticism about the state return on its investment, has put fourth level investment in research under the microscope in recent times. Underinvestment in undergraduate education is seen as suffering because of free third-level fees as well as a focus in recent years on the aforementioned fourth level. Writers such as Collins (2008, p. 11) have asked the question regarding who actually benefits from the investment?. Could the money be better spent on third level undergraduates for example?: Collins hypothesizes:

It is reasonable to suggest Government investment in education should look to optimising its public returns rather than private ones. Generally, as one progresses through the education levels, from primary to fourth level, increasing public costs translate into increasing private returns. So apart altogether from wondering how a country builds a fourth level if it neglects the earlier levels, it is difficult to support a choice in favour of the higher levels at the expense of the earlier ones.

Overall, the higher education sector here in Ireland is made up of seven Universities and thirteen Institutes of Technology. The *raison detre* of Irish higher education is often seen in the dyadic terms of the vocational/workplace remit *versus* the more holistic imperative of learning, with research and the dissemination of such research knowledge at its core.



The thirteen Institutes of Technology predominantly tend to gear for the former, whilst the seven Universities are generally seen to lean toward the latter. Mantras from various quarters about the importance of moving up the educational and research ‘value chain’ towards fourth level are commonplace. One observer, Andreas Hess (2009) posits that excellence in research and teaching is being replaced in universities by the employment demands of the labour market, surmising that ‘academic freedom’ is under threat. Elsewhere, Kelly (2009, p. 11) portrays the situation thus:

There is a need for a debate to arrive at a thoughtful and forward-looking definition of the public purpose of higher education so that we have a clear understanding of the role of the higher education institutions in our country.

### **1.5 Rationale for my research**

With the above context for my research in mind, the underlying rationale is to address whether there actually *is* a link between what academic researchers do and how they perceive these activities to be of benefit to undergraduate students. Many writers and academics have questioned whether there has been an over-focus on Doctoral research funding and whether undergraduates are neglected at its expense. “The increased emphasis on research output and the enlargement of Ph D numbers has to be handled carefully so that teaching to undergraduate students is not damaged”. (Kelly, 2009, p.11). The same writer also suggests that the role of teaching should not be diminished with an over-emphasis on research which potentially conflicts with the mission of a university. Such a mission in his view should be the education of our young people to take a responsible role in society. These views from an Irish perspective are not dissimilar to institutions in the US (Boyer Commission, 1998) and UK (DIUSS, 2009) where concerns expressed by these reports suggest a preponderance of attention to research over the teaching of undergraduates. (See Chapter 2).

It is the strong opinion of writers like Elton (1986) that it is *not* always possible or indeed legitimate to draw conclusions about the ‘mutual fertilization’ of teaching and research. This view of a questionable and tenuous relationship between the two is obviously not

one that is shared by all, with the common argument often espoused by researching academics that ‘research *informs* our teaching’. Writers like Healy (2005) suggest that many students of research-active teachers benefited immeasurably from their deep discipline-specific knowledge and expertise in research methodology.

My primary research with six academics in an Irish higher education institution seeks to answer my research question and address my overall aims and objectives. By questioning them about their research activities with reference to these six key research objectives, the broader, more in depth detail for the rationale for this Dissertation will emerge in the pages ahead.

## **1.6 Higher Education in Ireland – Broad Overview**

Overall the story of HE in Ireland has generally speaking been a successful one. Presidents of two of Ireland’s Universities, (Brady and Hegarty, 2008) highlighted the fact that the growth in the numbers of students progressing to third-level education is one of the great success stories of modern Ireland. In two decades from the mid-1980s, the proportion of school leavers going to college has virtually doubled, such that we now have more than 60,000 undergraduates and 15,000 postgraduates attending courses in the seven universities alone. The impact of such an uptake has also been credited by many as the reason for the growth of our economy up until the recent dramatic downturn. The National Competitiveness Council endorses the view that the quality of our education system is central to our ability to improve our quality of life and well-being through success in selling goods and services on international markets. The Councils Chairman, posited, (2009)

Ireland is a high value-added economy, with a well-educated labour force. The quality of education outcomes is a core part of our competitiveness. We need to have one of the world’s best education and research systems.

(Thornhill, 2009, p.14)

This conventional view while being seen as legitimate by many, does not however go unchallenged even by those working in academia. This is especially so with reference to

‘fourth level’ and the value for money it delivers to a country. Professor Tom Collins (2008) argues that there are many steps between a significant investment in basic research and returns on this investment. This issue is also one referred to by the Mc Carthy report (2009), in terms of their scepticism about the states return on its investment for the funding of research in higher education.

Elsewhere, Michael Kelly - Chairman of the HEA suggested that if higher education institutions are to deliver on the demands placed on them they will have to prudently manage the ever-increasing levels of participation at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Allied to this, they will be expected to maintain and further enhance the quality of teaching and other services- (Kelly, 2009). These institutions also need to meet ever growing demands from Government, society, parents and students for accountability and efficiency. Such demands might reasonably include the expectation that among other things, quality lecturing and research experiences should not be the preserve of postgraduate students, but should also include undergraduates. According to the HEA strategy document, one submission argues that “in general postgraduate students are judged by those who allocate resources to be more ‘worthy’ than the majority student body and the postgraduates are heavily subsidised accordingly”. (Barrett, 2009, p.4).

### **1.6.1 The dual purpose of higher education in Ireland**

The dyadic view which many people have of Irish third level education is through the previously mentioned twofold vocational/workplace remit *versus* the more holistic approach of learning which has research and its dissemination at its core. Maintaining excellence in research and teaching in Irish higher education as well as assisting in the supply of skills required by the employment demands of the labour market are the twin objectives. Central to developing my research question is looking at these two arguments briefly and seeing how Irish commentators view both.

### **1.6.2 Arguments in favour of a stronger research ethos in Ireland**

Prof Ferdinand von Prondzynski, president of Dublin City University suggests that:

There is a tension between the traditional expectation that universities will primarily teach students, and the more recent requirement for universities to underpin economic development and attract corporate research and development into Ireland. (von Prondzynski, as cited in O'Regan. 2008)

Elsewhere the presidents of Irelands two leading higher education institutions (UCD and Trinity) reiterate the importance of research to education and the economy as a whole. Brady and Hegarty (2008, p.10) argue that investment in research shows what can be done through enlightened policies, diligently pursued. They strenuously argue the point that the solution to the current difficulties facing the universities is not, as some have suggested, *'to backpedal on research'*. It is their contention that the generation of new ideas and knowledge through research and the enrichment of the learning experience by this knowledge, are at the very heart of a world-class university experience. They posit: *"any vision of our universities which did not encompass excellence in research and teaching - and the fusion of the two - would be threadbare indeed"*.

Combining these two educational strands is stressed elsewhere by the the NUI Galway Professor, Jim Browne. Interviewed for an Irish Times article, he suggested "research and teaching cannot be separated. The hallmark of a university is research-based teaching. If you don't have teachers involved in research inculcating a sense of enquiry in students, then it's not a university." (Browne as cited in Faller, 2008, p. 11) This is something which can cause tension in Ireland and is well documented as occurring internationally in the Literature Review. (Chapter 2)

### **1.6.3 Arguments in favour of a stronger pedagogical and vocational ethos**

The Irish education system, and in particular higher education, is repeatedly credited as a key contributor to our past success and our future prospects.

An issue of concern for some has been the notion of cross-subsidisation by undergraduates of postgraduate activities. A recent report by Downes (2009) cited

research carried out in Trinity College Dublin by economist Charles Larkin. It suggested that only 15 per cent of the money provided to universities by the government for each undergraduate student is actually being spent on teaching those same students. Based on the TCD economists study, the argument is that such students and their parents are being used as “cash cows” for the wider university system:

This is because the funding they attract may effectively be subsidising the generous wages of senior management and non-teaching academics, with little or no benefit to the quality of education which undergraduate students themselves receive. This has prompted fresh questions about how efficiently current resources are being used. (Downes, 2009, p.8)

The importance of this matter will gain traction now more than ever in Ireland due to the government commitments to Irish ‘fourth level’ education and the development of a ‘knowledge economy’. Such developments will also have to occur in parallel with the wider aim of publicly-funded third level education being delivered in a more cost-effective manner in straitened times. Elsewhere other Irish academics (Kelly, 2009) warned of this perception of an over-focus on growing the PhD numbers at the expense of expenditure on undergraduate teaching.

#### **1.6.4 Financing higher education in Ireland today**

The current reality on the ground is quite problematic, even at ‘crisis’ stage in the eyes of some. The absence of third-level fees allied to ongoing cuts to third-level funding is causing problems. A recent report by Mc Carthy et al (2009 p. 65), a government appointed taskforce whose remit was to investigate ‘Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes’ had some interesting recommendations for the sector. The introduction of a formal academic workload management system across the higher education institutions was one key proposal. A specific agreement on increased teaching hours incorporating “minimum undergraduate teaching commitments” for senior academic staff was also recommended. They also made reference to the small number of teaching hours that are being carried out in the University sector:

The Group understands that the current academic contract at the universities makes no specific provision in relation to teaching hours. This must be addressed in the interests of improving efficiencies in the universities and improving the service to students. (McCarthy et al (2009 p. 65))

They argued that all academic staff in higher education institutions should have some teaching responsibilities and also contend that there is a need for what they term as: “Greater scope for consistency in conditions of employment such as required teaching hours per week”. (McCarthy et al, 2009, p.70.). Significantly, the report also questions the benefits of ongoing research funding from the public purse to Irish third level institutions:

In general, the Group is strongly of the view that substantial reductions in funding are warranted given the significant amounts invested to date and the lack of verifiable economic benefits resulting from these investments. (McCarthy et al, 2009, p. 70.)

According to Sutherland (2009, p 13), a contrary view is that:

there is a need to develop a dynamic fourth level system of PhD training and vibrant research culture that will spawn the PhD graduates, knowledge, discoveries, intellectual property and inventions that will drive the knowledge economy and knowledge society.

He argues that a research ethos needs to become embedded in all higher education institutions with funding for same provided by government. This is also supported by von Prondynski (2009) who comments that despite the boom, universities had been squeezed financially. While higher education spending in Ireland had risen significantly, this simply reflected increased student numbers, but the actual income per student, had in real terms, declined. He also argued that while a number of studies had confirmed that third level was seriously under-funded, nothing much had happened to address this. In 2008 the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) which had originally awarded E44 million to the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance to reform undergraduate teaching had its funding cut. (Flynn, 2008). According to the aforementioned writer, the SIF had been described and championed by the government itself as a fund which would boost teaching standards in higher education. Overall, aiming to achieve a balance however between the two facets of research and teaching is central to the thoughts of many Irish

academics with another, Kelly (2009, p. 11) asking the following question: “Must we follow the US in everything? Research is a vital component of university education at all levels but there are dangers of its over-emphasis”.

In conclusion, whatever about where the emphasis will emerge in the years ahead, the issue of funding for higher education is going to be an ongoing problem for a country in a recession that has also recently ruled out the re-introduction of third level fees.

### **1.6.5 Dublin Institute of Technology**

I work in and am conducting my research in DIT. The matter of developing a formidable fourth level body of research-active staff and students is particularly apt due to DIT's campaign in the past to be designated university status. The journey towards achieving this status has had as one of its central tenets the recruitment and development of more PhDs among the academic staff and students. Much of this stems from the need among other things to attract research funding. The Skilbeck report (2003) which looked at the feasibility of DIT attaining this university status suggested IOTs were at a disadvantage compared to universities in that infrastructure funding and grants for research had given universities already in existence a substantial head-start over those that aspired to becoming research active. More recently, new proposed structures being implemented in the Institute envisage a central role for research within its re-configured structure. Alluding to same in its mission statement they posit:

DIT will be the first choice in Ireland for people seeking professional, career focused learning and discovery in a vibrant environment renowned for the application of research, innovation and creativity.( [www.dit.ie](http://www.dit.ie), 2010)

With a large cohort of undergraduate students however, it is imperative that these students have the best in research talent made available to them when it comes to teaching. Receiving the very best in pedagogical skills so that they are not neglected in favour of Doctoral research will also be crucial. The innumerable benefits that can potentially flow to undergraduate students who could be lectured by such research-active

staff are discussed later in Chapter 2. These possible benefits and difficulties also form the central components in addressing my research question and objectives.

### **1.7 Research Question, Aims and Objectives**

The overall aims and objectives of my research must be viewed with reference to the context and rationale explained earlier. The objectives outlined here aim to obtain an answer to my key research question, which is:

#### **Research Question**

*How do Doctoral research academics perceive their research activities to be of benefit to Undergraduate students?*

#### **Research Objective No 1.**

1. To ascertain how the *discipline specific* research knowledge and *research methods* skills of Doctoral researchers can impact the teaching of undergraduate students.

#### **Research Objective No 2**

2. To discover whether the students of Doctoral research academics are perceived as 'open' to their lecturers research activities and whether such students access the published work leading to *student*-initiated discussions.

#### **Research Objective No 3**

3. To determine whether Doctoral researchers initiate discussion about their research activities with undergraduate students and whether they know if their students perceive this as positive or negative.

#### **Research Objective No 4**

4. To identify any perceived changes in student reactions to Doctoral researchers since they started/attained their Doctoral qualification.

#### **Research Objective No 5**

5. To deduce the research participants perceptions of research, teaching and knowledge in relation to their day to day practice.



## **Research Objective No 6**

6. To establish whether an academics' research and teaching can be compartmentalised and treated as mutually exclusive or whether they are seen as part of a nexus in relation to their teaching practice.

### **1.8 De-limitations of my research**

As outlined in Chapter 4, the research for this MA in Third Level Learning & Teaching will be conducted among a small sample of six academics in some of DITs constituent Colleges. For this reason, I will not be claiming that this is reflective of the population of interest i.e. all Doctoral researchers. The reason for such a small sample is justified on the basis that it is sufficient to give partial insight into the thesis under investigation. It is also justified on the basis that it would not be practicable to engage with a very large group of similar respondents for the purposes of an MA dissertation. A larger sample size may be deemed necessary for a Doctoral thesis. Nonetheless, information I obtained from the six participants provided a substantial volume of relevant information that provided valuable insights to my research. (See Appendix C)

Quantitative research does not form part of my research. Notwithstanding the view that it can offer scientific and concrete findings if conducted properly. I do not deem it appropriate for the types of research I will be conducting, which aims to elicit opinions and feelings about my chosen topic. The rationale for this is as outlined in Chapter 4 (See 4.8).

The research did not take a dyadic perspective of looking at the topic from a students viewpoint. Interviewees chosen were from the academics side of the equation only. The limitations of time and issues around eliciting viewpoints from students about fellow academics both from a privacy and ethical perspective could be problematic. The research was also undertaken among staff in DIT only and so may not be deemed to be reflective of the broader Doctoral community in Ireland or further abroad.

The research undertaken among staff refers to how their research activities impact on undergraduates only, so for this reason, one cannot deem it to be reflective of the broader third level student population which would also include postgraduate cohorts.

### **1.9 Ethical considerations**

Foremost in any researchers mind in conducting research must be the ethical considerations pertinent to their research. Creswell (2007, p. 44) expresses this opinion:

Throughout all phases of the research process we are sensitive to ethical considerations. These are especially important as we negotiate entry to the field site of the research; involve the researchers in our study; gather personal emotional data that reveal the details of life; and ask participants to give considerable time to our projects.

These views on ethics as espoused by Creswell are ones with which I would concur. The first ethical matter as it applies to my research pertains to the area of anonymity. All six of my interviewees were given pseudonyms. There is however no *absolute* guarantee that their thoughts will not be identifiable to other colleagues should they choose to read my findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 370) made the following contention in regard to promising anonymity “The virtual impossibility of writing a fool proof report should be humbling to the inquirer who glibly promises protection without fully understanding the full implications of the promise”. I do not however see this as a significant issue as my research in the main, has not been an exercise in revealing any overly-sensitive information. One cannot assume however that findings that emerge from my research will not be sensitive to some of my interviewees.

Malone (2003) makes another point when she refers to the inductive, emergent nature of qualitative design which precludes researchers being able to predict exactly where the study will take them. Whilst we may begin with questions, problems or frameworks (in my case, a rough topic guide), we essentially begin with a setting where we hope we might find answers to some of our questions. Significantly however, we can discover answers to questions we had not thought to ask. The analogy is made of a detective

gradually uncovering an answer to a mystery and piecing together a puzzle, not knowing what the jigsaw will reveal. The point being made is that while we can tell our participants what our initial questions are and the kind of involvement we expect to from them, we can never really predict what will emerge.

This highlights one of the key success factors of in-depth interviews when using a topic guide, which is that it paves the way open for unexpected and unscripted topics to arise. Such new topics when introduced by the interviewee can enrich the scope and further deepen the level of findings a researcher encounters. To this end, it is incumbent upon the researcher to behave ethically in such instances. I am confident in my ethical stance on all such matters with respect to my interviewees and the authenticity of the overall research process.

Indeed BERA (2004) contends that deference for ones participants is essential. Their guidelines consider that all educational research should be conducted with a respect for the person, knowledge and democratic values. The quality of educational research and academic freedom should also be respected. Again, the concept of informed consent is referred to in their guidelines, which is in sync with the Nuremberg Code (1949) stance on informed consent needing to be voluntary. They further assert that the “human subject” should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter involved so as to enable them make enlightened decisions, but also decisions they can fully understand. In the case of my own research, the academic interviewees all have in excess of ten years experience in an academic environment. They were also provided with prior information on what the research entailed by virtue of a letter of explanation as well as a copy of the topic guide, a week in advance of the meeting. All interviewees expressed that they were confident and comfortable about discussing the topic under investigation. Their verbal comments to this effect are also recorded in the interview transcripts.(See Appendix C)

In conclusion, Fisher and Anushko (2008) address the issue of ethics when it comes to the ‘Analysis of Findings’ stage. They posit that researchers need to be fair in ensuring

that the objectivity of data analysis and interpretation is led by data and not other interests. They also assert that researchers must ensure that ones research findings are not inappropriately generalized to other populations. In this respect I am aware of the fact that the practices of a small number of participants in my study cannot be portrayed as being the practices and views of all academics in higher education institutions.

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

Visser-Wijnveen et al (2009, p. 673) assert that one of the problems that has arisen in identifying what is often referred to as the '*research-teaching* nexus' is that the nexus and its components are understood differently by different academics. In other words, they have different *beliefs*. In addition academics' views on the nexus and the underlying concepts also need clarification. This implies that we need to know more about academics' conceptions of *research* (one part of the nexus) and their conceptions of *teaching* (the other part). However, according to these writers, there is a more fundamental concept which is also of huge importance, namely *knowledge*. Individuals' epistemological beliefs also greatly influence their conceptions of teaching and these matters are discussed hence.

#### 2.1 Conceptions of Research, Teaching and Knowledge.

##### 2.1.1 Research

Brew (2003, p.6), citing the research findings of an investigation of conceptions of research of fifty-seven senior Australian academics identified four qualitatively different conceptions of research. This is summarised in Figure 2 and an explanation is provided below.

1. In the *domino* view, the researcher's focus is on the solutions to problems and the answering of questions, i.e. it is *external* to the activities of doing the research. It looks outside the immediate context of the research.

2. In the *trading* view of research, in the foreground are the end products of the research: publications, grants and social networks, i.e. aspects external to the process of doing the research.

3. In contrast, in the *layer* way of conceptualising research, the focus looks inward. Here, research is interpreted as a process of discovering, uncovering or creating underlying meanings. There are also differences in conceptions according to whether the researchers themselves are the focus of awareness or whether the researcher is essentially absent from, or incidental to awareness.

4. In the fourth category of description is the *journey* view and in the foreground are the personal existential issues and dilemmas of the researcher. Here the researcher is the focal point of awareness. Research is interpreted as a personal journey of discovery possibly leading to transformation.

Research is oriented towards: ↓	Research aims to: ↓	The researcher is present to, or the focus of, awareness	The researcher is absent from, or incidental to, awareness
External products	Produce an outcome	Trading view	Domino view
Internal processes	Understand	Journey view	Layer view

**Figure 2: Conceptions of Research**

**Source: Brew (2003, p.6)**

Elsewhere, Prosser et al (2008) looked at the nature of the research question, focusing on the relationship with the field of study as well as distinguishing between working towards facts, concepts or theories. Colbeck (1998, pp. 660-661) suggests that research is *context* specific and also contends that: “the broader the definition of what counts as research, the more faculty are able to integrate research and classroom oriented teaching”.

### 2.1.2 Conceptions of Teaching

Prosser and Trigwell (1999) highlighted the fact that teachers in higher education have different conceptions of teaching and learning and that the different ways in which they approach their teaching are related to the differences in these conceptions. These can be

divided into two experiences for learners, namely the *surface* and *deep* approach to learning. Teachers who see teaching as transferring information from the syllabus to students are associated with the approach to teaching based on the teacher being the focal point. This is often referred to as the ‘information transmission/teacher focused’ approach to teaching (surface learning). The opposite approach stresses the centrality of the student, which is called the conceptual change/student focused approach (deep-level learning)

Griffiths (2004, pp. 11-12) observed that there could broadly speaking be four approaches to teaching. Firstly it could be *research-led* in the sense that the curriculum is structured around subject content, and the content selected is directly based on the specialist research interests of teaching staff; teaching is based on a traditional ‘information transmission’ model. The second approach posits that teaching can be *research-oriented* in the sense that the curriculum places emphasis as much on understanding the processes by which knowledge is produced. In this sense careful attention is given to the teaching of inquiry skills and on acquiring a research ethos. A third approach is where teaching can be *research-based* in the sense that the curriculum is largely designed around inquiry-based activities, rather than on the acquisition of subject content. Here the experiences of staff gives scope for two-way interactions between research and teaching. Finally, teaching can be *research-informed* to the degree that it draws consciously on systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning process itself. The latter three are in sync with the *surface* approach as posited by Prosser and Trigwell (1999).

Åkerlind (2007) suggested that there were five different stages in the conceptualizing of teaching as teachers become more experienced. The first two stages involved firstly building up a better knowledge of one’s content area, in order to become more familiar with *what to teach*. The second approach was one of building up practical experience as a teacher, in order to become more familiar with *how to teach*. These two approaches are not dissimilar to the aforementioned surface approach. In terms of my research question, this concept has resonance with a defence often proffered by research-active academics focusing on discipline-specific research. i.e. knowing *what to teach* offers a strong basis

for *informing* their teaching. According to Jenkins et al (1998. p. 129): “there were tangible benefits to students from staff research, mainly through students perceiving that their courses were up to date and staff demonstrated interest in what they were studying”. The latter three approaches according to Åkerlind (2007, p.24) entailed the tactics of building up a repertoire of teaching strategies, in order to become more “skilful as a teacher”, then more “effective as a teacher” and ultimately leading a position where you are more “effective in facilitating student learning”.

### **2.1.3 Conceptions of knowledge**

Brew (2003, p.9) provided insights into two conceptions of knowledge. One where research is the creation or discovery of a body of knowledge which is perceived as detached or separated from the people who developed it. The other way of viewing knowledge can be seen in traditions such as hermeneutics, phenomenological psychology and critical theory. Here, knowledge is viewed as more subjective; as a product of interpretation and negotiation. It explicitly recognises that learning always takes place in a particular context and influences and is influenced by that context.

### **2.1.4 Relevance to my research**

Overall, the relevance of the above three themes of teaching, research and knowledge to my thesis is the necessity to establish at the outset the delineation between the three. Since this dissertation relates primarily to the teaching-research nexus, it is imperative to have clarity in regard to these sometimes distinct, yet not mutually exclusive concepts. Clearly seeking to establish the degree of linkage between research and teaching will be central to my thesis. In this sense, in order to understand the presence or otherwise of a nexus, it is therefore important to understand the terms in and of themselves. Insight into the notion of ‘knowledge’, also provides us with an appreciation of the values and attitudes an academic may have to learning and the context(s) in which it occurs.



## **2.2 Potential benefits in having research-active academics**

### **2.2.1 Staff-student learning and interaction**

There are myriad benefits that emanate from academics who engage in research. Jenkins et al (2007) make the point that exposure to research-active academics can aid the key stakeholder in education, the student. The students learning in particular, their pride in their discipline and the department within which they study all benefit. Visser-Wijnveen et al (2009 p. 673) also endorse this view by suggesting that:

students perceive a strong link between research and teaching as conducive to their learning process. When academics incorporate research into their teaching, students perceive their courses as up to date, stimulating intellectual curiosity and giving the impression that staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.

Coate et al (2001, p.166) also emphasise the point that: “academics gain enthusiasm from being research-active, which ‘rubs off’ on the students”. The point is made by Drake and Heath (2008) that doctoral work being carried out by academics should be a contribution to knowledge, not just a contribution to the academics own self-knowledge. Foremost among the beneficiaries of this knowledge should be undergraduate students, especially if they have class contact time with these research-academics. Healeys’ (2005) research among students also found that many students of research-active teachers benefited immeasurably from the depth of their discipline-specific knowledge as well as from their expertise in research methodology.

Karpacks research (2000) on mid-life faculty suggests that in their 50’s, many academics receive a ‘second call’: a call to care and to teaching. A new emphasis on relationships with and support for students gave such faculty what was in effect a new, and extremely rewarding, career. This is a view supported by Beecher and Trowler (2001, p.145). They suggest that in what they refer to as the ‘mid-life crisis’, many previously research-active academics who in their words are: “relinquishing an active research career” are also returning to teaching. “The most common choice of all is to concentrate on undergraduate

teaching at the expense of generating new knowledge or supervising the research of doctoral students”. This is a definitive example of how such academics who were previously extremely active in terms of what in many cases was Ph D research can make a significant contribution to teaching. In the longer term undergraduate students benefit from such academics knowledge and research skills. Perhaps the difficulty is that these same academics did’nt engage more with undergraduate students when they were actually research-active as distinct from when they had stood back from their research activities. This way, those students may obviously have gained a lot more from their experiences, as will be outlined in 3.1.

According to Healy and Jenkins (2007), undertaking an independent research project in the form of a dissertation can be the most challenging and rewarding part of an undergraduate student’s university experience. However, these same students often suffer from disjuncture expressed as lack of motivation, hesitancy and avoidance. They felt stressed by the daunting enormity of the task and the high demands placed on them as independent learners and problem solvers. It is argued that listening to students and responding to their perceived needs is an effective way to improve supervision practices. Students were shown to be lonely and insecure about their dissertations and the supervisor pressured by a considerable supervisory burden. From their analysis of the research, this duo noted a shift from the status quo of individual supervisory meetings between poorly motivated students and a frustrated supervisor, to highly motivated students effectively empowered as independent self-learners and most importantly, peer supporters. They conclude that given the right circumstances students can be facilitated to ‘do it better themselves’. These views sit similarly with that of Brew (2003, p.15), where she endorses the notion of ‘*communities of practice*’:

A community of practice implies a much greater degree of sharing than perhaps is common in our institutions of higher education currently. All too often, students are alienated from the community at a very early stage of their studies because they are treated as second class citizens. The implications of bringing research and teaching together within academic communities of practice, means that students would be treated as the adult people they are, with something valuable to contribute as well as to learn.

These views of communities of practice are best described in the pronouncements of Lave and Wenger (1993, p.98) who argue that learning should be a natural, social practice suggesting that a community of practice is: “a set of relations among persons, activity and world over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice”.

### **2.2.2 Staff opportunity to impart research-specific skills**

The significant area where academics who have completed a Doctorate or are working towards same could benefit themselves and Undergraduate students is in the actual *activity* of research itself. Some writers Scott (2002) suggest that research permeates the activities of all within academia – both academics and students alike, and that teaching and research are becoming even more intimately related. This argument suggests that in a ‘knowledge society’ all students – certainly all graduates – have to be researchers. Not only are they engaged in the production of knowledge; they must also be educated to cope with the risks and uncertainties generated by advances in the world. Nowhere is this more necessary than in Ireland with the push towards the so-called ‘knowledge economy’.(Forfas, 2007). All graduates, both undergraduate and postgraduate should therefore be acquainted with best practice in terms of research skills.

The view of the Higher Education Authority in the UK according to Jenkins et al (2007), is that the students’ learning experiences can be effectively enhanced in ways ranging from exposure to the current research of their teachers through to the immediate impact of being researchers in their own right. The concern however from the same UK authority is that those students who are not learning in a higher education environment which is informed by research are at a disadvantage. This is because it is not possible to access research-related resources and they are limited in their exposure to new knowledge which arises. Another area where undergraduates could benefit is from publishing activities of Doctoral academic staff.

Clearly these activities should benefit all involved in scholarly activity, i.e. in terms of the advancement and dissemination of knowledge which can be advantageous to academics but which would obviously have a concomitant benefit to undergraduate students reading and learning from such published material.

The *type* of research in which undergraduate researchers can practically engage in is also of interest. According to the UK Council on Undergraduate Research (2003 p. 6), undergraduate research is: “an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate that makes an original, intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline”. Such research activities can include those students who complete the traditional dissertation at the end of their honours degree programme right through to becoming part of a community of researchers in a higher education institution. In the estimation of Brew (2006, p. 86), final year dissertations are very useful to such a student cohort as it provides important opportunities for students to integrate their studies, to develop a piece of sustained work and to exercise creativity. Linking in with recognized Doctoral researchers in this regard would also be of obvious benefit to these undergraduates.

The valid question however that all of this raises is why such dissertation projects are used so extensively in the final year and not in the earlier stages of the undergraduate experience. The opinion most often proffered by academics to contest this view is that students are not capable of carrying out research before that time. In this respect, getting involved in undergraduate research schemes that encompass research that goes beyond simply doing final year dissertations is crucially important to the development of students research abilities. Such development can be greatly enhanced by getting involved with the aforementioned ‘community of researchers’. In the view of Blackmore and Cousin (2003) students appreciate the opportunity to participate in research and they appreciate being able to play a role in knowledge production through participating in the culture of inquiry. Brew (2006) also supports this analysis by suggesting that one of the most important things for students who were involved with researchers was that they felt they had the opportunity to work in a collegial way with academics and other researchers. The

discovery that these people took their work seriously gave them reassurance and confidence.

### **2.2.3 Researchers at the cutting-edge of their fields**

In research conducted among research-academics by Coate et al (2001, p.166), the most common assumption from their respondents was that research enhances teaching. The suggestions of how research has a positive influence on teaching, included the contention that research-active academics were at the ‘cutting-edge’ of their fields, and therefore have more ‘authority’ to teach their subject: “students love seeing their lecturers’ books on the library shelves”. In addition they also claimed that research-active academics teach more relevant, up-to-date material. They also teach from their *immediate* research experience rather than reproducing second-hand knowledge from textbooks.

## **2.3. Potential difficulties in having research-active academics**

### **2.3.1 Potential difficulties for Doctoral researchers in teaching**

While the ideal relationship(s) as outlined between the two might be perceived by many academics to be a positive one, this is not always the case. Coate et al (2001, p. 158) comment that there are a number of factors that shape the ways in which teaching and research can have a negative influence on each other, or even be driven apart. These factors include:

pressures to compartmentalize teaching and research through accountability and funding mechanisms, management strategies of academic staff time that treat teaching and research separately, and the competition for scarce resources.

It is argued by Hattie & Marsh (1996, p.507) that there is no correlation between traditional measures of teaching and research excellence. In their opinion: “It should cease to be surprising that the relationship between teaching and research is zero, and it would be more useful to investigate ways to increase the relationship”. This view is echoed by Coate et al (2001) who posit that although there is a popular conception that research enhances teaching, evidence of such synergistic relationships is inconclusive. In a similar vein, research carried out by Astin (1993, p. 363), in over 200 US institutions, concluded that: “a college whose faculty is research-orientated increases student dissatisfaction and impacts negatively on most measures of cognitive and affective development”. These negative perspectives in regard to a link are discounted somewhat by Terenzini & Pascarella. (1994, p. 30), They also agree that there is only very ‘small’ associations between the two but also argue: “if the evidence does not support the good teacher = good researcher argument, neither does it support claims that doing research detracts from being an effective teacher”.

My dissertation research will also seek to determine if such a mutually exclusive view of the two pertains to the cohort of academic staff with whom I will conduct my research.

The matters espoused by writers on this theme which I feel merit further investigation are outlined below.

### **2.3.2 Academic reward structure - Research valued more highly than teaching ?**

Beecher and Trowler (2001) suggest that the academic reward structure is largely responsible for a shift in academics' time and priorities towards research in all types of higher education institutions. This they argue has been at the expense of time spent interacting with students outside the classroom. This view is also maintained in an Irish context by an educational correspondent for a national newspaper who suggests that: "research is the rage in cash-hungry universities, but it may be over-emphasised at the expense of teaching" (Walsh, 2006, p.5). He quotes the words of Dr Mary-Liz Trant from NUI Galway: "At present, the road to promotion and status is out of the classroom and lecture hall and this should change" According to Coates et al (2001, p. 170), research has traditionally been highly valued in terms of academic careers, which can indirectly result in a negative influence on teaching if academics focus on their research output to the detriment of their teaching activities:

There was evidence that in some low research institutions staff were actively encouraged to value research more highly, and heads of departments or other managers had implemented strategies for rationalizing teaching loads in order to foster a research culture.

This is a vexed issue among teaching-focused academics in particular. Numerous writers in the field make this point. Pocklington and Tupper (2002, p.7) proffer a view that university research often detracts from the quality of teaching: "We regret the continuing elevation of research and the systematic neglect of the quality of instruction".

### **2.3.3 Time-constraints**

Linked to the above matters outlined above, is the notion of time constraints where it's highlighted (Healy, 2005, p. 190) that students: "perceived disadvantages from staff involvement in research, particularly staff availability. Moreover, most students had little

sense of ownership/involvement in these activities”. Students felt that staff research time should not take priority over their needs. Those students who are not getting access and time with research-related resources, which would obviously include the human resource of academic staff, are at a disadvantage compared to those who are. Jenkins et al (2007). In a strongly worded argument, Pocklington and Tupper (2002, pp. 8-9) make this point:

Universities must come clean about the relationship between teaching and research. The present view that teaching and research go hand in hand must be replaced by the more compelling view that teaching and research generally conflict with one another. Both activities, to be performed well, are enormously time-consuming. They involve different skills and impose contrary obligations on professors.

Many academic and university mission statements emphasise the value of staff academic research to (undergraduate) student learning. As suggested above, however, this close positive relationship is not supported by a lot of the research evidence on this issue. More recent research has demonstrated that such positive linkages can occur, but they have to be purposefully created by individuals, subject groups, institutions and national systems. All of this entails a commitment in time from people and institutional management alike.

#### **2.3.4 Future Scenarios**

The whole issue of funding and how it is allocated will have a profound impact on how the practice of pedagogy is perceived now and into the future. Morley (2003, p.28) suggests that while teaching offers a considerable degree of satisfaction, academics who were primarily oriented towards teaching rated their promotional chances lower than those primarily oriented towards research. The promotion system in higher education has traditionally rewarded research and publication. Research productivity in many educational institutions is the main criterion for academic career success. According to Elton (1986) the needs of both research and teaching will have to be treated equally. If this is not done and the funding for research continues to overshadow that for teaching and pedagogy, then this in the words of Elton (1999, p.39) will: “permanently



disadvantage teaching and reinforce the low esteem in which teaching is held". Likewise, Morley (2003, p.29) posits:

this can also produce a moral dilemma. Academics who focus on their research are likely to be successful in career terms, whereas those who focus on teaching gain some moral high ground, but significantly lose out on career development.

The above opinions also strike at the kernel of what this dissertation is seeking to investigate. It questions why anyone who has done or is doing a Ph D would be attracted to or demonstrate enthusiasm for lecturing undergraduates, when the potential for recognition of teaching in terms of career progression does not equate to the superior recognition given by myriad higher education institutions to research. With the exception of those academics who are purposefully inclined and motivated towards pedagogy, the experience of undergraduate is less likely to be one where they have active engagement with Doctoral academics. Again this arguably places this majority cohort of the student population at a disadvantage.

### Literature Review

#### 3. Students Perspective on Research-Teaching nexus

The principal objective of my research is to establish “*How do Doctoral research academics perceive their research activities to be of benefit to Undergraduate students?*”

This will be determined in my primary research activities. Albeit that my primary research for this Dissertation will not focus on carrying out any field research among students themselves, it is important from a context and *balance* point of view to be informed about what their experiences have been. Nuemann (1994, p. 325) described their place in the edifice of education thus: “Students should be seen as a part of the academic spectrum ranging from undergraduate students to vice-chancellors”. Given this absolute centrality of students to higher education, the aim of this chapter is to elicit from secondary sources, their experiences in being exposed to lecturers who engage in Doctoral research.

Various bodies in the UK (House of Commons IUSS Report, 2009), US (Bayer Commission, 1998) and beyond have sought to establish the student perspective on this topic. The Special House of Commons IUSS committee in the UK, responsible for the old Department of Innovation, Universities and Science (DIUS) in their (2009) Annual report gleaned some useful insights from students. Responses obtained from university students on such lecturers varied widely from the complimentary to the critical. The two key issues were the delineation between the lecturers in-depth knowledge of the subject on one hand and the lecturers pedagogic skills on the other. In the words of one Professor Burgess, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester:

It would be hopeless to have a high-quality researcher who did not understand how you could transmit and communicate effectively with first year students, and

that is clearly very important, but it is also very important to be taught by someone who is a leader in their particular field.

(House of Commons IUSS Report, 2009 p.4). The rationale for establishing student opinions is logical and simple, best described in the words of Neumann (1994, p. 323)

The teaching role exists to serve students, and so they are a key source for investigating whether a connection between teaching and research is perceived to exist in the teaching and learning experience

### **3.1 Perceived *Positive* Student Experiences of Staff Research**

The positive experiences noted from the literature by many students were varied in nature. The reasons identified in the plethora of academic studies, government reports and media articles will now be dealt with under the following four broad headings.

#### **3.1.1 Cutting-edge of discipline-specific knowledge**

Many undergraduate students comments in various studies alluded to the fact that what they were being taught, was very much at the cutting edge. (House of Commons IUSS Report, 2009). This is an idea corroborated by Neumann (1994) who mentions the importance of up to date, relevant examples from teachers research. This matter of being the recipient of cutting edge material was not always seen as omnipotent however. One German language student said that it sometimes depended on the subject: “It depends on the subjects...I do German and there is very little point in reading linguistics and really deep research into the linguistics. All one really needs to learn is how to speak German”. (House of Commons IUSS Report, 2009, p.4)The views of many other students however were very much in favour of being lectured by Doctoral research academics. Breen and Jenkins (2000, p.3) whose research while specifically on *post-Graduates*, nonetheless had findings which were instructive: “I think it's very stimulating if they are actually doing research of their own, because they're fresh to it, they have an angle on it”. This was the opinion of one student in that research which echoes the ‘cutting-edge’ argument.

Earlier research by Jenkins et al (1998) revealed focus groups findings that identified four key expectations that students had of staff: They should have good communication skills, the ability to involve and enthuse students, to be approachable and be available outside class. According to the same writers, one other requirement very important to students was being at the cutting-edge of knowledge: “Up-to-date knowledge was a final common attribute. Good teaching required teachers to have up-to-date knowledge and that the knowledge must be beyond that which was available in textbooks”. Jenkins et al (1998, p.131)

### **3.1.2 Research-specific skills**

Neumann (1994) refers in her research to the appreciation many students expressed in not only receiving advanced cutting edge discipline-specific knowledge but also the invaluable exposure they were getting to ‘research’ skills and techniques necessary for study at an advanced level. This belief about learning research skills is commonplace in a lot of the literature in this regard. (Scott, 2002; Jenkins et al, 1998). According to Jenkins et al (1998, p.133), research activity: “showed how staff's own research area and methodology could be developed by students in their own projects”. The House of Commons IUS, (2009 p.3) enquiries into students experiences gleaned insightful views: “‘If you are setting people on the road to research then it's quite obvious, that if the lecturer isn't involved in research themselves, then how can they do this?’”. Jenkins (2000) in a different study makes the point that research skills are now seen as one of the ‘key skills’ required for the knowledge economy. He asserts that the emerging economy is one which requires individuals with creativity and an ability to create, find and synthesise new knowledge: “If this is accepted, then students’ understanding of the research process and ability to do research may be the vital ‘key skill’”. Jenkins (2000, p.27). In relation to this point, Scott (2002, p.13) posits:

We are all researchers now, teaching and research are becoming even more intimately related. In a ‘knowledge society’ all students – certainly all graduates – have to be researchers.

This succinctly summed up the importance of such skills for every graduates future.

### **3.1.3 Inculcating a questioning, enthusiastic and enlightened approach to learning**

The notion of imparting a questioning, critical approach to knowledge as well as a positive approach to learning, relates to the more subtle underplay that prevails among the research academic and his students. According to Neumann (1994) it addresses the need to foster curiosity among students and excitement and enthusiasm about knowledge. Students in this scenario often refer to the fact that academics who are enthused by their own subject matter and research will often have a very motivating approach with students and can be recognised as inspirational role models by some:

Many students described their surprise firstly being asked to do something different from the usual assignments and secondly their sense of fear – sometimes coupled with excitement – at the challenge. All stated that by the time they had completed the assignment they had found the work intellectually stimulating and enjoyable. Neumann (1994, p.330)

Student respondents in the House of Commons (2009, p.4) IUSS study expressed the view thus:

What makes a university experience unique is that a lecturer can stand there and say ‘I have been undertaking research in this; this is how it relates to the theory’—that is what brings a lecture alive, otherwise lecturers are just reading from textbooks and that is not stimulating, stimulation is the key.

According to Jenkins et al (1998) a frequently stated benefit of research-active academics as suggested by students was the enthusiasm for their discipline/research from such lecturers. The idea whereby this mutual respect could last is one dealt with by Brew (2003, p.12) where it is suggested that the nature of higher education itself may have to be reconceptualised so that staff and students work together in what Brew referred to as “*academic communities of practice*” in which staff and students are ‘co-workers’.

### **3.1.4 Basking in ‘reflected glory’ of researchers**

Some students perceived one very clear benefit: “the reflected glory of being taught by nationally and internationally known researchers” Healy (2005, p.193) This is a view that arises throughout a lot of the research that solicited students opinions on the topic.

Many spoke of being on the threshold of opinion and theory by virtue of being associated with Doctoral Lecturers. According to Neumann (1994), several students commented on the ‘thrill’ of seeing their teachers’ names in print, whether it be on reading lists, on journal articles and books or in newspapers. These positive views are very much in sync with the findings in the focus-group study of undergraduate students by Jenkins et al (1998). They reported that students perceived clear benefits from faculty research, including increased credibility of faculty and their institutions reputation. The benefit of these observations is that it demonstrates a certain reassurance and instills confidence in students. Neumann (1994) also shared this view by suggesting that certain students really valued the opportunity for interaction with well known lecturers/researchers He also observed that this may be an important component in the teaching-research nexus, particularly by enabling closer contact with the more intangible, tacit aspects of knowledge and learning.

This issue of ‘credibility’ surfaces in a lot of the students positive disposition towards researching academics. Jenkins et al (1998, p.133) suggest: “Staff research also to an extent gives credibility--in student eyes--to their degree and to the department/university in which they are studying”. Interestingly credibility through staff research was also important to some students in that it ‘validated’ their decision to attend that institution. This reassurance of having made the right academic choice in terms of course and college was also deemed to be important to students in the Jenkins et al (1998) study.

### **3.2 Perceived *Negative* Student Experiences of Staff Research**

Nevertheless, students also perceived disadvantages from faculty involvement in research, reporting, for example, that the lecturers involved in research often gave too much time in lectures to their own research topic. This was invariably at the expense of covering the full curriculum. Others suggestions are dealt with in the following headings. Again it is important to reflect on the importance of students as key stakeholders in the process. The research to date indicates that undergraduates have not been consulted to any major extent because of uncertainty around the actual relationship and link between research and teaching: “That they have not featured directly in examinations of the nexus may not be all that surprising given the elusiveness of the nexus concept” (Neumann, 1994, p. 324)

#### **3.2.1 Discipline – dominant**

Many students were critical of situations in which a lecturers individual research interests were seen to dominate, particularly at the expense of the aims of the overall course curriculum. Neumann, (1994) makes the following point:

It cannot be considered that all active researchers are good teachers. In discussing subjects which were found to be unenjoyable and where teaching was considered poor, about a quarter of students referred to academics who either let their own research dominate the curriculum, thus providing an imbalance in content, or who were uninterested in spending time with their students because they were perceived to be more interested in spending time researching

Neumann (1994, p. 329).

Jenkins et al (1994) suggested that: “*in some cases, students were concerned that staff research interests could unduly sway the curriculum*”. This can also affect student satisfaction with a course. According to research findings among students: “up to date knowledge and interest in the subject were not seen as substitutes for good teaching

practice” Neumann (1994, p. 327). Many students in the Jenkins et al (1998, p 131) study also alluded to the omnipotence of teaching:

Across all groups there was a powerful message that high-quality teaching was a bottom-line requirement. Students saw the universities role as to meet their needs – and their prime need was for high quality teaching. Staff research, even when it was viewed very positively was largely seen as an optional or desirable extra.

All these details from the literature mentioning students views, serve to illustrate that in the eyes of many students, teaching is still a core activity for the undergraduate college experience. Relegation of same to give precedence to research may not be a judicious strategy in the long-term for all higher education institutions.

### **3.2.2 Non-availability of lecturers to students (Aloofness)**

In common with dissatisfaction with the above, students had issues about the non-availability of researching lecturers. Jenkins et al (1998, p133) make the point that students saw disadvantages in that: “staff were not available to students, they seemed preoccupied with their research at the expense of teaching”. This seeming passion with research was something which students felt made lecturers less available and in most of the studies, the lack of staff availability resulting from research was a frequent undergraduate experience. Also, particular staff were noted for a preoccupation with research which made them less available to students. Referring to one of the biology staff, one student commented: “Sometimes you see him in his office, but you never know, really, what he's up to. But he's always frightfully busy” (Jenkins et al ,1998, p.134) Related to this, staff absence on sabbaticals could have negative impacts - particularly where staff were frequently away. The most frequently and strongly expressed concern was that staff research: “takes them away from the institution”.

In the House of Commons IUSS study (2009, p.3) a Professor Driscoll, Vice-Chancellor of Middlesex University posited: “we know now that many institutions appoint people simply to do research and cannot afford—because the stakes are so high—to let them do



any teaching”. This lack of staff availability resulting from research was a frequent undergraduate experience. It is stated in the US Boyer Commission (1999) report on educating undergraduates in research universities that many undergraduates simply seldom get any exposure whatsoever to research staff.

Again and again, universities are guilty of an advertising practice they would condemn in the commercial world. Recruitment materials display proudly the world-famous professors, the splendid facilities and the groundbreaking research that goes on within them, but thousands of students graduate without ever seeing the world-famous professors or tasting genuine research.  
Boyer Commission (1998, p.5)

### **3.2.3 Research activity favoured to the exclusion of Undergraduates**

Neumann (1994, p.330) also referred to the fact that students had issues with lecturers: “who were uninterested in spending time with their students because they were perceived to be more interested in spending time researching”. This matter is reflected in the Jenkins et al (1998) research where they argue that all students should have opportunities to benefit from staff involvement in research. Also in the US, there are similar issues in terms of the level of perceived elitism that prevails around this specific matter: “Universities on the whole did not see ways to integrate their undergraduates into the research missions that they valued above all else”. (Boyer Commission, 1999, p. 6)

The same Commission posit that advanced research and undergraduate teaching have existed on two quite different planes; the first a source of pleasure, recognition, and reward, and the latter a burden shouldered more or less reluctantly to maintain the viability of the institution. This is supported by the views of writers in Ireland some of whom contend that undergraduate students and their parents are being used as “cash cows” for the wider university system::

This is because the funding they attract may effectively be subsidising the generous wages of senior management and non-teaching academics, with little or no benefit to the quality of education which undergraduate students themselves receive. This has prompted fresh questions about how efficiently current resources are being used. (Downes, 2009, p.8)

Overall, the matter of preference for research versus the teaching of undergraduate is something that has resonance in Ireland among some prominent educational commentators (Kelly, 2009; Walsh, 2006): “research is the rage in cash-hungry universities, but it may be over-emphasised at the expense of teaching” (Walsh, 2006, p.5)

#### **3.2.4. Non-ownership of the process**

Finally, in terms of negatives for students the matter of not being stakeholders in the process was something which rankled with some undergraduates:

Most students had little sense of ownership/involvement in these activities, why it was taking place, and which members of staff were doing what. They did not feel that staff research should take priority over their needs.

Healey (2005, p.193)

Jenkins et al (1998, p.135) also noted that students did not perceive themselves as stakeholders in staff research. They had little appreciation of why it was taking place, what the expected/required benefits were that students should experience and, often, no sense that they had any ownership/involvement in these activities: “To put it at its extreme, it was virtually as if staff research was some mysterious substance that, in 'X Files' fashion, spirited staff away. Then staff mysteriously came back, seemingly unchanged, and that was it”.

Jenkins et al (1998, p. 138) also make the point that students as fee-payers and modern day consumers need to be in the loop in terms of where their money is going: “To put it in crude mercenary terms, it is bad management not to manage student expectations of university staff”. Keeping students involved as central partners as much as possible in the process should therefore be an over-riding priority for all involved in education practice and policy.

## CHAPTER 4: Research Design, Methodology and Methods

### 4. Introduction

This chapter will describe the methodology and methods used in the study. It includes the research question and objectives, the epistemology and theoretical perspective. The population sample, method of data collection and the relevant techniques used in **analysing** same are also discussed as well as the de-limitations of my research.

### 4.1 Aims and Objectives

The overall aims and objectives of my research again must be viewed with reference to my context and rationale explanation as discussed in Chapter 1. The objectives outlined here aim to obtain an answer to this key question which is:

### 4.2 Research Question

*How do Doctoral research academics perceive their research activities to be of benefit to undergraduate students?*

### 4.3 Research problem

Defining ones research problem through a research question as well as highlighting what the aims of the research are, is a crucial step. Malhotra and Birks, (2000) see it as the most crucial step in the research methodology, as it is only when it has been defined, that actual research can be designed and conducted effectively. Having carefully considered the relevant literature and defined the broad research problem, the second task of ascertaining deeper information entailed identifying the specific components of the problem. The research question and objectives that follow are designed to gain answers in respect of my overall thesis question.

#### **4.4 Research Objectives**

##### **Research Objective No 1.**

1. To ascertain how the *discipline specific* research knowledge and *research methods* skills of Doctoral researchers can impact the teaching of undergraduate students.

##### **Research Objective No 2**

2. To discover whether the students of Doctoral research academics are perceived as 'open' to their lecturers research activities and whether such students access the published work leading to *student*-initiated discussions.

##### **Research Objective No 3**

3. To determine whether Doctoral researchers initiate discussion about their research activities with undergraduate students and whether they know if their students perceive this as positive or negative.

##### **Research Objective No 4**

4. To identify any perceived changes in student reactions to Doctoral researchers since they started/attained their Doctoral qualification.

##### **Research Objective No 5**

5. To deduce the research participants perceptions of research, teaching and knowledge in relation to their day to day practice.

##### **Research Objective No 6**

6. To establish whether an academics research and teaching can be compartmentalised and treated as mutually exclusive or whether they are seen as are part of a nexus in relation to their teaching practice.

#### **4.5 Epistemology**

According to Crotty,(1998, p.3), an epistemology is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know. He adds that it is: "the theory of knowledge

embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology”. Elsewhere, it is argued that it is impossible to engage in research and not be concerned with epistemology, epistemological questions and issues because central to such concern is the notion of ‘truth’ (Sikes, 2004). In order to complete a research process, it is important however that one is clear regarding ones relevant epistemology. From this stems the theoretical perspective, methodology and research methods. Indeed, in this regard, Merriam, (2009, p. 8) posits:

First I think it is helpful to philosophically position qualitative research among other forms of research. Such a position entails what one believes about reality (also called ontology) and the nature of Knowledge (epistemology).

There are various epistemologies written about in the research literature with the three areas of objectivism, constructivism, subjectivism most prominent. Creswell (2007, p.511) also refers to these epistemologies as ‘*worldviews*’ asserting that: “worldviews are the broad philosophical assumptions that researchers use when they conduct studies”. He further stresses that although some researchers may not recognize it, they make assumptions about knowledge and how it can be obtained. Crotty’s (1998) take on such philosophical foundations is described by way of the three aforementioned epistemologies. These three epistemologies are briefly described hence.

#### **4.5.1 Constructivism**

Creswell (2007) sees constructivism as a worldview whereby individuals seek an understanding of the world in which they live and work, developing subjective meanings of their experiences, these meanings being directed towards certain objects or things. Crotty (1998, pp. 42-43) describes it thus:

What constructivism claims is that meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Before there were consciousnesses on earth capable of interpreting the world, the world held no meaning at all.

Taking the above views into account, it appears that constructivist researchers believe that the principal task of the researcher is to understand many multiple constructions of

meanings and knowledge. As Crotty (1998) suggests, the world and objects in the world are indeterminate and all may be full with potential meaning, but actual meaning emerges only when consciousness engages with them. According to Merriam, (2009) constructivism is a term often used interchangeably with interpretivism, a phenomenon that assumes that reality is socially constructed, that is, there is no single, observable reality. Rather there are multiple realities, where researchers do not “find” knowledge, they construct it. These details of interpretivism are elaborated upon anon.

#### **4.5.2 Objectivism**

Another epistemology is objectivism. According to Crotty (1998), objectivist research holds that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as apart from the operation of any consciousness. In the objectivist view of ‘what it means to know’, Crotty’s (1998, p.8) understandings are considered to be objectified in the people we are studying. If one approaches it in the right way, one can discover the objective truth. The discussion around this particular epistemology is mentioned quite frequently in the context of positivism and post-positivism.

Sikes (2004) proffers the view that in terms of research design and choice of procedures, if the assumption is that knowledge is real, objective and out there in the world to be captured, then researchers can observe, measure and quantify it. However, as is the case with my particular research, if it’s assumed to be experiential, personal and subjective, the researcher will have to ask questions of the people involved.

#### **4.5.3 Subjectivism**

The third epistemological stance is that of subjectivism which comes to the fore in structuralist, post-structuralist and postmodernist forms of thought. In a view proffered by Crotty (1998), he asserts that with subjectivism, meaning does not come out of an interplay between subject and object but is imposed on the object by the subject. Here the object as such makes no contribution to the generation of meaning.

The three abovementioned epistemologies give rise to various theoretical perspectives, the main focus for my study being the interpretative approach, detailed hence.

#### **4.6 Theoretical perspective**

According to Crotty (1995, p.66), the term ‘theoretical perspective’ is taken to mean: “the philosophical stance lying behind a methodology”. In the opinion of the same author, it provides a context for the process involved and a basis for its logic and criteria. Significantly he posits that: “any of the theoretical perspectives could make use of the methodologies, and any of the methodologies could make use of the methods”. This stresses to would be researchers that demarcation lines in terms of theoretical perspectives and methodologies are quite often blurred.

Merriam, (2009, p. 8) also stressed the importance of having a broad understanding of the roots of ones chosen type of research emphasising that such an understanding can only be gained by looking at its ‘*philosophical foundations*’. and ones theoretical perspective.

##### **4.6.1 Interpretative paradigm**

To this end, the theoretical perspective of my research from an epistemological viewpoint will be the *interpretative* paradigm where *inter alia* the researcher at a practical level talks to the research participants and seeks to understand them, through interviews, observations and focus groups. As previously alluded to, my study will engage with research participants through interviews, which is in synch with this paradigm.

Crotty (1995, p.67) determined that at a broader level, adapting the interpretivist approach meant: “looking for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world”. According to Creswell (2007), interpretivism is very much in the realm of social constructivism. In this sense constructivist researchers often address the ‘processes’ of interaction among individuals. Such researchers also believe that the principal task of a researcher is to understand the multiple ‘constructions’ of meaning and

knowledge. The research subjects (in my study, Doctoral research academics) can help the researcher to construct the ‘reality’ of the situation under investigation. In this sense, constructivism would seem the most appropriate epistemology for my study into the specific area of the research-teaching nexus. Even though it is my chosen one, this is not to discount the many other paradigms that prevail in the debate around theoretical perspectives.

In summary, all of the aforementioned researchers concur about the importance of having a clear theoretical perspective before proceeding with a decision upon ones methodology. Among some of the other theoretical perspectives that prevail are positivism, critical theory, feminism and postmodernism.

#### **4.6.2 Positivism**

According to Scott and Usher (1996, p.13) positivism: “involves accepting that there is a logic of science which is more important than its historical or cultural locatedness”. This attachment to science is also posited by Crotty (1998) who similarly asserts that positivism not only shares an optimistic faith in progress, but also presents scientific discovery, along with the technology it begets, as the instrument and driving force of the progress being achieved. Any research carried out in a scientific way is seen essentially as an individual pursuit. This supreme confidence in science stems from a conviction that scientific knowledge is both accurate and certain:

In this respect knowledge contrasts sharply with opinions, beliefs, feelings and assumptions that we gain in non-scientific ways. The principal point of difference is the alleged objectivity of scientific knowledge. It is unlike the subjective understandings we come to hold.. Those subjective understandings may be of very great understanding in our lives but they constitute an essentially different kind of knowledge from scientifically established facts

Crotty ( 1998, p.27)

I will not be using positivism as a research paradigm for my study, the rejection of such being on the grounds that educational research based on a positivist epistemology and its



scientific assumptions about a world that is orderly and predictable, would be problematic for my particular study because of a lack of openness. Social events and processes, which form the essence of my research are seen as more *open*, however it appears to me that the many predictive generalisations as espoused by positivism are only possible if this openness is closed. With such an imposed closure, the very status of what I'm examining becomes questionable. Such imposed closure raises questions about the 'objectivity' of the research and the resulting knowledge claims I might make based upon the type of research methodology I choose.

### **4.6.3 Critical Theory**

Tisdell (2002) suggests that typically, the term critical means two things in research. Firstly dealing with and challenging power relations, as in 'critical theory' and secondly, facilitating some type of action among participants while research is going on. Scott and Usher (2004) suggest that the term itself can cause confusion . It tends to be the case that when critical theory is used in its capitalised form (i.e. Critical Theory), the reference is to the Frankfurt School of social theory founded in the 1930's. The concern of these social theorists was to re-think the meaning of the Enlightenment in the light of Marxism and Freudianism at a time when the ravages of totalitarianism seemed to be making a mockery of the Enlightenment ideals. Being strongly identified with Marxism means that Critical Theory seeks to liberate the disempowered, to redress inequality and promote individual freedom within a democratic society. In summary, it is the view of Scott and Usher (2004) that Critical Theory regards the positive and interpretive paradigms as incomplete explanations of social behaviour because they ignore the political and ideological contexts of much research. The purpose of Critical Theory is not to merely understand and interpret phenomena, but to change them . This approach stands in stark contrast to interpretivism: it is in opposition to a research which, as mentioned in wants to interpret and understand, to one which actually *challenges* assumptions. Some further aspects of interpretivism will be dealt with in the following discussion on my methodology.

## 4.7 Methodology

One's research methodology refers to the assumptions you have as a researcher. These can be epistemological or political in character, or mean that you support a view of the world promoted by a particular theoretical tradition. The one which reflects my study, as stated will lead me to embrace the **interpretative approach** for my research. Whether they are acknowledged or not or even whether you are fully aware of them, these assumptions will influence how one researches their topic. Merriam, (2009) makes this point clearly where she suggests that interpretive research, which is where **qualitative research** is most often located, assumes that reality is socially constructed. To this end, there is no single observable reality, but multiple realities, or interpretations of a single event, where researchers do not "find" knowledge, they "construct" it themselves. This often leads to a situation where constructivism becomes a term which is used interchangeably with interpretivism. In earlier writings Merriam (2002, p.37) succinctly positions qualitative research in the realm of interpretivism by asserting:

A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds. Constructionism thus underlies what I am calling a basic interpretive qualitative study. Here the researcher is interested in understanding the meaning a phenomena has for those involved.

With the above point in mind, I see the use of **qualitative research** to conduct my investigations as the most suitable approach for the nature of my study. According to Creswell (2007 p.37) qualitative research can look at the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process can involve the collection of data in a natural setting that is sensitive to the people and places under study. The data analysis that is involved is inductive and establishes patterns or themes among a group of people. In this sense it can be seen from a methodological perspective as **a case study**. Merriam (2002, p.9) posits that: "the case study is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community". The case is also a bounded, integrated system. In endeavouring to get an answer to my broad

research question, I will be interviewing members of academic staff in my place of work in DIT in two Colleges. In my own capacity as a researcher, I also am an academic who works among and with these academic participants where my research takes place.

As a researcher involved in interpretative research, my *modus operandi* will be very much in sync with the Creswells view (2007, p.21) of the interpretative activity where the focus is on:

The specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants. Researchers recognise that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they “position themselves” in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural and historical experiences. Thus the researcher makes an interpretation of what they find, an interpretation shaped by their own experiences and background. The researchers intent, then, is to make sense (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world.

#### **4.8 Research Methods**

In the words of Merten: (2010, p.3) “In quite simplistic terms, quantitative researchers collect numerical data, qualitative researchers collect words, pictures and artefacts . Mixed methods researchers collect both types of data”

*Qualitative research methods* were developed in the social sciences to help researchers study social and cultural phenomena. Examples of qualitative research include case study research, survey research, action research and ethnography. Qualitative data sources include observation, interviews, documents and texts and the researchers impressions and reactions. For the purposes of my research, I will be utilising in-depth interviews. (See 4.2 and 4.3)

*Quantitative research methods* were developed (in regard to the social sciences) to study natural phenomena. Examples of quantitative methods quite well accepted in the social sciences include survey methods, laboratory experiments and numerical methods such as mathematical modelling.

#### **4.8.1 Rationale for using qualitative research.**

My rationale for using qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research is because the essential focus of the research is not to do with the “*How many, how much*” focus that are obviously associated with quantitative research questions. On the contrary, the qualitative research employed has a focus on the nature and essence of the topic under question and my interactions with my interviewees. When undertaking qualitative research, one obviously considers the goal of the investigation. From a qualitative research viewpoint, the goals of such an investigation according to Merriam (2002, p.9) include: “Understanding, description, discovery, meaning and hypothesis generating” whereas such goals from a quantitative perspective include: “prediction, control, confirmation and hypothesis testing”. (*Ibid*). The nature of these latter characteristics are not conducive to the aims of my investigation which will focus more on the discovery, understanding and description of responses which I obtained from my six interviewees.

The means of data collection necessitate the researcher as the primary instrument in obtaining as much information as possible through in-depth interviews with the interviewees, whereas with the quantitative approach the instruments used would be by way of inanimate instruments such as scales, tests, surveys, questionnaires and various quantitative PC software (Merriam, 2002). Finally, my mode of analysis as a researcher has been inductive with the need for my findings to be explained in a richly descriptive way. I have endeavoured to achieve such a result in Chapters 5 and 6 where I discuss my findings, conclusions and recommendations. An opposite mode of analysis however prevails with the quantitative approach. It tends to be deductive and by definition, the findings are normally presented quantitatively in precise numerical terms. Because my research aims to elicit the opinions and impressions of my purposive sample, which is Doctoral academics, the qualitative approach served my objectives best in this regard.

#### **4.8.2 Interviews**

My specific research instrument will be in-depth interviews. The main methods employed will be conducting such interviews with academics who hold doctorates or who are presently studying towards same. At its most basic level, an interview is a conversation, usually between two people. But it is a conversation where one person – the interviewer – is seeking responses for a particular purpose from the other person: the interviewee (Gillham, 2003). The in-depth interview using a topic guide (See Appendix B) is a different take on a standard interview. Malhotra and Birks (2000, p. 180), define an in-depth interview as: “*an unstructured, direct personal interview in which a single respondent is probed by a skilled interviewer to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on the topic*”.

My topic guide will have areas/themes for discussion with questions covering academics experiences of teaching undergraduates before, during and after their doctoral studies. It is envisaged that all of the interviews were carried out in the actual workplace setting in the respective DIT colleges on a one to one basis in staff syndicate rooms and in one instances in a staff college canteen. No interviews or research were conducted in a ‘live’ lecture room format.

#### **4.8.3 The rationale for using in-depth interviews**

Crotty (1998) makes the point in relation to research methods that it is important that one furnishes details of these as specifically as possible suggesting that it is important to indicate in very detailed fashion what *kind* of interviews we do, what interviewing techniques are employed, and in what sort of setting the interviews are conducted.

In this regard, the rationale for using depth interviews is in sync with some of the advantages of same according to Webb (1992). Firstly, the depth and richness of the data collected, secondly the ability to ascribe a response to a single individual. Their third

advantage is their ability to establish a degree of trust and a close rapport between the interviewer and the respondent, leading to a freer flow of conversation. Finally, my one-on-one depth interviews provided my interviewees with the opportunity for expression of non-conformity. This allowed them to express their views without any fear of embarrassment or sanction which a group situation could elicit. Accepting that a questionnaire is not suited to in-depth questioning, the personal interview approach adopted used the aforementioned topic guide that will cover my research themes as informed by my review of the pertinent literature. The actual interviews themselves lasted on average forty minutes each and were recorded with the consent of the participants with a commitment given to anonymity.

The interviews themes (elicited primarily from my literature review) regarded issues that pertained to the impact of Doctoral researchers activities on undergraduate students. Allied to the many themes derived from my conducting a thorough review of the relevant literature, my interviews were also informed by my own experiences of working for the last nine years in the third level academic sphere..

#### **4.9 Other Issues**

One other possible problem I sought to avoid was that of potential difficulties that can arise with the nature and sequencing of topics and question as used in the Topic Guide. I conducted a 'pilot' interview with a Doctoral research colleague in another College within DIT and the sequencing of a small number of questions was slightly adjusted. This entailed removing a three question section which asked the interviewees about their understandings of the three concepts of research, teaching and knowledge, by way of a definition of each. My 'pilot' interviewee suggested that this be replaced with an easier question to 'ease' my respondents into dialogue. The questions were then re-positioned in the second half of the 'Topic Guide'.

#### **4.10 Key literature consulted**

The key Literature discussed i.e. literature surrounding the topic of the teaching-research nexus in Higher Education both here in Ireland and abroad was obtained from a variety of sources. The principal sources included the various internet websites in the educational sphere, examples of which included Eric, Australian Education Index, British Education Index to name but a few. Myriad Journal articles accessible electronically and in hard copy from the DIT Learning and Teaching library were also used. Textbooks from the same library were also used in addition to topical information gleaned from Irish media outlets like The Irish Times and Irish Independent. Government reports, both national and international were also accessed using the Internet.

Writers on research methodology and methods such as Merriam (2002);, Crotty (1998); Creswell (2007, & 2008); Opie (2004) and Malhotra and Birks (2000) were just some of the writers whose writing I have consulted for this Chapter alone. The multitude of writers pertaining to literature regarding the substantive topic of my Dissertation is as outlined in my Bibliography.

## CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 5. Research Question

*How do Doctoral research academics perceive their research activities to be of benefit to Undergraduate students?*

#### Research Objective No 1.

**5.1 To ascertain how the *discipline specific* research knowledge and *research methods* skills of Doctoral researchers can impact the teaching of undergraduate students.**

Overall there was agreement among the majority of the interviewees regarding the positive impact they perceive their research background as having upon their undergraduate students. There were two questions that covered this theme in the 'Topic Guide'. In the first instance, participants were asked the extent to which the *discipline* specific Doctoral research knowledge could make an impact on undergraduate students at a final year level as well as at any time in Years 1-3. The second question asked how the actual *research methods* skills could impact the same student cohort. For the purposes of analysis, the responses are dealt with from these two perspectives.

#### 5.1.1 Impact of *discipline specific* research knowledge

In research carried out in Oxford Brooks University (Jenkins et al 1998, p. 131), being at the cutting-edge of knowledge was something that was regarded by students as being of crucial importance: "Good teaching required teachers to have up-to-date knowledge and that the knowledge must be beyond that which was available in textbooks". Getting a greater depth and breadth of knowledge led one student to say that: "non- research-active



staff teach students to pass exams, whereas research-active staff teach students the subject” (Coate et al, 2001, p. 166).

Barbara alluded to the fact that the nature of her discipline, which was ‘**(Interviewee mentions teaching area)**’ meant that the Ph D topic she covered was directly aligned to her teaching. In her own words, she referred to it thus “*Well I think that my thesis topic is relevant to my teaching. My thesis topic ‘(Interviewee mentions thesis topic area) is in the (XXXX) area and that topic does come up and I do teach ‘(Interviewee mentions teaching area) , so it’s possible to make a reference to the actual material there”*.

Ali was involved in student placement in a particular college and her view was that her Doctorate, is specifically pertinent. Many students have work placements organized in Years two and three. As a result, they benefit from her work placement expertise as well as her in-depth topic specific expertise in writing work-placement reports. Ali did delineate between the students in Years 1-3 and 4<sup>th</sup> year students in the sense that she stated that: “*I think that in terms of perhaps the senior students, they would have more experience and would appreciate the need for it more”*. When asked the same question regarding topic specific activity, Colm did not make a distinction between the years 1-3 and final year by: ‘*Well I would say it would apply from Year one upwards’* . Taking Ali, Barbara and Colms experiences on board, it is clear that these three interviewees think that their discipline-specific research knowledge does impact the undergraduate student cohort.

David however had a different perspective. His area of study was in the Science area and sometimes the particular discipline and subject area involved in the Doctorate can deem it’s impact on undergraduates less applicable to their learning experience. This was a sentiment echoed by some students in a previous UK study where one German language student made the point that it sometimes depended on the subject: “*It depends on the subjects...I do German and there is very little point in reading linguistics and really deep research into the linguistics. All one really needs to learn is how to speak German”*. (House of Commons IUSS Report , 2009, p. 4).

Eugene however, was firmly of the view that the exposure he had to a wide breadth of literature when completing his Ph D was pertinent in myriad ways to such students. He suggested: *“it is very hard on my end to complete a Doctorate without developing a broad knowledge and sweep across a whole load of areas”*. He thinks it important for him to be capable of covering many areas in his teaching, adding that while ones research area might be quite specific for him, the whole Doctoral process: *“really opens your brain and opens your mind and your reading to very broad categories”*. Responding to my probes he said he did not think one was limited to ones discipline only: *“You are discipline specific to an extent in that you are expert in an area at the end of a Doctorate, but having gone through a Doctorate, it means that you are actually very well read and so it gives you an idea and the capacity to be able to talk about a huge range of issues”*. This sense of having a broad based knowledge and being capable of incorporating the most current thoughts into a class is also alluded to by many in the literature.

When academics incorporate research into their teaching, students perceive their courses as up to date, stimulating intellectual curiosity and giving the impression that staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.

Visser-Wijnveen et al ( 2009 p. 673)

This is a sentiment corroborated by Neumann (1994) who mentions the importance of up to date, relevant examples from teachers research. Since most of my interviewees opinions would definitely be in line with these two theorists views, it is clear that undergraduates would benefit from their discipline-specific research skills.

### **5.1.2 Impact of research methods knowledge skill**

In regard to the realm of research methods knowledge and skill, there was unanimity among all the respondents in the sense that their exposure to the methods, methodologies and ongoing practice of research could only be a plus for ther undergraduate students. In the opinion of Neumann (1994, p.326), teaching did not just serve as a form of dissemination of the latest knowledge: *“but also for academics to pass on the research skills and techniques necessary for study at an advanced level”*.

This is a view that was certainly pronounced from my interviews with all the respondents. Eugene stated that while he himself did not teach research methods as such, he said that he had become more strict and vigilant with undergraduates, especially concerning students in Year 1, where he makes this point to them by saying “ *listen guys, if you do this from day one, you’re gonna save yourself an awful lot of trouble, because that has been my experience. If you learn to reference right from the beginning, it saves you a lot of hassle*’”. As can be seen from his comment, Eugene makes the point that this is something that’s applicable to undergraduates from the very first year of their Degree.

Colm and David also agreed that this was the case through all years of a Degree. Colm observed: “*it’s all the way through, from Year One, for example: Research methodology, referencing... would that be an example. I would’ve just introduced that in the last year or two, so to make sure we’re bringing it in to Year One so students aren’t struggling in Year Three*”. David also saw resonance in the applicability to all years by suggesting: “*Years One to Three, mostly academic writing and referencing skills would be the most applicable really*”.

When it comes to the specifics of the final (capstone) year where students are doing a Dissertation, again all of the participants saw a strong correlation between their research-specific practices and the final year work of undergraduate students. This idea of final year Undergraduate students doing a Dissertation is seen by many writers on the subject as being very important. According to Brew ( 2006, p.86), final year dissertations are very useful to such a student cohort as it provides important opportunities to integrate their studies, to develop a piece of sustained work and to exercise creativity.

As a supervisor of Dissertations, Ali’s suggestion in this regard was instructive: “*I would have had two students who undertook logical research. Prior to my taking on the Doctoral research, I would never have considered it....that’s where it comes into the capstone in having a better understanding of different approaches to research*”. Barbara was also quite clear about the link: “*Mmm, I think that in final year level, it has a very*

*definite affect*". She also added that her research-methods knowledge has a positive impact: *"I will be doing much more next year, and obviously it's going to be of great help there"*. Colm was of a similar opinion whilst also mentioning the advanced knowledge that fourth years hopefully have: *"Oh Yea, the level of understanding for the student has developed from Year one, so you are able to give more in-depth information to the final year, based on their abilities...they grasp.....some of them would grasp it quicker than first years would"*.

Eugene recognized the value of sharing this knowledge and was equally emphatic in his feelings that his research-methods skills would be beneficial to undergraduates undertaking a Dissertation. *"Research methodology is actually one of those things that's actually quite straightforward, but can be complicated by people. You know, your first, the whole idea, you first take on it can be very complicated."* This is especially so when one considers the myriad problems Dissertation students can encounter. Healy and Jenkins (2007) had important views about the significant undertaking an independent research project in the form of a dissertation can be. They argued that it can be one of the most challenging and rewarding parts of an undergraduates university experience. They comment that these same students often suffer from disjuncture expressed as lack of motivation, hesitancy and avoidance when faced with the daunting enormity of the task and the high demands placed on them as independent learners and problem-solvers. This hesitancy and avoidance was often as a result of the challenges of dealing with a new language or 'research lexicon', which is often unknown to them. Eugene added that his research skills were of benefit, especially with this new language: *"Hermeneutics and you name it!, I mean and even trying to understand the difference between one and another, it's, I think when you have a good enough grasp of it yourself, you can demystify it for the poor student and let them get on with the work of doing the research instead of actually tripping up"*.

It is also argued by Healy and Jenkins (2007) that listening to students and responding to their perceived needs is an effective way to improve supervision practices. Students were shown to be lonely and insecure about their Dissertations and the supervisor pressured by

a considerable supervisory burden. If supervisors such as the aforementioned Doctoral researchers are involved, then it is clear that they all believe that they can add value to the supervision process. By lessening the stresses alluded to above, this is potential evidence of undergraduates benefiting from Doctoral researchers activities.

Coate et al (2001, p. 170) also argued that academics who may be research-oriented, may actually value more the teaching which is related to their own research as distinct from teaching topics and areas that are part of the prescribed curriculum: “The curriculum could potentially be driven by research interests of staff, thereby resulting in an unbalanced curriculum”. According to the authors study: “a few participants admitted this was a ‘difficulty’ they tried to manage”. One of my respondents, Eugene did not deny that this was quite often the case with him: “*Once or twice, you could find yourself going off on a tangent, so you would have to realize ‘listen, I’m going off on a tangent here, let’s get back to what we’re doing’*”. Finally, when probed as to whether his Ph D researcher standards may be too exacting for Undergraduates, Colm responded by saying: “*you’re kind of two things: you’re a teacher and you’re a researcher. So you’ve kind of got two hats on, so you should be aware that you’re talking to a group of mixed people and some of them will ‘get it’ and other ones won’t ‘get it’. You can’t be pitching it at your own level, you can’t, then you’re gonna lose x amount of the class*”. This view is also one that strikes at the essence of this thesis, in that it exemplifies in many ways that one such lecturer appreciates the delicate role they must play in marrying their abilities to the specific needs of undergraduate students.

### **5.1.3 Summary of Findings of Research objective No 1**

The undergraduates are impacted by their Doctoral researchers research topic areas and skills. This is illustrated in these previous paragraphs as being very real. The positives and negatives that emerge indicate that to varying degrees, each of my interviewees deemed the impact of the areas/topic specific skills to be of significant importance at all student levels. Particular benefits accrued however to students at the final year level when it came to research methods skills. Most learning initiatives relating to Objective

No 1 originate from the lecturers. The next area seeks to establish the perceptions of students interest in the research work.

## **Research Objective No.2.**

### **5.2 To discover whether the students of Doctoral research academics are perceived as 'open' to their lecturers research activities and whether such students access the published work leading to *student-initiated* discussions.**

The idea of Doctoral-research academics inculcating an enlightened and questioning approach to learning in their students is noted by Neumann (1994) .This contention is that their research activities can lead to the fostering of a curiosity among students and an excitement and enthusiasm about knowledge. Whether this occurred in respect of my respondents with their students, was next examined.

Questions were asked about undergraduate students initiating a discussion about my respondents research work. In this regard, their students seldom initiated discussions with them. The six interviewees were consistent regarding this question of student-initiated discussions. Barbara and Colm indicated that their students had seldom ever raised the matter with them: "*it does'nt come up very much and I might mention it from time to time, if it's relevant, but it does'nt come up a lot*", was Barbaras' response, with Colm suggesting "*there is a certain group of people that will notice something, like a publication and they are the minority, not the majority*". David mentioned the fact that many students were very 'pedestrian' about his research, also citing the fact that he quite literally never had an Undergraduate come to him enquiring about his Doctoral work or asking for examples of publications. Ali and Eugene mentioned the fact that when *they* initiated the discussion with students and encouraged it, the students would become involved. This however was always as a follow up to the lecturers prompting, not of their own volition. An example of this would be best illustrated by a comment from Eugene about Journal articles he may have written: "*I would mention them in college and I would find that some students...you know would have gone off and read them and come back and have said, 'Oh I like what you said about...or would refer to your paper'*". Based on this, he would subsequently direct them to further material.

### **5.2.1 Summary of Findings of Research Objective No 2.**

There was no consensus from my interviewees on Neumanns (1994) reflections on an enlightened, questioning interest from students who were ‘excited and enthusiastic.’. This no doubt raises a challenge as to how such educationalists can inculcate such initiative and interest into undergraduates about their research work. These matters of *lecturer*-initiated discussions and overtures to students are now discussed in dealing with Objective No 3. (See 5.3)

### **Research Objective No.3**

**5.3 To determine whether Doctoral researchers initiate discussions about their research activities with undergraduate students and whether they know if their students perceive this as positive or negative.**

*Lecturer*-led initiatives using aspects of research activities to enhance the learning experience of their students is the next are to be addressed. The question pertaining to this objective gleaned a significant amount of responses as outlined in two ways: the benefits, (3.1) and the difficulties (3.2) for students.

Unlike the last question of *student*-initiated discourse of their lecturers research, most of the interviewees could identify with experiences they themselves had in incorporating aspects of their research experiences into their teaching practice. This notion is central to the thesis under investigation. The responses, whilst mostly emphasizing the learning-*enhancing* experience it has for the student, also said that in a smaller number of instances, there could be opposite scenarios where it could *detract* from their students learning experience.

### 5.3.1 Student Benefits

One of the frequently stated benefits to students of research-active academics according to Jenkins et al (1998, p.132) is the enthusiasm for their discipline/research that some lecturers convey when they refer to their own work, thus giving these students a motivation to learn. The students described how the lecturers enthusiasm ‘rubs off’ on the students and gave ‘a vitality’ to their teaching and the curriculum. Earlier, I referred to how the lecturers with research-methodology skills and their knowledge of their topic evidently had benefits as discussed in 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 A progression on this thinking is the overall sense of inculcating a sense of enquiry in Undergraduates, or what Neumann (1994, p. 328) referred to as: “the subtle underplay that prevails among the research academic and his students”

Fintan alluded to the benefits of this broader conception by suggesting that he: “*brought something extra to the table*”. He spoke about it thus: “*I think as well from the point of view of even beyond the topic and the subject area, I think the philosophical side is the better understanding of people,...How they learn. Why they learn?*”. This is very much in sync with the view of Blackmore and Cousin (2003) who note that students appreciated the opportunity to participate in research and they appreciate being able to play a role in knowledge production through participating in the culture of inquiry. These wider benefits were mentioned by my respondents, notwithstanding the importance of the more obvious research methodology and research topic facets. Barbara also mentioned the wider philosophical benefits to students from her Doctoral research: “*It broadens my perspective and it broadens the perspective of the students*”.

In terms of students gaining in a broad sense, Colm said that he shared his latest exposures to new research with as many students as possible. His means of dissemination included sharing his outside academic contacts: “*I meet a whole new set of people and I get them in as guest lecturers for example, which I have done and the students benefit from that*”. The guest lecturer he referred to in this instance was the founder of a particular academic movement whose Ph D students Colm also used as speakers with



some of his undergraduate classes. This has resonance with the “*communities of practice*” idea which Brew (2003, p.12) suggested could change the nature of HE itself. It could be re-conceptualized so that staff and students work together in ‘*communities*’ in which staff and students are ‘*co-workers*’. Giving Undergraduate students such opportunities is clearly another way for them to benefit.

David cautioned against introducing too much depth with respect to discussions of his Doctoral research. Cognizance had to be taken of what was required of undergraduate students in terms of their level and abilities. This is further adverted to in 5.3.2 but the solution for him was to always make things comprehensible: “*you know you really have to break it down and make it very kind of simplistic...for want of a better word*”. He emphasised the importance of widening out the discussion to general topics as distinct from the specifics of his own Ph D, particularly as it applies to the everyday: “*but in class discussions we do a lot of discussion about topical issues for example...mmm...it might be something like obesity or something like that ...topical issues that are out there at the moment*” . Further clarifications were also given by him about the distinction he makes in conversations he initiates with students in years 1-3 versus the ones made with final year students, particularly in relation to his research activities. The dangers of alienating students, as experienced by David are dealt with further in 5.3.2.

Eugene was also very enthused by his own research and the opportunities it afforded to enhance the learning experiences of students from a holistic perspective. “*I am definitely more confident in myself in my knowledge, I’ve so much more to give the students in a broader sense of learning and I like to have those broader discussions with them*”. He specifically alluded to the fact that these were real mature ‘*third-level*’ discussions as distinct from what he referred to ‘*vocational learning*’. Allied to this he had secured scholarships for two of his students to get involved in research symposia abroad. This exposed them to leading edge scholars in the profession. Involvement for all his students in field-trips, led by these self same scholars also benefitted student learning. This is what he referred to as ‘*liberal learning*’. He was always aiming for this type of deeper discourse with his students and was of the view in relation to Objective No 3 that students

definitely benefitted from his broad doctoral-based discussions: “*we are able to link it in with other things and other elements, whether it be in Art, whether it be in Science or History or whatever....very much so in that perspective*”. This correlates with Blackmore and Cousins’ (2003) ideas in relation to participating in research and being able to play a role in knowledge production through participating in the culture of inquiry. According to Brew (2006), an important experience for students involved with researchers was that they felt they had the opportunity to work in a collegial way with academics and other researchers and the discovery that these people would take their work seriously. Certainly Eugene shared this perspective when exposing his students, through scholarships, to some of the best researchers from leading Universities and academic symposia.

The secondary research (House of Common, IUSS Study, 2009; Neumann, 1994) conducted on students perspectives of the advantages of being educated by Doctoral researchers also highlighted the value such students attached to the motivational impact such exposure has on their approach to learning:

Many students described their surprise firstly being asked to do something different from the usual assignments and secondly their sense of fear – sometimes coupled with excitement – at the challenge. All stated that by the time they had completed the assignment they had found the work intellectually stimulating and enjoyable. Neumann (1994, p. 330)

These positives are not however without many contrary negative examples of how being taught by such research academics can be problematic. These matters are analysed here.

### **5.3.2 Difficulties for students**

**To determine whether Doctoral researchers believe such research activities *may not* enhance the experience of students being taught by them**

Coate et al (2001) contend that although there is a popular conception that research enhances teaching, they argue that evidence of such synergistic relationships is inconclusive. In a similar vein, research carried out by Astin (1993, p. 363), in a detailed study of over 200 US institutions bluntly concluded: “a college whose faculty is research-

orientated increases student dissatisfaction and impacts negatively on most measures of cognitive and affective development”. In conducting my research, I endeavored to elicit the views of my interviewees with respect to some of the above assertions. The questions I asked them were as follows:

Do you believe your research activities enhance the experience UG students have of your teaching. Yes?...In what ways?, and if No?...Why not??

The “*No?..Why not?*” aspect of the question elicited a range of opinions, with some participants being quite defensive about this and others being disarmingly frank in admitting that it can cause problems. There were three broad areas addressed in the context of the themes covered with the respondents, which were:

1. Lecturing content that favours researchers specific research area over general course material.
2. Non-availability of lecturers whose focus on research causes time constraints that disadvantage undergraduates.
3. A sense that Doctoral researcher academics are not always available to undergraduates and that these students do not have any ‘ownership’ of the research process.

### **5.3.2.1 Lecturing content that favours researchers specific research area over their course material**

Many of the research participants disagreed that there was a problem in their case with this issue. Barbara was one participant who was quite emphatic that her research activities did not detract from her teaching practice, or in any way disadvantage her undergraduates: “*Well first of all, I would like to say that teaching has to be an absolute priority. The first thing is the student and the preparation of classes and aiming to be a good lecturer and any research I do, is after that*”. Ali was also of a similar view and said he resisted any temptation to delve too deeply into his own research area when dealing with undergraduate students: “*I’ve never went in and only talked about my research. It’s a bit of you know...‘slapping yourself on the shoulder’...and I’m not into*

*that*". Being aware of the level of students was critical to Ali: *"you keep it simple and you follow what you are supposed to be doing with the students"*.

When it came to 'over-focusing' on his own research in class Eugene admitted to being culpable: *"you go off on a tangent sometimes, because you are so interested in what you are doing and you have to remind yourself... 'to put the brakes on here...he says we're getting carried away here, this is not really what we're meant to be doing today'"*. He also felt that at times, he was questioning his teaching style and content and suggested his students may be thinking there is a: *"boredom, 'here we go again' factor"*, whereby he was over-using his Doctoral ideas too much in class. He said this was especially obvious among younger undergraduate students: *"the ones that probably have 'nt grasped the idea of college yet, ye know, who think, 'Ah, here he goes again', you know.... 'the glazed expressions'...is it 'another war story'?"*. He accepted there was a risk of 'losing' students attention in this regard. David said he did not spend too much time discussing his own research area as he believed: *"basically if I went into great detail about my research , you know the Ph D that I did, then I lose them, I completely lose them...they'd literally blank out, but I take little chunks and make it applicable"*. Colm had a similar view in this respect and said *"you should be aware that you're talking to a group of mixed people and some of them will 'get it' and other ones won't get it, you can't be pitching it at your own level, you can't, then you're gonna lose x amount of the class"*. This consensus view on 'pitching' your lectures at the right level is something shared by all my interviewees and this augurs well for their undergraduate students. These students will benefit from such academics not over-emphasizing Doctoral work at the expense of an undergraduate syllabus.

### **5.3.2.2 Non-availability of lecturers whose focus on research causes *time* constraints that disadvantage undergraduates.**

Ali admitted that students may have been disadvantaged during the time he was conducting the research in that, because of a reduced timetable he had to refuse supervising some of them. In addition, a junior member of staff took his classes. In

relation to replacement staff taking undergraduate students in Universities, the Boyer Commission (2008, p.8) posit:

Again and again, universities are guilty of advertising practice that they would condemn in the commercial world. Recruitment materials display proudly the world-famous professors, the splendid facilities and the ground-breaking research that goes on within them, but thousands of students graduate without ever seeing the world famous professors. Some of their instructors are likely to be badly trained or even untrained teaching assistants who are groping their way toward a teaching technique.

Fintan also said that replacements may disadvantage students in that: *“a subject area that you had subject specificity in, they’re replacing you with somebody who maybe isn’t quite as skilled as you”*. Whilst one cannot generalize about the calibre and experience of replacement staff, it is obvious that busy researchers who have a wealth of knowledge to share are not always ‘available’ to undergraduates as much as they could be. This is borne out by Colm, Eugene and Fintan especially in relation to balancing the time they have to give to teaching versus research. Colm stated: *“I always feel I’d like to give out more time to each. Yea and I mean we’ve had this conversation at various reviews and there was a Faculty review and it’s not just me saying it, because this came up from anyone who was doing research, you know, that it was a juggling act. And it’s very hard to balance it.”* A shortage of time for both is referred to by many of the interviewees. Indeed in a Faculty of Tourism & Food Review document outlining the Faculty’s future research strategy, it was stated: *“it will be necessary to ensure that staff who are completing manuscripts in a particular year can only be expected to work for four hours per week. Resources for this will be released through modularization, thereby unlocking the value trapped by duplication and over-teaching”* (Faculty of Tourism and Food Review, 2003, p.87). In the intervening years, comments from Colm and David would suggest that less teaching was not always the case, nonetheless staff time allowance for DIT academic staff doing a Doctorate was four hours per week. The point of sparing academics any commitment to “over-teaching” could be interpreted by some undergraduates as the oft mentioned lack of availability of these academics to them.

Eugene added further to this issue about time allocation by stating that the quality of his teaching suffered: *“The quality of my teaching disimproved or got worse, so the students suffered in the way that I have’nt as much time to prepare for my classes and to organize my classes as I had in the past because I had been so pre-occupied with my research”* He admitted: *“I was going on autopilot ...because you knew your subject so well or you knew your class and you give the same class a few years in a row”*. He frankly stated that he did’nt get a chance to plan or decide how he was going to approach his classes because of this pre-occupation and stated: *“I must be honest about that”*.

The level of interplay by respondents between whether all of what they do research-wise is beneficial versus any downsides was something with which Eugene engaged. He admitted to giving less time to class preparation: *“in previous years you would have given it a lot more preparation”*, but he correspondingly cites the many advantages that accrue to undergraduates as discussed in 3.1 in terms of a broader education because of his exposure to new material during his Doctoral research. Nonetheless, David and Fintan also agree that when doing their Doctoral research, it does take them away from students, with Fintan observing that: *“when I was writing up my Ph D it was very time consuming, and it did mean a no of trips to different conferences and it meant a number of trips over and back to London”*. Because his Supervisor was based in London, he admitted: *“ it kind of detracted from some of my teaching in that I had to cancel some of my classes and rearrange them to suit”*.

Fintan also spoke of the time factor and being away from teaching: *“I think when you’re teaching you’re trying to research. It can cause great distraction because you’ve got this big body of work that you’re working on ”*. He adverted to the fact that one needs to be very disciplined around time as well as ensuring that the content covered does not suffer. Managing to update what you were currently delivering in lectures was key to this.

### 5.3.2.3 A sense that Doctoral researcher academics are not always available to undergraduates and that undergraduates do not have any ‘ownership’ of the research process

Linked to the ideas on time given to preparing for lectures as well as the time spent in them is the idea of ‘availability’ of academic staff to students. This is cited by many students (Jenkins et al, 1998) as being an important quality in academic institutions. To this end, the idea of lecturers not being around for student queries and perhaps ‘*being aloof*’ Healey (2005) is an important one. Jenkins et al (1998, p.135) made the following observation “*most students had no sense of ownership/involvement in these activities. To put it at it’s most extreme, it was virtually as if research active staff was some mysterious substance that, in X-files fashion, spirited staff away. The staff mysteriously come back, seemingly unchanged and that was it*”. This point was addressed by Fintan who said that if you’re at home you’re not in the building to see students: “*so if students are looking for you you’re only going to be here maybe two, maybe three days a week that you are available to see students*”. In Ali’s case, he said that in the last year he had not taken on any research students because his own research and timetabling allowances for same meant inevitable time constraints. “*I had to refuse anything that was over and above my timetable*”. It is worth noting that the vast majority of the student population in the School in question are Undergraduates, which means his absence was a disadvantage to them in the short-term. He considered this to be a short-term sacrifice “*that’s a short-term impact on that, the positives far outweigh the negatives that would be there*”. By becoming a more qualified researcher himself, he was strongly of the view that he could offer more to students in the long term as discussed in 4.3.1. This is especially in relation to sharing his advanced research skills and knowledge combined with a more enlightened approach to using it in teaching practice.

When Eugene was asked about this matter of availability and perhaps being aloof from Undergraduates he was equally candid about not being available “*Well that would be true in that I would’nt have been as available as I would have been in the past as I did a lot of my research from home or I’d be in the library* (Interviewee names his research

**Institution)** *so I would'nt actually be on-site. So if some student came to see you for a question or something they might never ring you or e-mail you, but had you been there they might have had a word with you, you definitely wer'nt as available as you had been*". This idea of Undergraduate students being 'outside the loop', inadvertently or otherwise is mentioned in the literature and among media commentators. The Bayer Commission (1999, p. 6) was critical of the fact that an Undergraduates university experience on one hand was kept isolated from the research activity of academics on the other hand, suggesting: *"Universities on the whole did not see ways to integrate their undergraduates into the research missions that they valued above all else"*. John Walsh, the education correspondent for the Irish Independent signaled a similar note of caution when he suggested that *"research is the rage in cash-hungry universities, but it may be over-emphasised at the expense of teaching"* (Walsh, 2006, p.5)

Prof John Kelly the former registrar and Dean of engineering and architecture in UCD and also founder/editor of the *International Journal, Industry & Higher Education* make the point that the increased emphasis on research output and the enlargement of PhDs numbers has to be handled carefully so that teaching to undergraduate students is not damaged. He further asserts *"Research is a vital component of university education at all levels but there are dangers of its over-emphasis"* (Kelly, 2009, p.12). These views do have some resonance with comments made by the interviewees in regard to this topic insofar as research can become an all-consuming process. Fintans earlier reflection is a case in point *"It can cause great distraction because you've got this big body of work that you're working on. It also takes up a huge amount of time"*.

As suggested earlier, others commented about the huge challenge of 'juggling' time to accommodate their Doctoral activities as well as their Undergraduate teaching requirements. Eugene went so far as to suggest that there should be more delineation between the two roles: *"there should be some research positions within the IoT's and teaching positions*. He suggested different roles also: *"say that there is someone who is just full-time teaching, if that's what they like doing and they have no interest in research or stuff...they could do maybe say 20 hours, right!, someone who's really into...who likes*



*to teach but likes to research as well might do 10 hours. Someone who purely likes to research might do 5 hours, you know what I mean.* This opinion echoes somewhat with the analysis proffered by Coates et al (2001, p. 170) where they contended:

In some low research institutions, staff were actively encouraged to value research more highly, and heads of departments or other managers had implemented strategies for rationalizing teaching loads in order to foster a research culture.

Whilst interesting, Eugene's opinions on different roles could lead to a situation whereby some Undergraduates in particular could be at a disadvantage as a result of not getting sufficient access to the expertise of Doctoral academics.

### **Summary of Research Objective No 3**

Overall the observations made by my respondents regarding the challenges they face in balancing their roles is well encapsulated by the following quote from Pocklington and Tupper (2002, pp. 8-9) who make this point,

The present view that teaching and research go hand in hand must be replaced by the more compelling view that teaching and research generally conflict with one another. Both activities, to be performed well, are enormously time-consuming. They involve different skills and impose contrary obligations on professors.

The challenges facing all who work in Universities are manifold, but one would imagine that their key objective must consistently lie with delivering quality education to the principal participants, namely the students, irrespective of their status as Undergraduates or otherwise. The situation however as it currently prevails, based upon examination of the literature and allied to my analysis of my respondents feedback can be a lot less straightforward.

## Research Objective 4

### 5. 4 To identify any perceived changes in student reactions to Doctoral researchers since they started/attained their Doctoral qualification.

This question was addressed by reference to a study from the literature by Jenkins et al (1998) who claimed that the credibility of staff in terms of their research profile gave students a certain reassurance and validated their decision to attend that HE institution. Such a reassurance of having made the right decision in terms of their course and college choice was deemed to be of significant importance among students in their study. Healy (2005, p.193) spoke in a similar vein when he referred to the benefits students perceived, particularly “the reflected glory of being taught by nationally and internationally known researchers”.

Ali spoke about this element of possible prestige that students sometimes felt by being associated with Doctoral researchers, particularly when it came to things like Dissertation supervision. *“Yea, that they have a ‘Doctor’ supervising them...there’s anticipation”*. Alan and Barbara also noticed a discernible difference in the sense that more students were seeking them out for Dissertation supervision since their research profile had developed. Barbara noted *“somebody has asked for me every year, so in that sense since I got my Ph D so I suppose that’s a positive development”*. Colm reported an almost identical experience from the perspective of ‘being sought out’, but apart from that he did not detect anything else when asked if students had a changed attitudes towards him since attaining his Doctorate. *“I would’nt be able to answer that unless someone made me aware of it and came up and asked me that.*

David said there was no change at all from students *“Did students react differently? No, I don’t even think they knew I got a Ph D!”* He did say however that there were difficulties in the recent past where Undergraduate students were not happy with another lecturer in his discipline who did not possess a Doctorate. *“I think basically that was a kind of a thing, you know she was aiming the lectures towards a Certificate level maybe,*

*that was the only thing, but that had nothing to do with my qualification”*. Whilst this was Davids, opinion, parts of the literature do confirm that many students have a preference for ‘Doctors’...*“some of my best lecturers and academic staff are those who have participated in research. Looking at the divide of just having a teaching only university essentially, are they just going to have a standard curriculum, is it just going to be an extension of high-school”* (House of Commons Study, 2009 p.3).

Contrary to Davids view that students did not even know about him getting a Ph D, Eugene said that he had noticed a perceptible difference in students’ reaction to him

*Yes, people have reacted to me, the students have reacted to me slightly differently, they do see that, particularly 1<sup>st</sup> yrs, they do see ‘a Doctor’, plus the fact that when I got my Doctorate there recently, it was in the newspaper, so it was quite public and the fact that it was the first of its type in Ireland, plus they seemed to be ...a bit like your earlier question , they seem to take great pride in that. I remember that actually one student who put the photograph of me that was in the paper up onto her blog and said...this is my lecturer”*.

He also cited an example of a students comment during an Open Day event: “ *I remember one 1<sup>st</sup> year was telling potential students I had two Ph Ds ! ...you know...really blowing my trumpet...this sort of stuff”*. Eugenes view here is very much in sync with Nuemanns (1994, p. 331) findings that many students are excited by the ‘*thrill*’ of seeing their lecturers name in print whether it be in reading lists, journal articles, books or journals.

Eugene and Fintan also echoed a view expressed by all of the other respondents that students *approaching them* to supervise their Dissertations in their research area was the most noticeable difference. Citing a specific example of one such students’ approach, Fintan said “*I will have strong influence in guiding him and that’s one of the reasons why he came to me and it was on the back of the doctorate qualification”*. From a pragmatic perspective, the fact that students are approaching these lecturers to be their supervisors may not pertain exclusively to the reason that they wish to bask in their glory, as suggested by Healy (2005). It may be from the logical perspective that they are simply

the specialists in that particular area because of their Ph D. It may also be fair to conclude that some students, as was the case with Eugene's students are enthralled by the notion of having a 'Doctor' as one's mentor and teacher, or as suggested by Fintan "*in terms of the undergraduate looking at the professor, it does certainly validate what they're doing*". This quote tallies a lot in particular with Brews (1999, p. 297) observation "*Academic teachers may be viewed as expert learners helping novice learners. Researchers model in their own work approaches which it is desirable for students to emulate*". To this end, many students yearn for such direction from educationalists who have a profile, or in the words of Coate et al (2001, p. 166) research-active academics who "*have more 'authority' to teach their subject ('students love seeing their lecturers' books on the library shelves')*".

#### **5.4.1 Summary of Findings of Research Objective 4**

In summary, one can see that apart from the other aforementioned practical reasons as to why some Undergraduates may prefer having research-academics as lecturers, there are also perceived 'prestige' benefits associated with same. Based on these factors, it could not however be conclusively asserted that Undergraduate students reacted differently to Doctoral researchers since they started or attained their Doctoral qualifications, save for the fact that they sought them out for Dissertation supervision. From the point of view of 'basking in their reflected glory', only half of my respondents, Ali Fintan and Eugene said that there was a definite change in attitude towards them. David noted an express preference for her as a lecturer, which she herself did not attribute to her qualifications at all. The remaining three research participants noticed no difference in the attitude of their Undergraduate students towards them, with respect to their Doctoral qualifications.

In this sense, whilst some Undergraduate students may benefit from such prestige value, many of my academic interviewees did not get this impression from all of their students in this category.

## **Research Objective No. 5**

### **5.5 To deduce the research participants perceptions of research, teaching and knowledge in relation to their day to day practice.**

The two key themes of this Dissertation are *teaching* and *research*. To this end, it was apposite to elicit the views of the six participants regarding the two concepts as well as that of *knowledge* as it translated for them in their work practice. They were hence asked questions on what their understanding of each term was and what it meant in terms of their practice? (See Appendix A –Topic Guide). While definitions and interpretations of the three conceptions are important, I have not dealt exhaustively with them for the purposes of my research, given that they are vast and complex areas in their own right. What follows are samples of some brief thoughts of my research respondents on same.

#### **5.5.1 What is your understanding of the term “research”, what does it mean to you on a day to day level in terms of your practice?**

In keeping with the many diverse views on research, Brew (1999, p 293) deduced that:

Research is a meaning-making activity; it is about making sense of chaos and translating this into culturally accepted explanations. So it can be, and increasingly is, interpreted as a process of constructing knowledge.

Brew (2003) also looked at the four qualitatively differing conceptions as previously discussed in my Literature Review. (See Fig 2.1). My interviewees were of similarly diverse opinions when asked the aforementioned question of 5.1. Ali responded by stating his ‘take’ on what research meant to him, “*personally, it’s to go out and investigate something with an action coming from it, that there is some benefit...I just feel that the term research can be used quite lightly and quite loosely*” . In this sense, his opinion gives expression to one of the quadrants (the *trading view* of research) in Brews ‘Conception of Research’ (See Fig 2) where the suggestion is that what is important are the end-products of research, i.e. these could include the next steps of getting grants or of exploiting the social networks that one can encounter as part of the research process. He

argued that from his perspective there had to be an ‘outcome’ or an ‘output’, from it: *“there are researchers and they will call themselves researchers that do’nt have any end-product and it just goes up onto a shelf and it stays there.* His preference for the ‘output’ view was not however shared by all the interviewees.

Other such participants, namely Barbara and Fintan suggested that their ‘take’ on it was more to do with the enquiry side of it *“Well, research means keeping up to date with knowledge , with relevant articles, enhancing the content and making it topical, relevant and interesting to the student and having an enquiring mind.”*, whilst Fintan said succinctly that it means *“finding and discovering, you know, that’s what research is all about and understanding then”*. This was in sync with Brews (2003) *layer* way of conceptualizing research, where the focus looks somewhat inward and where the research is interpreted as a process of discovering, uncovering or creating underlying meanings. Colm also thought along the lines of gaining more information, “ he said it was *“just finding out more information about something, whatever, so whether that’s through literature or speaking to people or going to conferences or making links with experts in a field, that’s what I would think”*. From this point of view, Brews (2003) research provided aspects of research that many of the interviewees could identify with. If they were to apply these in their work context , they could be very beneficial insofar as they would align their research knowledge to the learning needs of the Undergraduate cohort.

One other opinion on research was elicited from Eugene who possessed the view that one is always in a constant state of research *“you are constantly questioning the status quo, you’re constantly questioning what it is we know, what it is I know...what it is...is the perceived state of knowledge.* In this sense, his interpretation is in sync with Brews’ (2003) *journey* view of research, where the researcher can be the focal point of the awareness and it is interpreted by them as a personal journey of discovery, possibly leading to transformation. Things continuously change and in his opinion, things that one *“believed ten years ago, may not be believed now or may not be believed in five years time, it might be totally different, so you are constantly figuring out”*. He concluded that this is something he endeavours to inculcate in his students, to be *“constantly*

*questioning*". He also stated that *"you're always trying to improve or increase your understanding about life"*. Again, Undergraduate students could only but benefit from such guidance.

### **5.5.2 What is your understanding of the term "teaching", what does it mean to you on a day to day level in terms of your practice?**

In terms of Teaching, there have been many writers, Prosser and Trigwell (1999); Kember (1997) and Rogers, C. R. (1983b) who have discussed the sometimes simplified dyadic conceptions of learning. Generally speaking, the work of Kember (1997) is in sync with that of Prosser and Trigwells (1999) dyadic summation of 'surface' and 'deep' learning. It identified in a review of thirteen studies that there were two broad orientations in teaching: the teacher centered/content oriented conception and the student centred/learning oriented conceptions. These contrary positions however are invaluable as a basis to compare how some of my interviewees view teaching.

Positions adapted by my interviewees were not dissimilar. Colm, David and Fintan had the *imparting* view in their minds when they gave their answer to my question on what teaching meant to them. To Colm, it meant: *"imparting knowledge to students. So whatever way you can do that and the best possible way I suppose is through lectures or practical wok or demonstration, so passing on information and being able to communicate it in such a way that the students can understand"*. Ali however, indicated that his attitude and practice to teaching had changed from such a transmission approach *"Now I find that I don't 'teach' as much though I will quiz them more, I'm inquisitive of the knowledge that they already have, from talking to them..and then what they're learning*. His description fits in with what Aakerlind (2007) suggests in the conceptualizing of ones teaching as one gains more scholarly experience; Aakerlinds (2007) stages included building up a better knowledge of one's content area initially in order to become more familiar with *what to teach*. The second approach was one of building up practical experience and knowledge as a teacher, in order to become more familiar with *how to teach*. This approach by him is one mentioned by Visser-Wijnveen

et al (2009, p 682) where they describe one such approach thus: *teaching is about giving students freedom to think for themselves and hopefully come up with ideas*". Ali's observation would suggest that his Ph D activities had assisted him in developing beyond the *transmission model*.

Eugene and Barbara had views that were more in line with the theory of Prosser and Trigwell (1999) of participative and student-focused learning. Eugene offered the following description on what teaching meant to him on a day-to-day basis "*you're really focused in on the idea that you're a facilitator of learning..... you realize that No, we're not there to know all, the font of knowledge that,...you pour it into someone, that it's more a joint venture*". Similarly Barbara highlighted such a collaborative approach: "*Well teaching is drawing out knowledge from the students, building on the students knowledge with participative processes*". These two interviewees ideas on teaching being a participative enterprise sit well with those espoused by Brew (2003, p. 11): "*We need a new model, one which focuses on a conception of teaching as student-focused*". Central to Brews (2003) conception of teaching was the sense that academics should work hard to create academic 'communities of practice' whereby both academics and students can engage. If Doctoral researchers can initiate such learning communities, then this would clearly be advantageous to Undergraduates.

### **5.5.3 What is your understanding of the term "knowledge", what does it mean to you on a day to day level in terms of your practice?**

Because this Dissertation centrally refers to the *research-teaching* nexus, the focus on my interviewees reflections on this concept of 'knowledge' is not exhaustive. Nonetheless, it merits a brief mention in terms of how Undergraduates can benefit from Doctoral educators who seek to develop it.

As discussed earlier, Brew (2003, p. 9) noted two conceptions of knowledge. One was where research is the creation or discovery of a body of knowledge which is perceived as separated off from the people who developed it. The other way of viewing knowledge



can be seen in traditions such as hermeneutics, phenomenological psychology and critical theory. The latter sees knowledge being viewed as more subjective; as a product of interpretation and negotiation. It explicitly recognises that learning always takes place in a particular context and influences and is influenced by that context. To this end some of my respondents made some succinct points on same.

Ali suggested that there were two types of knowledge “*‘Know-how’... will be the professional practitioner, a person that will be able to put that knowledge in something, while...‘Know of’ is more about a person being aware of something, knowing about something*”. The ‘know of’ referred to by him corresponds with Brews (2003) idea of knowledge as being separate or disconnected from actually doing something whilst the idea of ‘know-how’ sits with the notion of knowledge being viewed as more subjective and as a product of interpretation and negotiation. In this sense Ali suggested that ‘know-how’ was in a sense knowing how to *do* something. If research-active academics can inculcate this pragmatic sense of helping Undergraduates to develop know-how to do something, based on their research, then this is critically important to student development.

Kerr (2001, p.2) wrote that this idea of what some may deem practical knowledge was not something which the likes of Cardinal Newman in his seminal text “The idea of a University” would have agreed with. According to Kerr (2001), Newman favoured “liberal knowledge” and said that “useful knowledge” was only “a deal of trash”. Kerr also suggested that this was in contrast with Francis Bacon who preceded Newman by some 250 years and argued against such liberal learning by condemning “*a kind of adoration of the mind,...by means whereof men have withdrawn themselves too much from the contemplation of nature and the observations of experience, and have tumbled up and down in their own reason and conceits*”. Eugene believes that a nice thing about knowledge is: “*that those that are truly knowledgeable... know that they could only, in all their life, they can never , even if they spend all their life working on something, that they’ll only ever grasp a part, a fraction, of what is possible to learn*”. He said this in the context of a Degree he teaches on: “*so its a Liberal Arts Degree, so even though it’s a BA*

in XXXX, we'll say, I'll take the liberal Arts approach to it". So he added that in teaching his subjects "I'm linking those subjects in with the liberal, with philosophy, with art, with history, with you know... philosophy. This is in keeping with Kerrs (2001, p.2) reflections on Cardinal Newmans sense of 'liberal learning'. He did not see his role in imparting knowledge as training people how to do a job either but believed that you are trying to develop people:

*you're not training, I don't believe the day here is that you're training someone to do a specific job...I think you're trying to educate people so that they can actually develop as people and that they can take , they can move on because the nature of work is going to change...it's constantly changing...you need to develop people that are going be flexible in their learning, open to learning, open to continuous questioning ...improving ...all that kind of stuff.*

Fintans view can also be seen to be slightly more in sync with the more liberal view of knowledge when he spoke of "*the real philosophical understanding that knowledge depended on who you are and where you've come from*". Colm and David both of whom had more Science backgrounds, spoke of knowledge very much more in practical terms as something that was primarily a necessity and at its best when *applied*. This idea about disciplinary differences is therefore one which we also need to be cognizant of, not only in relation to understanding the 'knowledge' concept but critically in relation to the teaching-research nexus argument. Indeed Jenkins et al (1998, p.130) observed: "previous research has indicated both the importance of this level of observation and a possible key role for disciplinary differences in the nexus or relation between teaching and staff research".

#### **5.5.4 Summary of Findings for Research Objective 5**

Robertson and Bond (2001, p. 16) spoke of "these fundamental questions which persist about the definitions and shared understandings of such terms as knowledge, research and teaching". The many different interpretations about the nature of the three from among my interviewees is testimony to this. If Undergraduates are to benefit then lecturers must be clear about how they can impart their knowledge, via excellence in teaching.

## Research Objective 6

**5.6 To establish whether an academics research and teaching can be compartmentalised and treated as mutually exclusive or whether they are seen as part of a nexus in relation to their teaching practice.**

Coates et al (2001) argue that while the ideal relationship might be perceived by many academics to be a real and positive one, there are factors that shape the ways in which the two can have a negative influence on each other, or even drive them apart. If this is the case, then clearly Undergraduates will not benefit. Such factors include “*pressures to compartmentalize teaching and research through accountability and funding mechanisms, management strategies of academic staff time that treat teaching and research separately*”. (Coates et al, 2001, p.158). It is their contention that if the two are to be complementary, then new ways of managing the relationship need to be considered. Pocklington and Tupper (2002, pp 8-9) also make the point that “*Both activities, to be performed well, are enormously time-consuming .They involve different skills and impose contrary obligations on professors*”. The critical issue in all of this is the impact (positive or negative) which the management of their time and practice had on undergraduates education experience. According to the Bayer Commission (1999, p 6) “*Universities on the whole did not see ways to integrate their undergraduates into the research missions that they valued above all else*”. To this end, I was interested to ascertain how my respondents dealt with such a challenge, vis-à-vis quality education.

Responses from interviewees threw up some interesting insights on this matter. Barbara observed that “*I would see them as invariably linked. Good research makes for good quality teaching and one feeds into the other, so I would see them as linked*”, but when asked does she ever have to compartmentalise them, she said it was very challenging to even prepare for lectures “*With contact hours of 16 to 18 hours per week its very challenging to find any considerable time to do much research*”, citing a heavy teaching load at the moment in addition to working on a Journal Article as limiting her time. Colm was equally frank in response to the question of whether the two were separate or inextricably linked... “*I’d see them as linked, I mean there’s something wrong if they are*

*not linked, I mean it should be relevant what you're researching.....to developing courses, providing information". If such information is judiciously disseminated and targeted appropriately at Undergraduates, then benefits should accrue to them. In regard to teaching, he said it is essentially the job "that comes first really, that's what you're getting your salary for. So you can't just, that has to get priority, you can't just, you can't leave a class full of students sitting there". When probed on how he mixed the two in terms of time management he said time was hard to manage for the two "yea it's a bit... that's an issue, as I say, so the summer is the time you get freedom to think and look up literature and go to the library". That a research-active lecturer puts aside such time to link his research to "developing courses, providing information", then undergraduates can also gain.*

David views on this were mixed however. They could be linked if the modules he delivered were Science Degrees, *"however, for Degrees that I teach here...there's... because those Degrees are kind of ...more Arts Degrees, you can't really link the research that I, You can't, I suppose you can't really link them they are kind of mutually exclusive". Jenkins et al (1998, p. 137) argued that linking them should be dealt with. "We propose that departments experiment with better ways to ensure that staff research does underpin the curriculum". David point above is a clear example of how Undergraduates may not gain, especially when he says "you can't really link them".*

When probed on the need to divorce the two he stated: *"I find I can't allocate specific times to doing 'hands on' research", further adding "as for me going into a lab....forget about it..like you know...you just would'nt get the time basically to do it...I just find that teaching seems to be the priority here...really...teaching...that's what I find in this School". Frustration among some of my interviewees at a reduction in timetabled hours being allocated for research activities since college funding has tightened, was quite palpable. Davids case was interesting inasmuch as he had earlier indicated that the link between his own research and teaching was tenuous in many respects. However, his preference for research was clear. Speaking of former Ph D college colleagues, who are currently working in universities in the UK he complained that "they are mostly involved*

*in research, they find it extraordinary the amount of teaching that I do, and that I do hardly any research, really. And the research that I do supervise is mostly Undergraduate or Masters level. So they think that that's really unbelievable!*". According to Coate et al (2001); Downes (2009); Walsh (2006), research has traditionally been more highly valued than teaching in many HE institutions. *"There was evidence that in some low research institutions staff were actively encouraged to value research more highly, and heads of departments or other managers had implemented strategies for rationalizing teaching loads in order to foster a research culture"* Coate et al (2001). If Undergraduate students are deprived of ongoing access to such valuable knowledge from research-active academics, then again can be deemed questionable whether they benefit from such research activity

Finally, Eugene saw a need to separate them from the point of view of time management, *"you need to get your teaching on certain days and block off a certain period of time for your research"*. Nonetheless he did see them as wholly intertwined in terms of using research for classes: *"to me no matter what you're doing, whether you're teaching...your constantly engaged in research whether you know it or not . You see...every time you teach...you're re-learning...and re-questioning what you're teaching as such"*.

### **5.6.1 Summary Findings of Research Objective No 6**

Overall, the interviewees had mixed experiences when it came to blending the two, yet whatever about the academic researchers personal frustrations in doing so, most importantly in the words of Jenkins et al (1998, p.137) *"all students should have opportunities to benefit from research and from their staff involvement in research"*. The end-beneficiary must be the Undergraduate student, who according to Jenkins et al (1998 p. 137), as well as benefiting from their researchers knowledge, also gain from the aforementioned credibility and the sense that it validated their decision to attend the institution. These benefits and drawbacks address the key question of my research, which again asks: *In what ways do the research activities of Doctoral research academics benefit Undergraduate students"?*

### 6.1 Conclusion & Recommendations 1

**To ascertain how the *discipline specific* research knowledge and *research methods* skills of Doctoral researchers can impact the teaching of undergraduate students.**

The Doctoral researchers felt undergraduates were impacted by their *topic* areas, but one lecturer in the Science area felt his topic was not entirely relevant. Their research skills have an impact and this is clearly the opinion of all of my interviewees. All bar one, deemed the impact of their Doctoral *topic* knowledge to be beneficial. Some interviewees cautioned however against any temptation of '*going off on a tangent*' when it came to their Doctoral material. The majority of them spoke of the need to be cognizant of the academic ability levels of their Undergraduate students. Final year students who have such academics as Dissertation supervisors in their chosen discipline can also benefit from the depth of their knowledge. A similar proviso in respect of not being overwhelmed with too much information about the topic applied. The area of *research methods skills* and helping students become acquainted with the lexicon and advanced practices of same were the main conclusions on this point.

It may be argued therefore that such academics should make their Doctoral material as comprehensible as possible (in the words of one interviewee, '*bite sized*'), so that Undergraduate students are not intimidated by the knowledge being disseminated. They should also desist from '*going off on a tangent*' as described by Eugene. This should not preclude them aiming for as broad a pedagogical approach as possible. A similar proviso in respect of Final year students not being overwhelmed with too much information when they are receiving Dissertation supervision should also be noted. Most importantly however, by using their experience they should strive to significantly lessen the stresses and worries that Undergraduate Dissertation students experience as noted by Jenkins (2007) when he spoke of their feelings of daunting enormity and disjuncture. At a micro management level, this should be College policy so that all involved can incorporate this into their practice. The performance of same should be measurable and verifiable.

## **6.2 Conclusions & Recommendations 2**

### **6.2 To discover whether the students of Doctoral research academics are perceived as ‘open’ to their research activities and whether such students access the published work leading to *student-initiated* discussions.**

Little consensus emerged from my research participants in regard to Neumanns (1994) observations that some students of Doctoral academics can become questioning, enlightened, enthusiastic or even excited about their work. Two of my interviewees experienced a degree of this from a small minority of students, with the remainder having no experience of it. In all instances, real engaging interest in academics research only emerged when the lecturers themselves initiated the discussion. Students did not initiate discourse of their own volition.

One recommendation emanating from this finding, may be the creation of themed groups and greater promotion of Doctoral academics cognate disciplines. Subject focus groups with maximum student involvement as an integral part of college departmental structures should be considered. The DIT Schools where I carried out my research had only limited variations of cognate groups operated for academics. This should be strengthened to include students and in instances where said academics attract funding, some allocation from these funds should be made towards promoting these mixed membership subject groups in ensuring dissemination of research. Such pertinent material should also underpin the undergraduate curriculum. Employing the professional services of a body of pedagogy experts from DIT’s Learning, Teaching and Technology Centre to ensure its’ implementation, would be prudent. Again, subsequent studies should be carried out to monitor the impact and effectiveness of such initiatives. Abilities and motivation of student members need be monitored to ensure their ongoing engagement.

### **6.3 Conclusion & Recommendations 3**

#### **6.3 To determine whether Doctoral researchers initiate discussion about their research activities with Undergraduate students and whether they know if their students perceive as positive or negative.**

This research objective went to the heart of what I sought to establish in this Dissertation. This objective was approached from a dyadic perspective. Firstly it dealt with the positives as perceived by respondents. These included developing within students, practical research skills as well as a broader sense of *liberal* learning. These could be achieved through another benefit of their research which was establishing 'Communities of Practice'. The fact that students' abilities could become increasingly challenged through the expectation of higher standards was another benefit. The potential negatives as identified by some of my interviewees included; a temptation by two of them to deviate more towards their own research at the expense of the Curriculum. There was also an increased absence away from teaching undergraduates whilst doing their Doctorate. Subsequent to completion, they were usually timetabled for less teaching and more research. Timetabled teaching hours were increasingly with post-Graduates, which also meant that part-time or junior lecturers taught Undergraduates, thereby depriving students of their Doctoral expertise. Some of my respondents admitted to working on '*autopilot*' when doing their research. Others also had an express wish to do less teaching and spend more time researching.

There is a need in this respect are clearly to build on the aforementioned benefits whilst seeking to negate the downsides. Focusing on the preparation and content of lectures should be omnipotent for all lecturers, mindful of the fact that they should 'pitch' them at their undergraduates ability levels. No members of academic staff should treat teaching as a 'distraction'. To this end, the teaching skills of prospective Doctoral staff should be a key concern in the recruitment, training, timetabling and future promotion of these staff. This should be a central priority at managerial level. Avoiding scenarios where Undergraduates are almost exclusively taught by part-time junior members of staff who are lacking subject specificity should also be a management priority. Doctoral academics



should make themselves more available to Undergraduates, thereby avoiding becoming 'aloof'. This should be a key component of staff timetabling. Doctoral research academics not wanting to teach or to teach less, need to be reminded of contractual obligations and the adverse affects their absence has on students as well as the Colleges reputation. Again, the subject groups and the college management need to ensure that they constantly monitor and identify how their overall research policy impacts and supports the *undergraduate* curriculum.

#### **6.4 Conclusion & Recommendations 4**

##### **6.4 To identify any perceived changes in student reactions to Doctoral researchers since they started/attained their Doctoral qualification.**

The most common experience from my interviewees perspective was a notable increase in undergraduate Dissertation students 'seeking them out' for Dissertation supervision. Some respondents got the impression that students liked the idea of having a 'Doctor' as part of their educational experience. This also added to the 'prestige' benefits associated with studying in such a college. From the point of view of 'basking in their reflected glory', just two of my respondents said that there was a definite change in attitude towards them. The remaining three research participants noticed no difference in the attitude of their Undergraduate students towards them, with respect to their Doctoral qualifications. In this sense, whilst some students may benefit from such prestige value, half the academic interviewees did not get this impression their students. It could not however be conclusively asserted that undergraduate students reacted differently to Doctoral researchers since they started or attained their Doctoral qualifications, save for the act of 'seeking them out' for Dissertation supervision. Only in one instance, did one of my respondents note an Undergraduate experience the '*thrill*' (Neumann, p.331, 1994) of being taught by a lecturer whose name was in print.

The recommendations in this respect are limited to the fact that such lecturers could perhaps use their perceived 'authority' to provide encouragement to students with their studies and also to provide them with the re-assurance that they are in the best college when it comes to skills and expertise of staff. Brew (2003) suggested the skills in

becoming a Doctor include the ability to carry out a rigorous and systematic process of enquiry as well as a capacity to apply the skills so acquired in a range of contexts, including teaching. Instilling these skills and providing confidence to the Undergraduate should be their over-riding priority. Most importantly however, it is critical that student are not ‘in awe’ of such practitioners. They should always be made feel that Doctoral skills and advice are amenable to them.

## **6.5 Conclusion & Recommendations 5**

### **6.5 To deduce the research participants perceptions of research, teaching and knowledge in relation to their day to day practice.**

The Doctoral researchers whom I interviewed all had varying views in response to the questions of what their personal ‘take’ was on each of the three conceptions. Because this Dissertation centrally refers to the *research-teaching* nexus, the focus of my interviews centered primarily on reflections on these two concepts. The focus on ‘knowledge’ was not comprehensive. Nonetheless, it warranted a brief mention. My interviewees views on research ranged on a trajectory from the elementary view of ‘*finding out about something*’ through to the wider more liberal interpretation of ‘*always questioning the status quo*’ and indeed “*always trying to improve or increase ones understanding about life.*” Broadly speaking their opinions on teaching fitted into Prosser and Trigwells (1999) dyadic summary of the passive-surface teacher-centered learning approach through to the deep student-centered approach. What was encouraging was that in the opinion of five of the six interviewees, there was a link between the two conceptions. Visser-Wijnveen et al (2009, p. 682) described a new approach needed for teaching in this way: “teaching is about giving students freedom to think for themselves and hopefully come up with ideas”. Most of my interviewees spoke of trying to do this, with mixed degrees of success. Finally, their ideas on ‘knowledge’ were elicited. Opinions ranged from the very practical, training-like knowledge of knowing how to *do* something, through to a more holistic view. An example of this was one interviewee talking about developing the ‘whole person’ for life. He saw his role as “*linking subjects in with the liberal, with philosophy, with art, with history.*”

The recommendations in this regard revolve around the importance of lecturers being clear in their minds about what each form means to them. Most importantly, they need to know how they can utilize these interpretations for the benefit of Undergraduates. This can be achieved by developing efficient and effective ways of imparting their research-acquired knowledge. With excellence in teaching, such Doctoral researchers can lead undergraduate students to be independent learners. The recommendation in regard to this Objective No 5 is succinctly summed up by Elton (1986, p. 303):

What is needed is quite a radical approach in the value system of universities, giving equal value to excellence in teaching, scholarship and research, and a much greater differentiation of function between different academics. At any one time, some will excel at teaching, some at scholarship; few at all three and – hopefully – none at none

For this to happen, there will have to be ongoing training of all academics, particularly Doctoral researching-active academics. Initiatives in DIT whereby all new staff entrants undertake pedagogical training through a Certificate in Third level Learning and Teaching is an example of this. To have real impact, such initiatives should be rolled out across all constituent colleges within the HEA. At a local level within colleges, the cognate groups as alluded to in 6.2 should also be considered.

## **6.6 Conclusions and recommendations 6**

### **6.6 To establish whether an academics' research and teaching can be compartmentalised and treated as mutually exclusive or whether they are seen as part of a nexus in relation to their teaching practice.**

The notion of blending the two activities to the benefit of Undergraduates also strikes at the core of this thesis. The conclusion I make regarding my six interviewees is that there were different degrees to which they thought the two were part of a nexus and in some way linked. Some saw them as either: '*invariably linked*', '*linked*' or '*not linked at all*'. Most found it challenging to make the link happen, with one finding the two to be mutually exclusive. From the point of view of managing their time for each activity,

many saw it as a 'juggling' act citing in particular a shortage of time, whilst two others intimated their preference for research over teaching.

Recommendations in this regard centre around the key role that the academics themselves have to play. They need at all times to recognise the ways in which their research activities parallel those of students and most importantly, take steps to engage those students in research-like activities. If this occurs, then my interviewees' research can inform their everyday practice in facilitating learning to the benefit of Undergraduates. The importance of aligning the two can hardly be overstated, given that it is one of the distinguishing features of higher education today. In the words of Colbeck (1998, p.647), it is important for staff to maximize all opportunities to find their teaching and research activities '*merging in a seamless blend*'. Finally, management should continue to explicitly and formally support initiatives that will motivate students to engage with research at all levels. Supporting the development of lecturers' understanding of these students' perspectives is also important, so that Undergraduates real needs and concerns can be addressed.

## **6.7 Recommendations for future research**

6.7.1 This research was limited to interviewing academics only. Broadening same to include students in particular, and also college management would provide interesting insights into the other main constituent elements of the nexus .

6.7.2 Examining the interface between all elements in case study research in the lecture halls and tutorials of such Doctoral academics would also provide tangible examples of how the nexus works, or does not, as the case may be. Attending Dissertation supervision conducted by such academics with final year Undergraduate students would also be very useful.

6.7.3 Investigating how such academics deal with post-Graduate students whether lecturing or as supervisors might also provide useful insights that could be applicable and beneficial to the Undergraduate scenario.

6.7.4 A thorough investigation into the perceived lack of parity of esteem between teaching and research in Irish higher education institutions both from a funding and promotional opportunities perspective could be carried out. Is promotion linked to research profile and/or teaching profile? This study could investigate the percentage cohort of students in relevant institutions who are Undergraduates and examine any college policies and practices that aims to help students clearly benefit from Doctoral researchers activity.

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## **Appendix A**

## **Participant Information Sheet**

*Research Project Title: "The impact of the research activities of Doctoral research academics on the teaching of undergraduate students".*

I am currently undertaking an MA in Third Level Learning and Teaching in DIT's Learning Teaching and Technology Centre and I would like to research the teaching experiences of lecturers who have attained or are working towards completion of a Doctorate, and the ways in which such Doctoral research activities can impact the teaching of undergraduate students. I am inviting you to contribute to the research project and in order for you to decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information and contact me if there is anything you would like clarified or if you would like more information.

### **About the study**

The study will be undertaken in the DIT College of Arts and Tourism and the main aim of the research will be to capture the details of the teaching experiences of Doctoral lecturers with specific reference to the impact of their research interests and activities upon their teaching interactions with undergraduate students. Having read myriad literature on international perspectives on this topic, I am interested in the experiences of lecturers in an *Irish* higher education institution and how they conceive of and practice teaching in light of their Doctoral research experiences. I have chosen people who I know to have completed or are working on doctoral research.

### **What it will involve**

It is anticipated that the interviews will take place in March and April 2010. This is an anonymous research activity where the names of the participants, College and School will remain unspecified in the final document. The only identification given will be that it was carried out among staff in DIT.

Should you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form which is attached for your information. If you do decide to take part but subsequently change your mind you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. You will be asked to participate in one interview of about 1 hour in duration. The main topics to be covered will address the discipline-specific matters pertaining to your research as well as the specific research skills developed through the process of doctoral research, with reference to the impact upon UG teaching. A week in advance of the interview I will send you the interview questions (topic guide) so that you will be clear on the issues I will be raising with you.

If you experience any problems with the research, then please bring this to my attention immediately. If it is not appropriate to address your concerns to me, then you can contact my supervisor, Ms Martina Crehan, whose contact details are available at the end of this document. Again, all information collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and all data will be anonymised so that individuals or the College/School cannot be recognised in it. Should you require copies of our conversation and subsequent transcripts, you are welcome to request same. The results of the research will be used to write my MA thesis which will be submitted in July 2010. After the thesis is examined it will be stored in DIT's Learning and Teaching Library where it will be accessible to its students.

**Contact for further information**

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**Thank you for reading this and for taking the time to consider participating.**



**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Project:** *“The impact of research activities of Doctoral research academics on the teaching of Undergraduate students”.*

**Name of Researcher:** **Jim Mc Cauley**

Participant Identification Number for this project:

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for the researcher and the Supervisor to have access to my anonymised responses.

4. I agree to take part in the above project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant                      Date                      Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher                      Date                      Signature

## **Appendix B**

## TOPIC GUIDE

### SECTION A: STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

#### Student experiences:

1. To what extent can the *discipline* specific research knowledge of Doctoral researchers impact on the teaching of UG students:
  - At capstone (final year level)
  - At any time in Yrs 1-3
  
2. To what extent can the actual *research methods* skills of Doctoral researchers make an impact on UG students.
  - At capstone (final year level)
  - At any time in Yrs 1-3
  -
  
3. Do your students know much about your research?, that you're doing it ?, what it's about.
  
4. Do you think any of your published work (could be availability of you Ph D text, Journal articles, conference proceedings, industry publications) is accessed by your students....have they discussed it with you
  
5. Do you get an opportunity to discuss any of your research (subject content and research activities) with UG students...in what ways ...any examples?
  
6. In your experience, are UG students 'open' to the idea of embracing the above (4 & 5)?

7. Do you believe your research activities enhance the experience UG students have of your teaching.
  - Yes?...In what ways?
  - No?...Why not??
  
8. Have UG students reacted differently to you since you started/ attained your Doctoral qualification? In what ways, if any...eg asking you specific questions on your work and activities, wanting to collaborate in research ect
  
9. In what ways might your research activities *detract* from your teaching activities with UG students.

Have you ever experienced resistance or negative sentiment from UG students to the content of your research or other research activities, eg over-focus on your topic and time allocation.

## **SECTION B: RESEARCH AND TEACHING**

### **Research & Teaching**

1. Judged from the perspective of an academic, can they be mutually exclusive or do you see them as part of a nexus (linked)?
  
2. Is it possible for research/teaching to be compartmentalized/separate in terms of managing your time and practice as a lecturer.?

## **SECTION C: DEFINITIONS OF RESEARCH , TEACHING AND KNOWLEDGE**

Brief explanations/perceptions of personal ‘take’ on 1-3 below:

1. What is your understanding of the term “research”, what does it mean to you on a day to day level in terms of your practice?
2. What is your understanding of the term “teaching”, what does it mean to you on a day to day level in terms of your practice?
3. What is your understanding of the term “knowledge”, what does it mean to you on a day to day level in terms of your practice?

<b>SECTION D: CURRENT ISSUES IN IRELAND: RESEARCH &amp; TEACHING IN IRELAND</b>
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### **Current Issues in Ireland: Research and Teaching in Ireland**

Any brief opinions on current debates about reduction in research funding to HE sector research, Mc Carthy report, strategic alliances between colleges for research funding, HEA attitude to binary system in Irish HE..

## **Appendix C**

## INTERVIEW NO 1 - ALI

### SECTION A: STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

**Right so, we'll kick off, there are a number of questions and it's on a topic with the heading as you can see of student experiences and the first heading as you can see is the question of student experiences . The first question I have is:**

#### Question 1

**To what extent can the *discipline-specific* research knowledge of Doctoral researchers impact on the teaching of undergraduate students and I stress undergraduates.**

Right, undergraduates. The Doctoral research that I'm actually doing is geared towards Undergraduate students, looking (**Interviewee mentions Doctoral research topic**). Although it's significantly geared towards international or transferable elements to all (dissertation or) that (**Interviewee mentions Doctoral research area**) we would have and so I'm now also currently now looking at the issue of xxxx for 1<sup>st</sup> year student at Level 6 students, Level 7 students and Level 8 students, mainly geared towards improving their development.

**Right, ok, and though would you differentiate between whats happening to 4<sup>th</sup> year students or specifically you're saying most of it is at the first no of years at undergraduate level or is there a difference.**

Yes most of the internships would take place...if it's a Level 8 programme they tend to take place in year 3 , Level 7 ones they will tend to take place in the Year 2, a Level 6 programme is going to be mainly on the first three years of the programme.

**Right well they say alot of the time the research is only beneficial to the final year student and I was curious to know, that's fine so the second point there is:**

#### Question 2

**To what extent can the actual research methods, and I'm differentiating there obviously between the *topic* and the *research* methods, the skills you know, that Doctoral researchers bring and how does that impact on your input say at capstone level, at the final year level.**

On final, well, on well on my own research, because it is mixed method research with phenomenological hermeneutics as well as qualitative research, I would be engaged with Dissertation students so I am imparting the knowledge that I would have as a researcher

onto the Dissertation students. I would have had two students who undertook logical research. Prior to my taking on the Doctoral research, I would never have considered it....that's where it comes into the capstone in having a better understanding of different approaches to research. I would also probably emphasise that the type of Doctoral, (because I'm doing an actual professional Doctorate in (XXXX) –(Interviewee names **Doctoral research area**), I had four full modules in different research methods so I had a well grounding in all of the different research methods and that's the one they're doing.

**Right so, could I just put it to you, and its probably a side question...is there ever a temptation there or a risk that you might be putting your high standards as a Doctoral researcher (and that's not to 'plamas' you or anything... right) that you...bearing in mind that they are just undergraduates, and I say 'just' with inverted commas.**

I don't think so because of the research that I am doing. I am looking at the difference between Level 1, or Level 6, Level 7 and Level 8. I'm very conscious of the National Framework for Qualifications. I am therefore tuned in to what is expected of a Level 8 student. No I understand why you are asking that.

**Yea, it is based on the research. Ok, so I think we have covered that second part.**

### **Question 3**

**Thirdly .Do your students know much about the research? Do they know that you are studying, first of all that you are doing anything at all.**

A large majority of them do because they were the research so they had to buy into the research particularly with Year 4(4<sup>th</sup>) years, in 2008...in 2009 all of the 4<sup>th</sup> Year snow would be very familiar with graduates from last year, but the first years coming in don't know.

**Right so, it's because of their direct involvement that they know what it's about...thats ok, well we can move on from that question so.**

### **Question 4**

**Do you think any of your published work, if you have any published work at all, for example conference proceedings is accessed by your students...have any of them ever initiated anything?**

Well on the research I'm actually doing, I had two conference papers published in conference in (Interviewee names conference) ,one just recently. I submitted two papers into the XXXX Journal although it takes so long for them to come back to you, they have'nt been. In terms of students accessing them, I would'nt have enough publications out of what I was doing because it was a conference and I was going after those.



### Question 5

**OK, in terms of research, do *you* get an opportunity to initiate a discussion about your research...about the subject content or practical research activities?**

OK , because I'm involved, because the research is undergraduate students, the fact that I'm involved in the international placements, when I do the workshop with them, I 'm talking about the experiences of students learning from the phenomenological research. Last year I had all the students engage in phenomenological or... they left and I took a qualitative measurement...that (was)in 2008, last year I asked them would they to do a qualitative piece of research by their names , so I took all their names and I coded all their names and encoding when they came back I was able to measure and that gave me a very good insight.

### Question 6

**In your experience of undergraduate students, are they open to the idea, is there enthusiasm to want from their point of view i.e. the students**

Yea...mmm....that they want to talk about the research?

**Yea that they want to talk about what your research is?, that they actually want to engage with it , that they want to be part of it.**

Well yea they did because it was to do with the students themselves and they wanted to be involved in it. Now I only found three students that really did'nt really want to... and I left them because obviously you can't really force somebody to become involved that did'nt want it. It was really just a questionnaire to say....it was sent back and I asked them to sign it, but I would say in general they were fairly open to it.

**So they were open to it, that again would be something from my research that there can be a degree of resistance... and I just wanted to ask you.**

Yea, I suppose it's about if you're looking at an area, whether it's going to benefit the students , because now they are saying they are saying '*how's it going*'?, a number of students would like the marking system changed, I'm proposing a change with grade because of internships and the work involved with them. They also want the grading to change. I am proposing a change of 86, so that there is value back to the student, so that if the student is'nt excellent with giving them this and that that does'nt reflect the work. The grading system is set up where ...if the student falls into this category, depending on what level the current marking system or marking level require they will end up on 60 per cent.

## Question 7

**Right, Question 7. Do you believe that your research activities enhance the experience of undergraduate students you are teaching. If now versus three years ago?**

It certainly does because the research is all geared toward the Undergraduate students and it enhances the educational process. I'll give you one example of that, in terms of phenomenological, they keep a journal...they only do projects on the industry that they were actually working in. A project based on something in a hotel or restaurant. I as part of my own research asked them would they write on four topical areas which they had worked with as I was looking to develop that. The other thing they actually write about is professional internship, some part of internship i.e. internship in work and then they have to identify which was called the XXXX inventory. They would take a photograph, about four photograph...it could be anywhere...it does'nt have to be where they work and then they have to talk about those photographs and what it meant to that. I discovered we were getting much more fruitful material.

**That's interesting in terms of what you are saying because a lot of researchers dissertations may not be as pertinent to their students as yours, so in terms of what you are saying, it is at variance in some ways with what's out there. So it's interesting to get your views.**

## Question 8

**OK. So question No 8 there is:**

**Have undergraduate students reacted differently to you since you started /attained your Doctoral qualification.? (Sorry maybe we covered that) now, since you started or attained your Doctoral qualification and in what ways. Have they asked you specific questions about your work or activities. It's just a final piece because I think you have answered this via other questions.**

Yea. What I find is more and more students are asking me questions... 'we know you are doing this dissertation work' they put a value on it, we're finding that one s that I ve accepted for next year, the year ahead are asking me to do it and when I accept them they are sending me e-mails to say thank-you very much where previously they would'nt do that at all.

**Yea , you're just allocated a dissertation supervisor, which is so much the case with undergraduate dissertations. Do you often find, and again it's just something that comes from my research that when you become Dr Joe Bloggs, that there is this sense of prestige issue.**

Yea Yea, that they have 'A Doctor' supervising them, there's anticipation.  
**Yes there is that element of that and it's interesting I suppose from the research, it's something more for me to talk about, after when I get the research findings.**

**Question 9**

**In what ways might your research activities detract from your teaching? Have you ever experienced resistance or any negative sentiment from undergraduate students to the content of your research or indeed your research activities.**

*Yea, .... I have'nt*

**Is there ever anything at all where you felt your students...**

Well, I would say the fact that I am doing so much research myself ,last year I did'nt take on any research students, but, that's a short-term impact on that, that is... the positives far out-weigh the negatives that would be there, whereas I had to refuse anything what was over and above my timetable .I got a replacement every time but I do'nt think that has a major impact .My colleague steps in and is capable and I felt that not me being standing in front of them meant that the individual was'nt disadvantaged

**And there's no other way you feel it has done so or whatever?**

**No, no**

## SECTION B: RESEARCH AND TEACHING

The next thing here to look at is research and teaching.

### Question 1

**Judged from the perspective of an academic, can they be mutually exclusive or do you see them as part of a nexus (are they linked?). In other words can you have *'research'* here and *'teaching'* there, as in separate or is that possible or are they almost invariably interlinked?**

I'd like to think that you've got both...mmm...because I'm engaged in the SIFT project, I could go off and do that framework and the framework is based on the research, but I think it's an error when somebody starts a piece of research, and it's too narrowly focused and it only benefits them.

**And when you say that , that they are actually asking you for cooperation, do they want to collaborate? Do they ... looking forward....are they even looking for things...., to co-write?**

Yea, one of the two students, I have co-written a publication and I've one in the pipeline with another students. It's a Masters, but I don't think that that would be the general students. What I tend to do is, if I've work that's coming on that's pretty good I mention it to the students.

### Question 2

**Just before we leave this. Is it possible that they can become compartmentalised. Do you sort of say I'm Joe Bloggs now and I'll take off that hat if you like and walk into that class...**

Yea, I switch off yea and I'll say the framework is this and this.

**Can I just ask you the corollary of that,...right..if you are to walk into a class and you just bombard them with this overflow of information....and you've a syllabus to cover and its part of your...again it's a human temptation?**

Yea, No.. I think I have always resisted that ...I don't think,... I've ever went in and only talked about my research. It's a bit of you know...'slapping yourself on the shoulder...and I'm not into that, so I think you have to be aware of the level of students you actually have and if what you're doing is way over the level of what they're doing then you do'nt , you keep it simple and you follow what you are supposed to be doing with the students.

## SECTION C: DEFINITIONS OF RESEARCH TEACHING AND KNOWLEDGE

Brief explanations/perceptions of personal 'take' on 1-3 below.

**Yea, Yea. OK just these next three questions...I'm just looking for information. How long have you got!?!?. A number of quick questions here:**

### Question 1

**What does the term '*research*' mean to you?, on a day-to-day level, just at a practical level?**

I suppose there's many different points on research, personally it's to go out and investigate something with an action coming from it, that there is some benefit. I just feel that the term research can be used quite lightly and quite loosely. Because there are research and they will call them researchers that don't have any end-product and it just goes up onto a shelf and it stays there and one of the things that I felt when I started out to do the Doctoral research was that this was'nt just going to end up on the shelf.

**I see, you already... before it's over...it's actually happening.**

Yea it's already taking place now.

**I, quickly that fine. I just wanted an answer to that... I just wanted to get your initial take on it.**

### Question 2

***Teaching then on a day to day level. What do you see 'teaching' as?***

Well my view of teaching before I done the Doctoral work, my view was just using slides, now I find that I do'nt 'teach' as much though I will quiz them more, I'm inquisitive of the knowledge that they already have, from talking to them..and then what they're learning.

### Question 3

**Right the third question which is one where we could be here all day , but just again...your personal take on '*knowledge*'**

Alright.

**How long have we got? !!**

I'm you know, big into the knowledge and what use is the knowledge, you know...I have a belief that there are two types of knowledge:

1. The is a knowledge of '*know of*'....and

2. There is a knowledge of 'know-how'...though know-how will be the professional practitioner.....a person that will be able to put that knowledge in something, while... 'Know of' is more about a person being aware of something, knowing about something but may demonstrate or impart...I would see certain aspects of what I do that are important for the students:

- *Knowledge: Know of* ..where they can source different materials, so lets say they don't have to be a solicitor coming out of it...that's know of.
- Then we have the *know-how*, managers they need to have this. That's a different thing altogether.

**Do you think there is a hierarchy between them so?**

I would'nt because, some people might say well 'know-how' is more important, it's action and it's performance-based, but I think that *know-how* can also be a discipline of the mind. They would need to know like ....how do I develop a strategic plan?, how do I get this operation running?.

**In terms of your research is there anything that you are doing on this?**

By getting students to reflect more, get them to learn more. The difference in doing a piece of work, a project in class, then reflecting on what has taken place, the learning that has taken place in the class before they do it....so I think the project needs to be tied in to reflective, then they will know.

**So your research would be that you are more focused as a lecturer,since you started down this route**

Yea, Yea I would'nt have went down that route before

**SECTION D: CURRENT ISSUES IN IRELAND: RESEARCH & TEACHING IN IRELAND**

**Right ... a question here with two parts to it...it's to do with current issues in Ireland. A very brief thing here. (Have you) Any brief opinions on the current issues, on the current debate.**

I think mmm, certainly some research that you see, take Doctorates.. you may never hear of the benefits of the research. So I can understand when somebody's saying well, '*lets focus those*', because I do believe that there should be a requirement on the researcher. So I would say Yes, there needs to be more collaboration. For example I only recently found out that the framework that I am developing for (xxxx-Interviewee names them) is also done by (yyyy Interviewee names them), so there's the two of us being funded to do the same basically. Now we looked at where I had differences.... where I had four years research and I discovered that they were actually doing the same thing. I'm going down to a conference on the 15<sup>th</sup> that they're doing. They don't want to collaborate, yet I have the bigger amount of information to bring to them, fair enough but....

**Right, right there is an all-party report where that there should be commercialisation of research findings.**

No, well now I would'nt totally agree with that slant. Now I'm prepared to put a value on something because if we're conducting research on that then to me an outcome would be that changing how you might deliver on how you might enhance the education of someone then you get an indirect benefit to society, then the student, that individual, goes out in their lifeand that is adding benefit.

**OK so that's all on that..OK ,we'll bring it to the conclusion.**

-----INTERVIEW ENDS-----

## INTERVIEW NO 2 - BARBARA

We are talking about the Topic Guide which is the questionnaire as such for interview and it's just to get the feedback from the interviewee that she is happy with the content that was forwarded to her.

*I'm happy with that.*

That's OK.

## SECTION A :STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

### Question 1

OK so we're starting off as per the topic guide with student experiences of Doctoral researchers and the first question there...the first question is:

To what extent can the '*discipline or topic-specific*' research knowledge of Doctoral researchers impact on undergraduate students. And when I say this ... it's whatever your particular discipline is , whether its science, whether it's management, whether its maths...whatever, what do you think..influence that has on your teaching at a capstone level and then at any time in Years 1 to 3?. Do you have any views on it?

Well I think that my thesis topic is relevant to my teaching area. My thesis topic; 'XXXX' and that topic does come up in (Interviewee names Discipline area), so it's possible to make a reference to the actual material there. In addition to that on another course, 'XXXX' is actually mentioned on the syllabus so there is another opportunity there.

This year I started teaching (Interviewee names Discipline area), and in a video '(Interviewee names Discipline area),' that I showed some of the students, while interviewing, they give a section on the interview to how they manage work-life balance. So that's interesting and I think in my teaching for next year that mmm I will include that because people who are thinking about (Interviewee names Research area),

**Absolutely**

So I think that in terms of my teaching it's possibly a relevant area that can come up.

That's OK, would you differentiate we say ...between final year students and students in years 1-3, do you think it's of more benefit to we say students who are perhaps studying/doing a Dissertation or even students who are at a fourth year level who maybe are more advanced with the years experiences behind them, would you differentiate between the two?



*Mmm , it does come up at both stages of teaching of ...I think of the fact that it's mentioned here would help me more to bring it into my teaching but I think that in terms of perhaps the senior students they would have more experience and would appreciate the need for it more.*

**Yea, bearing in mind that alot of the students work part-time and are getting a flavour of working life**

## **Question 2**

**OK so the next question moves to looking at the research methods skills and it's just saying:**

**To what extent can the actual 'research methods' skills (so whether it was qualitative or quantitative research you carried out as part of Doctorate), how can those impact on undergraduate students in your opinion, again at final year level or indeed at any time in years 1-3.**

I think in both cases the actual research methods have a positive impact. Certainly doing the Ph D enabled me to refine my research skills and to discover, I suppose,... in depth the whole vast area of information that's there and help to access it, so I would be very quick to go to the journals on the website and pick up the journals in the library a a to look at what's topical, I think that's a habit I acquired, so for example, with some of my 4<sup>th</sup> Years and 3<sup>rd</sup> Years I've used up to date articles for example from the **(Interviewee names Discipline area)**, journal and other Journals in the library and I think the Ph D has made me aware of other journals, of which are the most relevant. I think also I have done a little bit of supervision of theses and obviously I will be doing much more next year, and obviously it's going to be of great help there.

**Yea, Again I suppose, would you differentiate at the final Year level or Years 1-3, do you think, is there any....you know, to what extent would those research..., the depth of those research skills that you got from your Ph D, can that have any influence on students in Years 1-3?**

Mmm, I think that in final year level, it has a very definite affect. In years 1-3, it is relevant mmm , it is relevant, and as I say I have classes in 3<sup>rd</sup> year and I am using Journal articles and accessing up-to- date information for the module on 'XXXX **(Interviewee mentions discipline)** and that it's relevant to there.

**Right, OK....so by it's nature, it's almost 'I have to be looking for new things' as well**

That's right

**And sourcing what's 'the next big thing' if you like, or whatever.**

Yes, but I think the Ph D has given me a facility and an ease for doing that and I suppose I know my way around.

**Right, right and that probably brings confidence in itself of the students in you because they know that that's ok.**

**Ok so, can I move on to question No 3 if that's ok with you.**

### **Question 3**

**Do your students know much about your research? For example, do they know if...when you were doing your Ph D, I should say...did they know you were doing a Ph D or what it was about or even today now that you are 'Dr Jo Bloggs' ...they obviously know that you have done a Ph D or a Doctorate of some description, do they know why you would have done it? Or have they ever queried you on it or...?**

Mmm, it does'nt come up very much and Mmm I might mention it from time to time, if it's relevant, but it does'nt come up alot.

### **Question 4**

**OK, Number 4, do you think any of your published work, it could be the availability of your Ph D, the actual text , which .some libraries have them available, your Journal articles, or any Conference proceedings or if you have written in any discipline-specific magazines, in anything...any of these published things . Do you think any of that work is ever accessed by your students or have *they initiated* a discussion about it with you, anything that you have delivered at a Conference, or any..papers or anything like that.**

I have mentioned a conference or two on some occasions when its been relevant to the lecture, and there are two students who have asked me a little more about it and or how you would go about that process....it's probably something I could initiate more.

**Right, right, are you happy enough to move on to the next question, ok**

### **Question 5**

**Do *you* get an opportunity to initiate a discussion with any of your undergraduate students, (either subject content or research activities) and in what ways?...is there any examples. I am aware that there might be some repetition there but at a level where *you* actually initiate it...I know you just alluded to it just there in the last question that it's something that you should do more of**

I do'nt initiate anything

**You don't initiate anything**

No, no

**In your experience...(Are you happy enough to move on to the question Number 6).**

### Question 6

**In your experience, are undergraduates ‘open’ to the idea of embracing the above in other words are they amenable to, you know, if there was a discussion...if you mentioned some Conference paper...or whatever that there is an interest, that almost a deliberate interest among them, as distinct from ‘well, this is kind of over our head, this is Doctoral stuff’ or is there ever?**

I think there would be an interest, yea

**Right, and have they ever expressed it?, is it in terms of building on your work ...or..is it**

Mmm, well I think it would be up to me to initiate the topic more and refer to my own research obviously.

**Right, right that takes us to question Number 7**

### Question 7

**Do you believe your research activities enhance the experience undergraduate students have of your teaching. If Yes, in what ways, if no why not?**

I think very much so, I have more sources of knowledge, mmm It broadens my perspective and it broadens the perspective of the students. It is much richer content and more up to date with trends, and more up to date with what’s happening and with current information and I think that knowledge is changing very quickly and I think that the research skills that I’ve developed do help me to keep abreast of trends and I would say it has a very positive affect on all aspects.

**OK, Question Number 8**

### Question 8

**Have undergraduate students reacted differently to you since you started or attained you Doctoral qualification.? So maybe just to clarify that, when you were...and again I give you this pseudonym of ‘Jo Bloggs’ versus ‘Dr Jo Bloggs’ Was there ever any reaction or difference amongst students towards you in terms of that they were asking you more questions or that they were curious about why you had become Doctor or how it all arose and what happened?.**

I did’nt know of any particular reaction, you know, a few people have asked me what my Doctorate is in mmm but the transition from being Masters to Doctorate went unnoticed. Well it went unnoticed to me, but not to them.

**Yea, exactly, exactly...I'm just wondering did you ever get any sense that and that's why some people take the view that and some Ph D people would say that more people sought them out as supervisors aaa because if that was a specific area of engineering for example that someone wanted to look at, and this guy had , you know, completed his Ph D and published some work on it....well that's probably where that question is coming from , you hav'nt had people seeking you out?**

Well I noticed that in the last a, (I'm in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year now supervising my Masters students), so somebody has asked for me every year, so in that sense since I got my Ph D so I suppose that's a positive development, and the other thing now that I think about it is that...and it's just happened in the last month, but a number of people have asked me about doing a Ph D including a past Masters student from the (XXXX Interviewee names) School and some outsiders based on my research profile in the DIT website.

**Right , right, yes**

*They are the ones who have contacted me.*

**Question 9**

**There's a question 9 there, it's over on the other page, if you want to skip to it.**

**In what ways might your research activities detract from your teaching activities with Undergraduate students, if at all? Have you ever experienced resistance or negative sentiment from Undergraduate students to the content of your research or your activities, for example an over-focus on the topic or the time allocation that you can give to the module content or even the time allocation you might give to the students.**

*Well first of all, I would like to say that teaching has to be an absolute priority. The first thing is the student and the preparation of classes and aiming to be a good lecturer and any research I do is any research I do after that, so in my case anything I do would be the exception to that rule and that's the way I do it.*

**Right,OK, right that's fine, that's OK.**

## SECTION B: RESEARCH AND TEACHING

### Question 1

And moving back to the final section if you like, there's a heading here research and teaching, and it's in some ways linked into what your response is just there now.

Judged from your perspective, from the perspective of an academic, can teaching and research be mutually exclusive or do you see them as being part of a nexus?, so in other words are they complete separate entities or do you see them as linking in, you know invariably linking in?

I would see them as invariably linked. Good research makes for good quality teaching and one feeds into the other so I would see them as linked

**Right that's ok, that comes to the next question.**

### Question 2

**Is it possible, in your opinion for the two of them to be compartmentalized /separate in terms of managing your time and practice as a lecturer. So is it ever possible that you Josephine Bloggs, you are a researcher this morning, you can have your lunch and you have to go to class for example, is there ever a sense that you would compartmentalize the two?**

I think there are considerable challenges in combining the two of them in the case of being a lecturer in DIT XXXX Street (Interviewee name work location). With contact hours of 16 to 18 hours per week its very challenging to find any considerable time to do much research. With the teaching load, particularly at the moment, I teach two courses at a Masters level and I do some supervision of theses and I teach two courses at 4<sup>th</sup> year level, 3<sup>rd</sup> year level , so , in that sense there is considerable preparation involved and so what I'm saying is with that teaching load, it's a challenge...to combine it , now I do get a little bit of input from time to time, but it would be very challenging to do that mmm as I say in the past I have presented conference papers and I am working on an article, its taking me a long time.

**I can well imagine it.**

But I am. However I understand that in the Universities its more compatible where there's less contact with just a few hours per week and you would be given time for Research.

**Well as interviewee Number three I can assure you that you are not alone in your sentiments. It's not uncommon that view that you've expressed. It's fairly common, just by sheer workload, by sheer virtue of the fact that you have sixteen hours class contact and the corresponding preparation that goes with it. And I suppose where I was coming from with the question was that is it really a question of where you have to park the research temporarily just to do the work with the class and maybe sometimes the research does'nt feed in because is that.**

Yea, yes , sometimes it does'nt feed in, there would be inconsistent input and then you would have to come back to it. But I'm hoping that as I get more familiar with the material that perhaps I will be able to do something more consistently.

## SECTION C : DEFINITIONS OF RESEARCH, TEACHING AND KNOWLEDGE

**Right, right, that's fine we're coming then towards these definitions and I know people have very different takes on them, so it's really just to get your personal take on these three areas and what research, teaching and knowledge are and we'll wrap up with a quick question on current issues. The first one there is:**

### Question 1

**What does the term '*research*' mean to you on a day to day level in terms of your practice?**

Well, research means keeping up to date with knowledge , with relevant articles, enhancing the content and making it topical, relevant and interesting to the student and having an enquiring mind.

**OK is that something you try to instil in students ?...in undergraduate students?**

Lets say I would in the advice I would give them about doing assessments and encouraging them to read , but perhaps I could do it moreso.

### Question 2

**Right ok, what does the term '*teaching*' mean to you on a day to day level in terms of your practice?**

Well teaching is drawing out knowledge from the students, building on the students knowledge with participative processes and to encourage as much participation as possible and mmm learning activities to help interactive learning.

**Interactive learning, right ...ok**

### Question 3

**And the third one, and I know we could talk about this one all day, but what does the term knowledge mean to you on a day to day basis.? I know it's a very big question, but if even if you can talk about it in any succinct way.**

Well first of all knowledge is a commodity that's changing all the time. We need to keep up to date with developments, there is the lecturer, but there is also the student input and I think it's important that the lecturer realises that they are not the only source of knowledge, that the student can contribute alot and can be a source of knowledge enrichment in the classroom.

**Ok, so you are into the whole idea of 'group-learning', or whatever else**

Yes, of course yes.

## **SECTION D : CURRENT ISSUES IN IRELAND: RESEARCH & TEACHING IN IRELAND**

Ok the very final piece here has got to do with current issues and I suppose where I'm coming from with this wrap-up catch all is in many ways the genesis of why I'm carrying out this Dissertation is that there has been an awful lot of discussion in the McCarty report last year and with the Department of Education saying that *'well we want value for money from lecturers across all universities and the Higher Education sector and we want to see alliances between different colleges and all that'* and I'm just wondering what is your view on this notion that lets say the Minister for Education is saying that lecturers should be teaching more and doing less research. Have you a view.

Well my view is that in my present situation I think that we're teaching alot and at third level it would be difficult to lecture any more than the sixteen to eighteen hours a week, so I do'nt think it applies to us.

**Not to IT's?.Maybe unlike the universities.**

I think that research needs to be encouraged and I note at the moment that there is little funding for the Ph Ds in the research and scholarship and the supports that were there before ar'nt there, and mmm time allowances ect and I think this is a backward step to improve the economy.To go forward there does need to be encouragement for research at Doctoral level.

**Yea and I suppose the final question on that and I suppose it's in some ways linked in, is that there is more of a demand now almost to commercialise the research to get more value for money, what's your view on that? Do you think that research should almost be commercialised?, or do you see any other value in it for we say Undergraduate students.?**

Well obviously

**Without it being commercialised?, you know.**

Apart from that research and knowledge has a value in itself, it has its own reward to pursue a topic and shed light on it and contribute something to knowledge, even though it may not have a monetary value, it does have other values.

**And for an undergraduate it could be things like Professional Development.**

Yea, exactly yes there are the different aspects like the development of the person, the contribution to the development of society, even though it's not be measureable in monetary terms, and advancement in other areas

**OK, OK that's fine. I'm happy to conclude the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?**

No that's everything, thanks very much

-----INTERVIEW CONCLUDES-----

## INTERVIEW NO 3 - COLM

Commencing the interview and it's just 11.45 on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March. It's Interviewee No 4 and just to clarify with the interviewee that (s) he's received everything in connection with the interview?

I'm happy, yea

Right so. Broadly speaking we'll take you through the topic guide and feel free to elaborate and give as short an answer or as long an answer or as short as you wish them to be.

### SECTION A: STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

So, the first area here looks at Student experiences of Doctoral research be it when you are doing your research or when you went into teaching first. So the first question is:

#### Question 1

To what extent can the '*discipline or the topic*' specific research of your Doctoral research impact on the teaching of undergraduate students?

I'm really looking for there is whether it's Engineering, Management, Science or whatever your *discipline* was as distinct from the *methodology* involved. How did it impact on undergraduate students?

Well my background is (Interviewee names Discipline area), so you are asking me did it impact from Year 1.

Yea, well capstone level is the final year what impact does it have on those types of student and if there's any difference and if it varies with the students in the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 Years

When you say the discipline, it's not the subject matter, but just the way I teach?

Well, sorry it is the subject matter?

Well I would say it would from apply Year 1 upwards.

Across the board ?

Across the board, yea.

Would there be any distinction between the information you would impart or share with 1<sup>st</sup> yr students versus final year students. In terms of....?



Well I don't think so because what I'm thinking especially about is (XXXX) – (Interviewee names discipline) which is my background. So I'd be giving examples to any 1<sup>st</sup> years who I teach XXXX as a subject.

And I would also have a module, an option in 4<sup>th</sup> Year so I would be bringing the knowledge that I have , you know all the way through.

**That's ok, that's fine, the 2<sup>nd</sup> question there is Question No 2.**

## **Question 2**

**To what extent could the 'research methods' skills of Doctoral Researchers make an impact on undergraduate students?**

**Again, I'm looking at the final Year level and any impact it has in the first 3 years for undergraduate students.**

Well again it's all the way through, from Year 1 for example Research methodology, referencing... would that be an example.

**Yes absolutely**

I would've just introduced that in the last year or two, so to make sure we're bringing it in to Year 1 so students aren't struggling in Year 3, so it should be a lot, so it should be automatic to them.

**As we know across all the faculties, its a common complaint that students are really clueless in many ways on things like that**

Absolutely, so I mean that's one example.

**So in terms of differentiating, and I accept your point that you've got to get them into a referencing habit early in 1<sup>st</sup> yr, given that you have completed a Doctorate, would you assist final year students any more, or in a heightened way, in a more advanced way, than you would first year students.**

Yea, I mean, what I do is through the options I introduce into 4<sup>th</sup> Year, so I'm using the knowledge I got through my Doctorate skills in setting up new Modules, so I'm writing new modules and trying to keep the course up to date, like XXXX (Interviewee mentions one of their subject areas) for example. I've just written a module on that and we're actually going through and we're working through it.

**Ok , so, and a lot of that is based principally on your Ph D?**

Yea, basically the skills that I've developed while doing the Ph D, the language. We had to be able to write modules, we had to look into details at things like.

**Right and in terms of the students gleaning those skills from you, is there any way that they can get more from you if you like, final year students for example get more than students students would in years 1-3, I suppose that's what...I suppose if you take for example ..at final Year level , a student has to do a dissertation**

Oh Yea, the level of understanding for the student has developed from Year 1,so you are able to give more in-depth information to the final year, based on their abilities...they grasp. Some of them would grasp it quicker than 1st years would, again like you're also talking about the age profile is a huge factor, I find because we are now seeing more mature students in first year , because they have a lot of the skills.

**Yea , thankfully, so hopefully it's a question of that there will be shared learning so that they will assimilate among the rest of the class.**

Yea, I mean the class dynamics has a big influence as well when you've mixed ages like that ...you know, I mean in the past we maybe could have one mature student per year on the ( xxxx Degree Interviewee names Degree), now we nearly have a group.

**That's right, you are right. I know from my own point of view I have the second year class at the moment and I'm surprised at the age-profile,...26 upwards and to 30 and even beyond and last year it was the same.**

So it makes ...you kind of have to tailor your teaching,

**Absolutely, yea yea.**

To try and hit them all.

**Yea, you're trying to hit the middle ground and you are and. Ok I suppose just before we move on to question 3, mm and I'll leave this research methods alone after this, is there you know, given that you have a Doctorate over versus someone maybe who does'nt have one, that the standards that you would have as Doctoral... say Dr Jo Bloggs we'll call you for anonymity purposes, is there a temptation maybe that you would have very advanced, by virtue of having completed one , that you would have advanced research skills that maybe that that could've been too high for we say Undergraduate students. I'm not saying.....**

Yea, I know what you're saying, but....

**Is there any temptation that you could judge people by your barometer, by your standard?**

Well you see when you've done a Ph D and you're a lecturer, you're kind of two things; You're a teacher and you're a researcher. So you've kind of got two hats on, so you should be aware that you're talking to a group of mixed people and some of them will 'get it' and other ones won't 'get it' .You can't be pitching it at your own level, you can't, then you're gonna lose x amount of the class.

**Yea yea, hopefully less than half... you're being diplomatic**

We won't go into that now!

**Right, then moving on, thanks for that, moving on to question Number 3,**

### **Question 3**

**Do your students know much about your research? For example have they any experience or knowledge of what research you've been doing or what it's about. Dr**

Well, you see I'm actually teaching **XXXX (Interviewee names her discipline)** as a module and even yesterday I was speaking to them about an article we had in the **XXXX (Interviewee names title of publication)** so it was about **XXXX (Interviewee names her discipline research area)**, so I was able to use that example in the class, to make it relevant, so yes, there would be.

**Right , right, so even in terms of student awareness, are they aware, have they ever said to you 'Oh , by the way Dr Bloggs' at there initiation, if you like ,have *they* ever said it to you as distinct from it coming from you?**

*Mm, not no, they would'nt have*

**Ok happy enough to move onto Question 4?**

### **Question 4**

**Do you think any of your published work, it could be the availability of your Ph D text, (some have them available in various Universities), or journal articles, conference proceedings or any of those things, is any of that work accessed by your students and again have *they* initiated a discussion of that with you, even if it was like that example of an article in the **XXXX (I name the publication which interviewees article was published)**, has anyone ever pro-actively come to you on that?**

Well yea, I have just a student started on a Ph D and when he was doing his 4<sup>th</sup> year thesis, he used one of my papers in his references. So as part of his thesis, but he would be in a minority now, having said that, so there is a certain group of people that will notice something , like a publication and they are the minority, not the majority.

**Well I think that, you are interviewee No 4 and that is not uncommon what you've just said, alright.**

**Ok the next question is question 5 and again forgive me if this is repetitive, but:**

### Question No 5

**Do you get an opportunity to initiate a discussion about any of your research for example (subject content and research activities) with Undergraduate students. And in what ways ...any examples and I know you've given the ones about the XXXX article, (I name the publication which interviewees article was published) mmm you know there's 2 two areas, there's the *subject content* which you've spoken about, and you see you are quite unique because of the 3 or 4 people I've interviewed and actually you say you deliver a research module.**

Yea, yea , that gives me a platform to hack my own work if I want to ..., but apart from that I have the module as I said on XXXX (Interviewee names her discipline) and my post-Grad is working with me on that and then the 4<sup>th</sup> year students are aware of the research work that the 4<sup>th</sup> Year student is doing because he's in the class, so they would and that's my latest.

**Yea well that's very good and it's great to get dissemination from another person as distinct from you doing it from on high.**

Exactly because they will probably talk to him easier about it

**Yea , curiously he has more kudos even though it's your work, you know what I mean.**

Yea I happy about that.

**So you are happy enough to let him go and let him do that, right?**

Yea, I mean I have two ways...that's through the module in XXXX (Interviewee names her discipline) and through the XXXX (Interviewee names her discipline) module that I can discuss those.

**Moving onto to Question No 6 , and it's saying...**

### Question No 6

**Are Undergraduate students 'open' to the idea of embracing the above and the word embracing maybe is the wrong one...are they amenable to you talking about your work..I know one could argue... 'they are students, they are there to do whatever module is going on'. But has there ever been a kind of resistance, maybe not a resistance but a scepticism shall we say among students that they say 'this is too heavy goin for us' or whatever as undergraduates?**

Mmm, No I hav'nt come across it but to go back to your point, it's rather me saying it than them. Mmm finding information and discussing it, but I've never had a resistance, because I think what I've been doing is applied work and they see the relevance of it.

**Absolutely, the one on research methodology because it's in their best interests to take *that on board* anyway.**

Yea ,they can understand, it's still in plain English , it's **XXXX (Interviewee names her research area)**, so it's not pitched way up here up into the whole chemical meta-physical side of how we found it out, we just talk about the end results.

**If you're happy enough we'll move on to question No 7**

**Question 7**

**Do you believe your research activities enhance the experience undergraduate students have of your teaching?**

Yes,... No. Well I'd say yes because through the research activities that I do I meet a whole new set of people and I get them in as guest lecturers for example ,which I have done and the students benefit from that.

**Right so they can see what's happening.**

So I had somebody in who worked with **XXXX (Interviewees Research area)**, who was the founder of it and I've invited the founder of it over to the college , he gave a talk in the college about two years ago , about, in 2008. And aa

**And it's huge stuff to have someone who has that depth of knowledge**

Ah yea, it was great, this was the founder you know

**Right and was that somebody who was outside the country, or whatever?**

Ah yea he was (**Interviewee identifies speaker**) So one of his post-Grads, he just finished his Ph D has come to Ireland, He's come to work in Ireland, so I got him in to do two of the units on the module and the students were really interested in it.

**Yea so it was a good *coup* alright.**

Yea and he's at the heart of all the latest developments so it's great.

**OK, so, no...why not?, does that feature at all?**

No

**That's fine.**

**There's a question No 9 as well overleaf, so we'll come back to that, so question No 8.**

### **Question No 8**

**Have undergraduate students reacted differently to you since you started/attained your Doctoral qualification? Now this may not apply to you given that you've finished. If you can cast your mind back, were you teaching when you were doing it?**

Yea I was actually teaching in XXXX Street (**Interviewee names College**) in the other XXXX School, (**Interviewee names school**).

**Oh right, when you were actually doing it?**

While I was doing it

**After you had completed it if you like, was there any difference? Like when you were Josephine Bloggs and again ...and say it's the first Semester of the following year and you had become Dr Josephine Bloggs, and it's not to try and put the halo over anyone or get the pedestal out for you. But just, certainly there is in the research (and the reason why I ask you this question is that I can actually show you, I've the file in my office over there... is that a lot of the research says for example that students one of the phrases that's used is that they *reflect in the glory* or whatever of calling their lecturers be it Doctors or Professors or whatever and '*basking in the reflected glory*' actually is the phrase that's used.**

Oh really!

**I can show you the article, so there you go, does that make you happy?**

Yea? super!

**Go ahead, make my day**

Well you know, it's funny because you never realise yourself what people are thinking about you? So I mean I would'nt be aware of it, that they're looking at you differently because you have a Ph D or something. Unless somebody actually says it to me, which they do'nt tend to do .But aaa, but I take your point because I remember somebody wrote a book on doing a Ph D and being a supervisor and they interviewed the students of the supervisor separately and the interviewed the supervisor separately and they had completely different views of each other. You know, they were'nt aware that one thought the student was excellent and the student was sick of the supervisor and thought he was useless. But I mean I'm sure it goes on all the time.

**It does yea.**

So I would'nt be able to answer that unless someone made me aware of it and came up and asked me that.

**That's fair enough, I ask the question because it's based on the literature, if you have a few idle moments next year I will happily show you my Dissertation**

Yea, I'd be interested.

**You can look at the references, it's just interesting, but I suppose if you're saying they'd reacted differently I will just ask the finished question, for example, were they asking you specific questions on your work or activities or did they want to collaborate in research ect, you mentioned that with one Undergrad student ect, but was there ever any other situations?**

Well, I suppose if you put it like that actually, yea I have had students who just ...like I did'nt go looking for them, they came looking for me. So maybe that's one way of going that route.

**Is that like seeking you out maybe at third year level, if they're interested in a particular area**

Yea, there would be. It's like when they are starting to think about doing their thesis. They're starting to decide on an area that they would be interested in. If they are going down a Business route or a Science route or the **XXXX (Interviewees Research area)**, route, because that **XXXX (Name of Degree in question)** is quite broad. So I suppose you know when they are interested in a **XXXX (Interviewees Research area)** area and they want to do a post-Grad, it's then they'll come looking for me alright.

**So moving on then to question No 9 then on other side of page.**

### **Question No 9**

**In what ways might your research activities *detract* from your teaching activities with undergraduate students?. Have you ever felt in any way....well I suppose that's the question I suppose.**

Yea well you see, that's one of the issues here I suppose in DIT. It's just the teaching load you know *and* research.

### **University is different**

Yes, it is and it is hard to balance them out. And give enough time and I always feel I'd like to give out more time to each. Yea and I mean we've had this conversation at various reviews and there was a Faculty review and it's not just me saying it, because this came up from anyone who was doing research, you know, that it was a juggling act. And it's very hard to balance it. Of course officially you have the holidays from 20<sup>th</sup> June to the 1<sup>st</sup> September, but you can't just walk out the door and say here I'm off now, so that just does'nt happen like. So yea, there is an issue here, but you do'nt get that in universities.

**Yea , in a University they may lecture for only four hours for example, four hours teaching and it gives them so much more freedom to...**

Yes and I mean they've plenty of time to put together proposals for research to get funding,

**es especially when demand is coming from *on high* that they are looking for more, but they still 'want their cake and eat it', if you like.**

Yes, exactly and they must be aware of the opinions and attitudes cos they've done it through reviews so , but yet nothings' done about it.

**OK just the second part of the question, have you ever experienced negative sentiment or reactions to the content of your research or other research activities, for example an over-focus on your topic and time allocation.**

No, no

**You have'nt.**



## SECTION B : RESEARCH AND TEACHING

### Question 1

**OK, judged from your perspective as an academic, can they... i.e. research and teaching be mutually exclusive or do you see them as part of a nexus (linked), so do you see them as two silos or do you see them as inextricably linked?**

I'd see them as linked, I mean there's something wrong if they are not linked, I mean it should be relevant what you're researching.....to developing courses, providing information. You know, things are moving on all the time we are developing new ideas, new technologies so if it's not relevant..there's something wrong there.

**Seriously wrong, ok I suppose where I'm coming from with that question is and its a follow through to this question 2.**

### Question 2

**Is it possible for research and teaching to be compartmentalised /separate in terms of managing your time and practice as a lecturer?**

*Do you like ever say 'today I'm Josephine Bloggs and I've a class at 12.00-1.00' for example, 'I'm off from 2.00- to 3.00 and I've class 3.00- 4.00. I've now got these two hours off or I've now got two hours off' and say 'right ,I've now got a patch, I'll grab a quick bite of lunch or whatever and I'm gonna dedicate that to research, I'm gonna switch the button off and become a teacher.*

Yea, that's basically what happens, Yea, because you can't say to you class 'I'm busy with something can you wait like. If you're timetabled, you have to be there.

**Yea, that's your job.**

Yea, that's essentially the job, that comes first really, that's what you're getting your salary for. So you can't just, that has to get priority, you can't just, you can't leave a class full of students sitting here. So yea it's a bit... that's an issue, as I say, so the summer is the time you get freedom to think and look up literature and go to the library and...

Yea, get a bit of mental space. Yea

#

## SECTION C : DEFINITIONS OF RESEARCH, TEACHING AND KNOWLEDGE

**OK, the final three questions here in this section and then there's one wrap-up question at the end, just briefly and I know it's hard to be succinct about some of these definitions.**

### **Question 1**

**What does the term '*research*' mean to you on a day-to-day level, you know in terms of you work practice?**

Research means to me , just finding out more information about something, whatever, so whether that's through literature or speaking to people or going to conferences or making links with experts in a field. Mmm that's what I would think.

**Right and the next one there, the same.**

### **Question 2**

**'*Teaching*' in terms of your working at a day-to-day level and you work practice, what's your 'take' if you like?**

'*Teaching*', I suppose to me means imparting knowledge to students. So whatever way you can do that and the best possible way I suppose is through lectures or practical work or demonstration, so passing on information and being able to communicate it in such a way that the students can understand what your speaking about and that they've actually have learned something at the end of the class.!which is'nt made easy!, but you've succeeded if it's done.

**Yea, humble as humble an objective as it seems, it does'nt always happen, you know.**

No, it does'nt.

**Right the final one there, and this is '*how long is a piece of string?*':**

### **Question 3**

**What does the term '*knowledge*' mean to you at a day-to-day level.? And it's a bit of a philosophical question to be asking on a wet Wednesday morning.**

Right, 'knowledge', I suppose ... the gaining of information or processing information so it's something new that you didn't know already.

**Right, ok. So do you see it as a building block thing or do you see it as an erratic thing ?, that's happens now and again and there's space where there's nothing learned?. I'm just thinking from the perspective of an Undergraduate.**

Oh from the perspective of an Undergraduate, well you see that depends on the Undergraduate student.

**Right so, very much so.**

It depends, are they hungry for information?. Are they looking for it or are they just passive and they've learnt something new?..fine and if they do'nt....that's fine as well, you know...it depends how open they are.

**Right, ok how open they are.**

## **SECTION D: CURRENT ISSUES IN IRELAND: RESEARCH & TEACHING IN IRELAND**

Ok that's fine and we'll wrap – up and it's really just to why I have these few issues thrown in here and it is a kind of a 'catch-all' little area here and it's really the genesis of why I'm doing this research because there is a big debate with Batt O'Keeffe, well he's now the former Minister for Education, after yesterday. Things have changed quickly, but there's himself and there's the Mc Carthy report, the Colm Mc Carthy report last year which was basically saying that there's not enough teaching being done, right.

It goes back to the heart of the fact that we were speaking about earlier on, and it's the genesis of why I'm just looking at this whole area, that there's not enough being done. I know in DIT we are doing it, but in other colleges for example in Universities they are doing maybe 4 hours as I said to you. I'm just looking for some of your opinions on that , I know you've already given me some of them, even around the area of alliances in colleges around funding. What's your opinion on that?

Well, I'm definitely in favour of that because I've worked abroad in colleges and when you see, remember Ireland is very small country.

**We tend to forget that.**

Yea, I mean we're just a drop in the ocean. Why are we all vying with each other?. You know we're not doing anyone any favours so we're all vying with each other for funding for similar type things, sure it's ridiculous.

**From a very small pool of funding**

Yea, we'd have a much stronger, I think, this is my personal opinion...we'd have a stronger base and be able to get more expert in a particular area if, the funding came in alliances...and but and that's what's happening with Trinity and UCD, and Limerick and Galway, so that's makes sense...because we're such a small operator. I mean it's ridiculous if you look Industry...at the sugar companies, sure they ca'nt . Irish sugar companies can't compete... they've all shut down...it's the same thing.

**Yea, the principle applies in the research sector, there's no question**

Sure we're shooting ourselves in the foot if we don't do it.

**Yea, yea...yea...I think the phrase that's used is 'to harness the synergies' that they have, you know what I mean, to make the most...**

Yea and make the most it.

**Exactly of what's there. Have you any opinions there on what as said in the McCarthy report, just finally to wrap it up...I know you say briefly on it, but he's saying that '*more teaching, less research*'.**

Yea... well...

**From a National point of view even.?**

Yea ...well...I mean....and then you'll have government saying you need to be innovative, you need to be world leaders in innovation, but how can you be innovative if you are not doing the research?

**It's a contradiction**

It's a contradiction, yea ....and I mean ...you need to... were talking about knowledge. How do you bring knowledge and new information if there's no research being done, so there has to be.

**That's hopefully, ultimately where undergraduates will get the benefit**

Yea, exactly

**I'm happy to conclude this interview are you happy enough with everything?**

Yea, that's , I am indeed.

-----INTERVIEW ENDS-----  
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## INTERVIEW NO 4 - DAVID

**Just to clarify, this is interview No 4 and it's Wednesday afternoon and just to ask the interviewee a few questions. Are you satisfied that you received the participant information sheet and the topic guide?**

Yea, I am yea. .

**So basically, I am working from the topic guide and I'm starting off with a no of questions.**

**And really just to very briefly give you the genesis of where this is coming from, I was reading the Mc Carthy report last year and a lot of the information was talking about the balance between research and teaching and funding for all that. So I was coming at it from that angle and then a lot of the questions emanated from that , so you can be as brief or elongated as you like.**

OK.

## SECTION B : STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

**Right so, looking first at students experiences of Doctoral researchers, and I have here:**

### Question 1

**To what extent can *discipline or the topic specific* research knowledge of doctoral researchers impact on the teaching of undergraduate students?**

So, sorry, this is just my own research?

**This is just your own research as distinct from the *research methodology***

Oh right, ok.

**This is about the topic you covered, so how does that impact if you like on your teaching?**

On my teaching, yea...as such the specific topic because it was very scientific and lab based, for an **XXXX (Interviewee names a School Degree )**student, it does not really impact that much on what they would actually be learning, ok just solely from the knowledge, the conclusions of it can be I suppose broken down...and the bare minimum or the basics of the conclusions or recommendations given to them. But as such, anything to do with ....and as such, I know you say it has nothing to do with the methodology, the

type of research that it was the methodology used, those kind of areas you know were not...the students would not be able to comprehend at that level. If it was for a student who was an Undergraduate student from a XXXX (**Interviewees Research area**)degree, it would be more relevant, but for a XXXX (**Interviewee names a School Degree**) Degreee, it's not ...not necessarily that relevant, no. Now basically just, you know...mmm I suppose the background information to the topic that I covered...I looked at (**Interviewees Research area**) which is very scientific.

**Right, yes yes.**

But the background is to (**Interviewees Research area**) and all that, something that I did't really look into, but the general background to that does have some impact.

**Yea it would have, it would have**

But as such, the main, the main finding would not be.

**Would not necessarily be?, Well that's fine, that's not unusual of the interviewees I've had already, and I mean it depends, I mean that's not to say that you will be teaching those group of undergraduates forever. There could be a situation down the road where it could be more relevant.**

Yea, it could be some more...it has become, now I know we're talking about Undergraduates , but for Masters students, for some of the Masters courses I've taught. It has become a little bit more relevant for them, but not really for Undergraduate students.

**Yea, right right. So I suppose where I was really coming from with that was some of the research and I have a Literature Review here in parts where I can show you some of the quotes.**

Yea!

**Where a lot of the students would feel that, their lecturers... they are at the cutting edge, they are just a step ahead of we say a textbook.**

Right, yea.

**And that's where I was coming from. Could you be asked questions, "*well since this textbook was written in 2006*" for example...well hypothetically, "*if you finished your Ph D in 2009... Is there any advance in that*".**

Yea right, OK.

**Well ok, Well I'm happy enough with that ... to move on to Question 2, if that's ok with you**

OK.Right OK.

## Question 2

**To what extent can the actual *research methodology* of Doctoral researchers impact on Undergraduates again at a final year and in the Years 1-3**

Yea. Well I suppose really as regards the research methodology, the lab work that I undertook would not impact on them...ok however, you know areas such as recruiting subjects, the statistics used, the academic writing and the referencing, all of that would be absolutely fine for the Undergraduate students and impact on them, and would be pertinent to their research...you, it's like, it would allow them the same types of methodology or the same fora of methodology for a (**Interviewees Research area**) thesis,, we'll say

**Right, yes, yes**

But in a laboratory, because we simply don't have the facilities nor the money to actually do any of the laboratory work that I would have undertaken for my postgraduate, for my Ph D.

**So they may not reap the benefits of that particular thing?**

Of that, No...Yea, but they would of statistics...you know recruitment of subjects...mmm, you know 'inclusion/exclusion criteria', things like that, yea.

**Right, and things like that don't necessarily change.**

Exactly, yea.

**And I suppose where I'm coming to too is...you speak of the final year level, years 1-3 mmm,**

Yrs 1-3, mostly academic writing and referencing skills would be the most applicable really.

**Ok right, I'm happy enough to move on to Question 3 if that 's ok.**

Yea

## Question 3

**Do your students know about your research?**

**For example, do they know that you're doing it, or what it's about, or if they have, you know as distinct from being (As I've said to other people, I'm going to call you 'Joe Bloggs') right, as distinct from Dr Joe Bloggs. Has a somebody ever said... "Why are you Dr Josephine as distinct from Miss"? Has the question, has it ever arisen or are they quite pedestrian about it?**



The majority of the time they've been very pedestrian about it. However, you see now I teach at final year, I teach a module which is a optional module, so those students who choose to do, you know, to look at (**Interviewees Research area**) at the final year would be more interested and would've actually asked questions about my research, more so that any student that I would take in first year or second year.

**OK , right**

And the final year subject, the 1<sup>st</sup> yr and 2<sup>nd</sup> year subjects that I teach , introduction (**Interviewees Discipline area**) and another one looking at (**Interviewees Research related area**), so they are not really...what I researched would not impact on that / those subjects, however in final year we do go onto a little bit about different research.

**Right so you mentioned there...you alluded to that module right, specifically, mmm students who would be in final year, have they ever sought you out.**

Oh yea. In terms of supervision, yea, well then basically what I would do is I'd show them what a Ph D thesis looks like, usually mine, show them what a Masters looks and an Undergraduate thesis looks like and we'll just do comparison basically, it's then they tend to want to know more and they tend to want to understand what the Ph D is about.

**And maybe scare them off?**

We'll I suppose that's one way of putting, I did'nt think I'd scare them now that you've actually said that !!!

**There's gloom around the corner!, well that's fine, that's fine and I will probably just touch on that in a further question.**

Later on again,yea.

**Question 4 and 5, forgive me about this, but they are probably similar so we'll just cover the two of them together.**

**Question 4**

Do you think any of your published work for example your Ph D text, Journal Articles and you've mentioned it there is accessed by your students or have they initiated a discussion about it?

Again yea, final year they may. Now accessing any of my published work...rarely.I've never actually had, I don't think at undergraduate level that I've ever had a student come to me and say to me 'a look, I've looked at your...' ...now I've mentioned my own work, you know but I would'nt actually give them papers on it, nor would they actually go and source papers on it.

**Right**

Mmm post-Graduate level ...yea, but not undergraduate level , Yea.

**Right that's o**

## Question 5

**Question 5** there says do you ever get an opportunity to initiate a discussion about your Research ,do *you* initiate it?

I initiate it, yea. So normally we'd be discussing perhaps ...I don't know...something like **(Interviewees Research related area)** and then I will initiate that discussion about it and tell them some of the general findings which are'nt too scientific or too specific, you know. What I found, for example in comparison to what other researchers have found and what has been found since then, but normally I would initiate that.

**That's fine.**

I suppose really my Ph D was very specific, you know very kind of bio-chemical in a way. Ok, and you know, so students from the **(Interviewee names School Degree)**.

**They may not necessarily 'get it'?**

They don't get it really and you know you really have to break it down and make it very kind of simplistic, for want of a better word.

**Try and make it applicable to them in as much as one can.**

Yea, exactly.

**Right I'm happy enough with that, I'm happy to move onto the next question. I'm not trying to speed things up here.**

No no, You're grand.

## Question 6

**In your experience: Are undergraduates 'open' to the idea to the idea of embracing the above?, and where I'm coming from with that is some of the research and again its in the Literature Review here from the students perspective is that some of the students may sometimes feel... "right she's a professor or Doctor or whatever", right, and that your subject content could be 'OTT' if I could put it like that, for them.**

Yea Yea for them

**They may just be doing a 3 year or 4 year Degree or whatever. Have you ever met any degree of, maybe 'resistance' is too strong a word, but have you ever met people who will say 'God!...this is too much'**

Mmm Yea....!!!!All the time!!.

**Well I get it an odd time and I don't even have one of them things so.**

Well mmm, so basically if I went into great detail about my research, you know the Ph D that I did, then I lose them, I completely lose them.

**Right**

They'd literally blank out, but if I take little chunks and make it applicable, as you said, to what they're about.

**Yea, 'bite-sized'.**

Yea. Then it becomes a bit more interesting, and they open up discussions about it for example, they might have seen some of the **(Interviewees Research related area)** that I was looking at in my Ph D , they've started to you know, mmm **XXXX** industry have started to make **XXXX products** of them, and they'd start to noticing these in health food stores and chemists and stuff.

**Of course, yea in that regard.**

So that kind of, you know ...we talk about it in that regard.

**Of course yea...there's been an explosion of, there's a real burgeoning growth there in that area.**

Yea , that really, more so than the exact specific Ph D itself and what I did and you know why I did it kind of thing

**Yea, which is fair enough , I mean ..yea that's fine. Right Question 7**

**Question 7**

**Do you believe your research activities enhance the experience Undergraduate students have of your teaching?, and I suppose I'll let you come to me on that now, I'll explain then.**

Mmm , sorry I'll have to read the question again....Mmm both Yes and No.mmm

Yes, with regards to when new products come out on the market in this area, in this industry, then yea we can actually discuss them and I can actually tell them of an example of the background of what I actually did when I was doing my Ph D, you know the benefits, the adverse affect ect, the metabolism how for example..., I know now this is a bit specific , but how **(Interviewees Research related area)**.

**Yea, well that makes sense, yea.**

And they can relate to that, ok

But then again *No*, that they can't relate to mmm, I suppose the **(Interviewees Research related area)** which is really what I was looking at. So I can't really go into specifically what I was looking at. I kind of have to skirt around it and you know the general health benefits of it, the reasons why you would take it, I suppose the reasons why I did what I did, not how I did what I did.

**Ok , right, right that's fine. And it probably links in here with what I have and I just want to look at :**

**There's this idea, this notion that we're all urged to do, which is *dissemination of knowledge*, as such be it a blog or whatever, and if you've a blog that you can have a '*community of practice*', this sense of communal learning, that's students have, that's probably more where I'm coming from...is there's ever that sense of '*inclusivity*', that they feel a part of it.**

Well in class discussions, now I don't have a particular blog or anything like that, but in class discussion.

**None of them do, only one person so far, this is number 5, only one so don't worry.**

Right great, I don't have, but in class discussions we do a lot of discussion about topical issues for example, Mmm, it might be something like **(Interviewees Research related area)** or something like that ...topical issues that are out there at the moment, general issues and then we can kind of relate back to the whole area of **(Interviewees Research related area)** which is what I was researching, can relate in to that, because it's fact really because it **(Outcome of Interviewees Research)**, because there's a big push on in trying to promote it.

**Of course**

Because it's full of anti-oxidants, so it can relate into that and there can be a general discussion about all **(Outcome of Interviewees Research)** into it ok , so then again I suppose really one of the problems I find with class discussions and what not basically is just the time aspect. The timescale, we just don't have enough time. I just don't have enough time, which is probably why a blog would be an excellent thing, they could just log on.

**Yea it (time) is an inhibitor, it's a barrier.**

I find as well that Undergraduate students, as such at final year level, yea, they are interested but for Years 1 and 2. I don't teach Year 3, I'm kind of basing this on the **(XXXX Interviewee names School Degree)**.

**Yea, that's ok, that's perfect.**

Year 1,2 and 3. They're only kind of getting into the grasp of things by 2<sup>nd</sup> year, you know they're becoming more interested. They're starting to read the newspapers and look at the news and see things.

**Yea there is a degree of maturity coming into it**

Whereas in Year 1, I could try and start a discussion and maybe only two people in the class would actually join in the discussion.

**We all have that, glazed expressions!**

Yea, yea, the rest of them are only just waiting for the clock to go basically.

**Ok that's fine. We'll move on to question 8 if that's ok with you.**

Yea that's fine

### **Question 8**

**Have undergraduate students reacted differently to you since you started or attained your Doctoral qualification?**

**And I suppose if you could go back and re-wind to when you started your Ph D , how long were you working here before you went from being Jo Bloggs to Dr Jo Bloggs?**

Right ok.mmm I think, basically, I started here in 2002, I graduated the year after I handed in my Ph D,so I must have graduated in 2004, now it took me a while to write up so I kind of had a year out from writing up, so it took me a while.

So now, did students react differently, No, I don't even think they knew I got a Ph D.

**OK, well that's fine. It's just from the students perspective Chapter in the Literature Review,, one of the things they say...in case you think I'm making it up or being conceited, it says here:**

*“In a view mentioned earlier by Healy, some students perceived clear benefits by having a Ph D lecturer which inter alia included the reflected glory of being taught by nationally and internationally known academic”.*

Ha ha, Could you believe it!

**So they are basking in that glory, right, it gives increased credibility and it's validation for them if they have registered for a Degree and they can say that I was there andthere was so many Doctorates there, that's where I was coming from. So from the student perspective, did they feel any way re-assured?. Or was there anything about it ,or did you get any sense of that? That's all, and that's it....I'm not making this up.**

Yea, you see I don't get any sense that they feel any more or less, you-know re-assured, well having said that , you know one of the things is I am the only (**Interviewees Discipline**), teacher in the Faculty, so they hav'nt experience of anybody else,

**Right, so there's no comparison,**

Yea, there's no comparison there. Now having said that, there used to be another (**Interviewees Discipline**) teacher and I do remember (s) he used to teach a kind of more Certificate level student and I do remember the Degree level students were not very happy when they got them at one stage, but I think that basically was a kind of a thing of you know, she was aiming the lectures towards a Certificate level maybe.

**Right, right.**

That was the only thing, but that had nothing to do with my qualification

**Right, that's that ...that's fine...it just to say it's not based on thin air,...mmm...that's fine there's Question 9 on the other side...it's supposed to be here...I don't know how it got there. Right.**

**Question 9**

**It might be a bit repetitive again, but it says:**

**In what ways might your research activities detract from your teaching activities with UG students ...and again there's some literature here we can go through them, but maybe from your own point of view, could you...**

Well I suppose when I was writing up my Ph D, now u see I had finished the practical work on my Ph D when I started here so... that was fine, but when I was writing up my Ph D it was very time consuming, and it did mean a number of trips to different conferences and it meant a number of trips over and back to London. My Supervisor and everything were in a College over in London, so I suppose it kind of detracted from some of my teaching in that I had to cancel some of my classes and rearrange them to suit..

**Right, right, so short-terms sacrifices.**

They were short-term sacrifices. That was writing up, but now in terms of supervising, if you supervise Ph D students now, it takes up a lot of time. It does take up a lot of time and you just don't really have time to do both, I feel, you don't have enough time to start mmm putting mmm applications together for research funding, while teaching at the same time, particularly full-time teaching.

**Yea, it's one of the big complaints with this binary system with the Universities on the one hand, with the Universities within the HEA and the IT's , the Institutes of Technology , that we seem to have a much heavier teaching load, and it's a bit different for me because I'm not actively involved in research, but for somebody who is...you know , you hear stories and I think it's very true , that in say UCD a lecturer might have three or four hours**

Yea exactly and the rest of it is dedicated to research, yea

**So it's not an even playing field.**

Yea, exactly. And I find as well, I suppose, you know just with the way we've more and more students coming into lectures, that come Christmas that's when it comes to correcting exams and correcting assignments. You're talking really about a whole block of two months where you know, I find it takes me a lot in to December to get the assignments done. And then you've Jan and you've the thing...and you're talking about a block of two months where that is your sole purpose, is getting through that. I have to say to my Undergraduate or my Ph D student, who's now just finished, Thank God, but Masters students even, *'I won't be able to see you really during those two months, those two months are kind of literally you have to kind of work'*.

**They're 'blocked off'.**

Yea blocked off, you have to try to work yourself, because otherwise you can't get through it, because it is a bit unfair that you're expected to do so much research, yet have such a teaching load at the same time.

**Yea, Yea....they would keep it even it's hard , it is hard. Yea where I'm coming from with that question is and again I mean from a student perspective, the students of researchers would say there are four benefits, one of them we've spoken of which is this idea of cutting-edge discipline specific knowledge of the Ph D holder with the research specific skills they bring...they inculcate a questioning and enthusiastic approach to learning and the other one is *'they bask in the glory'*..**

**But, some of the drawbacks, and I mean you can tell me if you think (maybe like) may touch on the drawbacks, so one is that it's discipline-dominant , so if there's a syllabus to be covered that the Ph D holder may be tempted to reflect too much on *their* area.**

Yea on their area.

**Yea, another one is, and you mentioned it, the non-availability of lecturers to students, that was one of the things mentioned**

Yea, well that would specifically arise around exam time, when assignments have to be corrected you know at that time...I find that very difficult to actually allocate enough time to a student , because really with Undergraduates at thesis level, and I think my colleagues above will say the same you're not talking about an hour a week, you're talking about two hours per week , per student basically, it's a lot of time.

**It huge.**

It's huge. and I mean if you've three or four students, it's six or eight hours per week and its difficult to allocate enough time to students , you know, especially around Christmas when their thesis is due in at the end of January.

**Of course, it's a primary time when they need it.**

Yea, when they need it, when you are correcting exams and correcting assignments. Like I just found now last term, cos I had 120 students on one module on Monday morning and that was just one module, that's a lot of assignments, a lot of exams, so it was just very difficult. I just had to sit my students down and say , like my thesis students...like X, Y , and Z has to be done by the beginning of December, like look I will I'll look at it, I'll edit it or whatever, but I won't be able to give you two hours of my time each in January.

**OK, that's fine and I suppose the corollary or the other side of that is, as you said, when you are writing up that you didn't get time to give to teaching as much.**

Yea, exactly, Yea Yea.

**So that's mentioned there and one of the things that's said here again, one of the drawbacks is that research is favoured to the exclusion of *Teaching* of Undergraduates and there's quotes on the Boyer Commission ect on that. That's ok, I just wanted to know is , the final thing is mmm. On this particular question is the sense of 'ownership', I'm just coming back to it , do you ever get a sense that students would like to '*latch on*' to your particular studies or is there ever any?**

No! Absolutely not. No student ever at Masters or Ph D level. As students, it's not an area I didn't think that they would really want to get into. They usually come with their ideas of more topical area. Things that they would see as being more topical in the media and things like that would be mostly. But my specific area, because it was so (**Interviewees Discipline**)...it was laboratory –based and kind of doing nasty things to people, they don't really want to know about it.

**They don't. Taking blood, It doesn't really enthuse me.**

It was'nt just blood!, it was other

**Ok, moving on swiftly, just looking at research and teaching there.**



## SECTION B : RESEARCH AND TEACHING

### Question 1

**Judged from the perspective of an academic, can they be mutually exclusive or do you see them as part of a nexus?.**

**Like do you 'park' them individually, or do you see them? What's your view on that?**

Mmm. From my own research again, basically they can be I suppose they can be lined if you are teaching an Undergraduate Degree that is specific to (Interviewees Research Area) or we say specific to medicine...right, something like that. One of the health Sciences really. However for Degrees that I teach here...there's because those Degrees are kind of ...more Arts Degrees, you can't really link the research that I, You can't I suppose, you can't really link them they are kind of mutually exclusive, yea...

### **Exclusive, in your particular case**

In my particular case, yea...mmm the students that I supervise however...you could, there would be a link between those and you could actually you know allow even UG students take on part of a Masters students work and some areas like that, there might be specific areas like that, but definitely for the students that I supervise, Yea, they can be linked but from my own research that I did, it would be mutually exclusive.

**Right, that comes to the next one.**

### Question 2

**Is it possible for the two, research and teaching to be compartmentalised in terms of managing your time as a lecturer?**

Sometimes, and where I'm coming from with that and where the Literature is saying it is, that maybe at management level you are almost timetabled in that way, *"we're going to give you, well hypothetically...if you have sixteen hours in your contract...that eight of those are going to be for teaching and eight of those are going to be research, right?"*

Right.

**Again is it a sense that when it comes to managing your time that you say: ‘right I’m now researcher that on, put that on...walk out the door...cross the corridor...hat comes off...I’m now in teaching mode’.**

Yea, mmm I would agree with you really, Well it depends really. I find here that when I start doing research or perhaps doing a little bit of sitting down with students or whatever, mmmm I, probably and this is my fault really, you constantly kind of constantly being rung or e-mailed or someone comes in and you to do X,Y, Z , there is’nt a specific...I find I can’t allocate specific times to doing hands on research, getting into labs and things like that, now I can just come to a meeting where I sit down with my students and sit down with them and then I can insist that there is no interruptions.

**And that’s blocked off?**

Yea, that’s blocked off, but its mostly my interaction with the student whose actually undertaking the research that’s actually blocked off.

**As distinct from you going in on you own??**

Yea , as for me going into a lab....forget about it, like you know...you just would’nt get the time basically to do it. I just find that teaching seems to be the priority here, really...teaching...that’s what I find in this School.

**Yea, yea, it’s true, well I suppose it’s just by virtue of the fact that again it comes back to cutbacks and there’s not the teachers there to do it and if they have somebody there to do it well that’s it.....which is contradicts if you like the whole mission statement of DIT. Even I remember some years ago there was actually an audit some done on the whole research in the Faculty, and the Faculty document in the Directors Office office basically talking about research, I think it was some Fulbright Scholar guy did it some years ago and that was one of the big things that emanated from it, where the people said there had’nt got that separate , insulated time if you like to do that and I suppose that’s where I was coming from.**

## SECTION C : DEFINITIONS OF RESEARCH, TEACHING AND KNOWLEDGE

**Brief explanations/perceptions of personal 'take' on 1-3 above**

**Just two areas left and ... brief explanations of these and then a look at the current issues in Ireland so. Are you happy enough to move on to that**

Yea Yea

**I'm mindful enough that these are probably deep enough questions so.**

**Question 1**

**What do you understand by *research* and ect...just what your 'take' is on it on a day-to-day level. It does'nt necessarily have to be a definition that's full of hyperbole or anything.**

Well ,yea, I suppose for me research. I came from a science background so for me research is a scientific investigation, you know, you're in a lab, moreso that social science and what I've actually found is that mmm since I've started here, my, the research that I supervise is more social science and I do'nt come from a social science background, because I came from a scientific background so there's, it was a big kind of shake up.

**Oh God , yea**

Yes, I found it quite difficult initially

**Yea, very frustrating to try to change**

There is'nt the money there basically to send students into labs, I mean even to do something very simple like look at the vitamins and mineral contents of a slice of bread...we do'nt have the money there to do it. Nor do we have the facilities really, I mean you're competing with the XXXX School, you know for facilities and things like this so for me the term research, you know ,I suppose ,deep down in my heart the term Research means scientific investigation, you know of a problem or an area.

**I see, so it's very concrete. Yea, yea, because this stuff that I'm doing is very kind of tangential , it's you do'nt have to nail it as much.**

Yea, whereas, I suppose, I want facts and figures at the end of the day.I mean '*we took this blood and we analysed it this way and this is what we found*', so yes, feeding somebody on this does reduce cholesterol or whatever, you know...that's like I just want your start and your finish and I can tie them up very neatly, but that's had to go off since I started here.

## Question 2

**OK, alright, the next one there is on a day to day level. What does the term 'teaching' mean to you in terms of your practice?**

Yea, so I suppose when I'm teaching what I try to do is, it depends again on the module that I'm actually teaching. So some of the modules may be on very Introductory modules which may be very basic...it may be very basic '*here are the facts ...that's it*', ok.

The modules that are taught at Year 2, Year 3, Year 4 those look at translating really the research that is there, translating it into a format that is understandable for the students. So, taking the facts and figures and I suppose mmm, developing those, extrapolating those.

**Extrapolating those I suppose to something that's meaningful?**

Exactly yea and that relates to things that they can understand and extrapolate those to common day occurrences like **(Interviewee talks specific research area)**

**Yea, I heard something about that on the radio recently**

Yea, so things like that, extrapolating those results and expanding on the knowledge that they'd have got at introductory level and making it more informative really.

**OK, right, right**

**Mmm, again the next one there, knowledge**

## Question 3

**What does the term *knowledge* mean to you? An interesting one, I'm sorry for asking this!**

Yea, I was trying to think of this.

**Right, if you want to skip it!, anything at all you have on it??**

No, I suppose I was thinking about this for a while and I suppose knowledge for me is, what it means for me in terms of what I do is trying to get a student to understand the facts or the results or the phenomenon or how the phenomenon occurs. How come this **(Interviewees research area)** if you want to talk about knowledge of **(Interviewees research area)**, what causes it , the background to it , so understanding the background to it and the consequences of it.

**The consequence, when you say the consequences, would you be talking about how they would apply it in real life ?...or**

Well yea, for my subject definitely, they would have to learn how to apply I suppose (Interviewee names Degree area) to the (Interviewees research area).

**Right, because where I'm coming from with that question is that there's a big debate that goes on about 'knowledge for itself'. This broad-based philosophical thing that it should be, that it should'nt necessarily be that one can go out to Intel and become almost the Training department for the Company or whatever. So do you have any view on that in terms of knowledge that could be *applied* or just knowledge for the sake of somebodys brain being developed or their whole self.**

Yea, well for nutrition, you know, nutrition modules are ...nut educ you do need to have the background knowledge that you can just go in and you know what a vitamin is, you know what a mineral is , but then you need to be able to develop that on to actually be able to apply it to real life. So to be able to actually tell someone in real-life that you have high cholesterol, this is what you should be able to do to. Or to be able to go out to a School and teach, you educate children in a hands-on manner rather than just writing on a board, you know...chalk and talk, in a *hands-on* manner on how to example cook, how to modify recipes to make. I don't know... something like lasagne healthier or whatever. And you know we have a module which is coming on line next year with the (Interviewee names Programme area), which takes the two, takes the theory and the practical and moulds them together, so that the student can come out and do that. They will know the theory of (Interviewees research area), what it is, what causes it, how to treat it, they will actually be able to go and come out at the other end ...and have the whole, the whole scope.

**Right, excellent, the whole package**

Yea the whole package, so I suppose for me that's what knowledge means to me. It is yes teaching them, chalk and talk, drilling , this is what a vitamin is and that is a matter basically repeating over and over, repetitive teaching them that. But then they can actually come out at the other end after 2 yrs or 4 yrs whatever it may be and say well this vit, vit D is needed for this , this is what you get it in and this is how I incorporate it in foods.

**Right, but there's also this notion of know-about and know-how-to. Yea , so you getting that that's fine.**

Yea, I suppose what I would want from students at the end of 4 yrs is that they can educate someone else, so that they could teach both theory as you said and how to apply this in a real-life situation.

**Right, fine, fine that's ok.**

## SECTION D : CURRENT ISSUES IN IRELAND: RESEARCH & TEACHING IN IRELAND

And the final area then is just to look at current issues in Ireland, and a lot of this stems from the Mc Carthy report where ...he's probably a bit of a 'hate-figure' where he was saying last year that wastage across the public sector and he was of the view that being 'an insider' in UCD he probably hurt a lot of academics and he was saying that there is probably not enough time given to teaching and I'm just wondering if you have any opinions on that ...on that whole area about research, you have on one hand as we were saying earlier on this strategy of whether it's the smart economy, more research, more Ph D's, the Value Chain they talk about and all that. But he would say we need people in there teaching...what's your view on that?

I feel that too much time is given to teaching, for me that's most of my time actually. Most of my time is teaching, and not enough time actually, if I wanted to do some specific research there's not enough time for me to actually go and do that. Now yes, I could go and get undergraduate students to do a bit of research but mmm.

### **But it's not a substitute**

Yea exactly mmm, getting in Ph Ds and Masters students, well mostly it's Ph D students who you would look at, or would want to look at specific areas that I would want to look at, you know. And that can be very difficult. I find that if I try to get funding or anything like that ...it's near impossible.

**Yea, yea.**

Or unless you're applying with a colleague who already has a known reputation for funding so the money basically aspect is a huge hindrance

**Of course, and that's where an awful lot of it comes back to. I would just like to ...there's a quote here from which I would just like to exemplify. There's a quote from a guy in Trinity who says that 70% of the revenue comes from the undergraduates but that not enough time is being given to them and that's why I was just asking your opinion.**

**#**

Yea, well I think maybe you know myself that I'm the only **(Lecturers Discipline)** lecturer in the Faculty, so if I have over a couple, if I have...like I could have over a couple of hundred students over one Semester basically, and because last year I corrected over 280 exam scripts, that nearly 300 students taking **(Lecturers Discipline)** modules, you can't dedicate time to all of these, you know, if each of them came to you with problems.

**Of course, clarifications with assignments.**

You would'nt be able. You can't you know, so the fact that we're down people, you know there isn't enough people recruited basically...we've lost people, they are not being replaced or whatever. If I get ill for example, there is nobody there to replace me, to take up the slack, there's nobody there to actually take my lectures . I find that a huge hindrance and then most of my time is teaching. Now what they've started to do in the different schools, the three schools is....is just pile all the students together. So you end up with lectures of 120 students, so that like a three hour lecture basically with a 120 students in it and it's my big problem.

**Yea, it 's almost mission impossible.**

Yea it nearly is, but there's nothing you can do about it.

**I suppose, if you look at HRM , HUMAN resource management, you're a resource in the sense that you have this specific area and I'm sure that you would have been mmm promoted or recruited on the basis of doing a Ph D, yet when they have you here, they are not actually using you?**

Yea, exactly, friends of mine who did PhDs or who finished them the same time as I did , most of them would now be in a University situation, particularly in England, they are mostly involved in research, they find it extraordinary the amount of teaching that I do and that I do hardly ant research, really . And the research that I do supervise is mostly Undergraduate or Master level. So they think that that's really unbelievable.

**Bizzare?**

Bizzare, yea

**Right ok, just a final thing there in terms of strategic alliance with colleges, and again it comes back to the Mc Carthy report, where he was saying there was too many people in this country of 4.5 million that the whole college/collegiate community of researchers that there were too many people doing the same thing.**

**What's your view on giving up something of what you're doing to let somebody else do it or?**

Mmm. Yea I suppose personally, the research that I did myself was very novel, was very unique right. mmm the research that I supervise, particularly (**Interviewee names research student whom she supervises**) research is completely unique, it's one of the first studies in the world, nobody else has done the same topic, so it was like you know, mmm...Would I have liked to hand that over to somebody else.?, is that what you're asking me?

**I do'nt think so!!**

No. I know for example (**Interviewee names research student whom she supervises**) external examiner was very interested in getting his name on paper, but I would'nt be happy with that at all. I suppose you get a bit possessive, particularly if you have put a lot of time and effort into it.

**Of course, naturally enough..**

Mmm, I suppose the nature of research where I came from anyway with a scientific background of research on a science level, on a scientific level in labs ect...research is supposed to be novel in nature anyway, supposed to be unique. Unless you are testing somebody else's working, but normally you are supposed to be like building on basically, adding on to that area and it all has to be unique and novel, so mmm

**Well that's ok, that's really it. Have you anything else you'd like to add?**

No I'm trying to think here..I don't think so James.

**I'm very happy at this stage so, thanks....**

----- INTERVIEW ENDS-----



## INTERVIEW NO 5 - EUGENE

**Just a few questions: Are you happy that you got your 'Topic Guide' with the information explaining what the interview's about?**

I am, I've read it all.

**You are satisfied you received everything?**

I am indeed.

## SECTION A: STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

**Moving on to the first question, the experiences that students have of Doctoral researchers, before, during and after, if you like in your case.**

### Question 1

**So to what extent can the '*discipline or the topic*' specific research of your Doctoral research impact on the teaching of undergraduate students? .(So at the final year level and years1- 3).**

Well I suppose the first thing I was thinking of was that there is... even though a Doctoral programme is discipline specific, in that you can become an expert on one area, it is very hard on my end to complete a Doctorate without developing a broad knowledge and sweep across a whole load of areas. Because you have to be able to cover a whole load of areas to be able to be absolutely totally confident in your one specific area. If you know, your whole research area might be quite specific, the whole process of doing a Doctorate really opens your brain and opens your mind and your reading to very broad categories. So, in that, in thinking about that question, I don't think you are limited to the fact that you are discipline-specific. You are discipline specific to an extent in that you are expert in an area at the end of a Doctorate, but having gone through a Doctorate, it means that you are actually very well read and so it gives you an idea and the capacity to be able to talk about a huge range of issues.

**So, would you differentiate between how you would talk about those issues with final year students at undergraduate level *versus* students in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year?**

I suppose mmm, I would. Again it all depend on the students. You would imagine that the discourse you could have with the final level students should be much broader, you know, you would imagine that. Now the thing is, most of my teaching is actually at 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Year level. At 4<sup>th</sup> Year level, I do a number of theses and that sort of stuff, and standing on some seminars on (**Interviewee names Research area**) and stuff like that

and what I've found is that I am able to throw a lot of these ideas at them because you have read so much. No matter what topic comes up, that you are able to identify the key writers in those different areas for them to look at. You throw things at them because I've read so much deeper that they have, do you know what I mean.

Again at Year 4 where I've had that experience, you'd expect at year 4 that they would have read much broader, do you know what I mean. But I have found that even at Year 1, that I've found that you can give them good solid, concrete examples of things. You actually put the students, you put the interested students, they actually go and 'hunt out' those names that you give them, do you know what I mean. They read them up and they come back to you, do you know what I mean....now other people...it just goes over their head.

## **Moving on to Question 2**

### **Question 2**

**To what extent could the '*research methods*' skills of Doctoral Researchers make an impact on undergraduate students? That, as distinct from the topic. You know methodologies, interviews, the whole thing.**

Well again, that would affect, well you know I don't teach research methods as such. But that said, we have in my teaching, *I have I have gotten much stricter in the last two years, particularly in getting people from Year 1 to reference, and while that's not necessarily linked with the Doctoral thesis, I'm not sure how this links in except to say, the reason I make those point is "listen guys, if you do this from day 1, you're gonna save yourself an awful lot of trouble"*, because that has been my experience. If you learn to reference right from the beginning, it saves you alot of hassle. We're starting to do that and I suppose some of that is from my own experience and I can give that concrete. I can say, *listen guys, if you do this from day 1, you have the references, everything you read, make a note of it. Make a note of the page as well*". That's a key thing which I drill into them now...which page, so that they can back to it and say "*where the hell was that*", do you know what I mean.

**Well yea, you've probably been that soldier yourself so.**

Yea yea yea

**You mentioned there that you supervise dissertation students , so do you find that, do you find in that strict sense that your Ph D helps?**

Oh, it would do, Yea because to be honest, I'm much more comfortable in my own understanding of methodology now....you know, than I would have been when I started teaching. Research methodology is actually one of those things that's actually quite

straightforward, but can be complicated by people. You know, your first, the whole idea, you first take on it can be very complicated.

**It seems huge, yea.**

Ah Hermeneutics and you name it!, I mean and even trying to understand the difference between one and another, it's it's, I think when you have a good enough rasp of it yourself, you can de-mystify it for the poor student and let them get on with the work of doing the research instead of actually tripping up.

**Yea.**

### **Question 3**

**Do your students know anything about your research? For example...do they know that you're actually doing it?. You know...We'll call you Jo Bloggs, so you were Jo Bloggs and then suddenly last year or whatever, two years ago you were 'Doctor' Jo Bloggs.. Is the question ever asked of you, "How come you are Doctor Jo Bloggs? Or even when you were doing it, was there ever any curiosity from students? Did they ever ask?**

Ah yea, I mean, I think the students were fairly aware of what I was doing. Because I suppose one of the things, one part of what I was doing anyway was sort of linked with my teaching. It was, you know, in with (**Interviewee names research area**), or it was about this sort of stuff. So it was linked in with the sort of stuff I do. So I used to bring up 'Findings', I used to bring it into my teaching, Number 1, so that they were quite aware of it. So what I have found now is that since my Doctorate was finished, it's been available on 'Arrow' on the DIT, and it's been up there for four months now and I've had over 419, yes I had an e-mail with 419 downloads for it, so I know it's being read internally and externally which is very good.

**It's heartening.**

Yea, not just that but other publications, like Journal articles that I've done, published conference proceedings and that. I would mention them in college and I would find that some students would go off and read them and come back and have said "*Oh, I like that what you said about*", or would refer to your paper, you know what I mean. Which is interesting, which is nice, you know. And you can say "*Ah well if you like that one, you can go off and read the other one*", and then you get a, you know what I mean....

**Yes, so there is a degree of dissemination.**

Yes, there definitely is, there definitely is.

So that's fine. So there's this notion that I have that's part of the literature review here that you, maybe you heard it before....that in some ways maybe students ...one of the quotes was *"they like to see their lecturers name on the library shelf"* or the phrase they use is that *"they bask in the glory"*.

Yea Yea.

**So for them, it gives them an affirmation or validation that they made the right choice in doing this course or whatever because they have the experts in the area.**

Yea, well we do that. I mean recently, one of our graduates has just won a **(Interviewee names Schools discipline area)** competition, so the two biggest competitions of the last year, they're both basically graduates of the programme, and I tell the students *"Guys, look, someone who was sitting in your seat or standing there five or seven years ago is now"* and that sort of thing gives them affirmation, that they're on the right course. It gives them confidence that you know...we know what we're talking about, as you say...being published, your name up there. You're on the 'tele', if you're in the newspapers, you know...they feel *'Yea. This is someone who knows what they're talking about'*. You know.

**So, I'm happy to move on to questions 4 and 5**

**Questions 4**

**Do you think any of your published work, it could be the availability of your Ph D text, (some have them available in various Universities), or journal articles, conference proceedings or any of those things, is any of that work *accessed by your students* and again have *they* initiated a discussion of that with you?**

**We more or less discussed that.**

The definitely do.

**That's good.**

**Questions 5**

**Do you get an opportunity to initiate a discussion about any of your research, be it the content or the research activities with undergraduate students?, in what ways? Any examples. I think you've alluded to that really.**

Yea, I would to be honest. I would discuss it with them quite frequently. Quite frequently I would bring it in to my...whatever the subject is. I would discuss it with them and tie in with something else and try and make it interesting. Yes.

Again, forgive me if there's repetition, Question 6.

## Questions 6

**In your experience, are undergraduate students ‘open’ to the idea of embracing what you are doing? You know, is there ever any...I’ll put it like this...**

Yea, I know. Is there a boredom “*here he goes again*” factor. Mmm, I know. You know, I think the majority of the students are really interested and actually benefit from it and the fact that quite a few have gone off and read the stuff and actually bring it into discussions and you actually feed off them. There are some that you can probably see, mostly the younger age group, the ones that have’nt really grasped the idea of college yet, you know...you think “*Ah here he goes again*”, you know what I mean.

**Yea, the glazed expressions.**

“*Is it another war story*”, you know what I mean. But I think they would be saying it no matter what you are saying, to a certain extent, do you know what I mean.

**Yes, there’s that cohort**

Yea, there’s a cohort who have not really grasped the idea of what a University is about, it’s not school. It’s about learning about as much as you can, it’s about grasping as much knowledge as you can. It’s not just about ‘*getting through*’ and passing, you know what I mean, so, but a

**OK because I have there...the focus, the ‘OTT focus’ on your own stuff.**

Yea, I know. I mean you can get that. Sometimes I find myself, I do find, I have found myself....you go off on a tangent sometimes because you are so interested in what you’re doing and you have to remind yourself.

**To put the brakes on?**

“*Put the brakes on now here, he says..we’re getting carried away here, but this is not really what we’re meant to be doing here today*”, so, you know what I mean.

**Right so, that’s fine, that’s not uncommon, a lot of that comes out in the Literature Review.**

**The next question is:**

## Question 7

**Do you believe your research activities enhance the experience undergraduate students have of your teaching?**

**Yes, in what ways?. If no. Why not?**

I think there is a yes and a no.

- The ‘yes’ is because I am definitely more confident in myself in my knowledge. I’ve got much more to give the students in the broader sense of learning and I like to have those broader discussions, what I would consider to be third level

discussions as opposed to pure vocational training, you know what I mean. That when we're coming in to discussing something, that we're able to link it in with other things and other elements. Whether it be Art, whether it be in Science or History or whatever, so very much so in that perspective.

- I think my, I don't, as in the quality of my teaching has improved because I know more, but the quality of my teaching has disimproved or got worse, so the students have suffered in the way that I hav'nt had as much time to prepare for my class and to organise my classes as I had in the past because I am so pre-occupied, or had been so pre-occupied with my research. So literally, an awful lot of what was happening was, I was going on autopilot...because you knew your subject so well or you knew your class and you give the same class a few years in a row.

### **You go in, do your gig?**

You did your gig, you did it as well as you could. You did'nt....when I say "*a well as you could*", you probably did'nt do it as well as you could. You could probably do it much more because in previous years you would have spent more time, .. "*OK. .What I have I got tomorrow.O K. How am I going to approach it?, What will I do first?*", You know, and you plan out your class. Whereas I found that when I was doing my research, I did alot of it on autopilot, now do you know what I mean, so....

**Well that's not uncommon, so.**

So I must be honest on that.

**Thanks very much**

I must say that I was lucky, one of my colleagues helped me out an awful lot. She would put in the paperwork, you know we would have to put in the **(Interviewee mentions discipline lab requisitions)** and stuff like that since we shared the same module. (S) he used to put in **(Interviewee mentions discipline lab requisitions)** for me as well, which really took the pressure off me and let me away to concentrate on my research, you know what I mean.

**There's this notion of 'Communities of practice', you know what I mean, you know and again we're back to dissemination and how you get the information 'out there', be it via a blog or whatever. Do you have any such initiatives where students might gain in that way?**

Mmm, not in that way. What I do propose with them...one of the things I've been involved with for the last ten years is the **(Interviewee talks about School/Discipline activities)** and something like seven out of the last ten years, I've given papers and I've had them published as part of the symposia.

I have always encouraged students to look at those proceedings, encouraged the students to attend those symposia. Starting last yr, there was a grant and an award, a scholarship to go there and last year, two of our students went and I'll propose other students to go there this year. So in that sort of way, there's that sort of linking with them, you know what I mean, plus linking in that we bring students on field trips, one thing that I do as part of the field trips. One of the people I link in with as part of the **(Discipline-specific)** symposium, she's the current Chair of it. She gives these historic walking tours so walking tours of Paris, so there's links in there and then they see her name in the library, in the books in the library and the restaurants we bring them to, you know they are really in the top places.

**Right, and a lot of that would emanate from the knowledge you would have from your Ph D area as well??**

Some of it, yea yea yea

**So we'll move on to Question No 8, again question No 8**

**Question No 8**

**Have undergraduate students reacted differently to you since you started or attained your Doctoral qualification? In what ways, if any...eg asking you specific questions on your work and activities, wanting to collaborate in research ect.**

**I suppose really on that last point, have you had anybody coming to you asking you to collaborate now that you are Dr Jo Bloggs. ...do they want to hang on your coat-tails , or ?**

Yea and, I suppose there's two questions in that. The first is Yes, people have reacted to me, the students have reacted to me slightly differently, they do see that particularly 1<sup>st</sup> years. They do see a 'Doctor', plus the fact that when I got my Doctorate there recently, it was in the newspaper, so it was quite public and the fact that it was the 1<sup>st</sup> of its type in Ireland, plus they seemed to be ...a bit like your earlier question, they seem to take great pride in that. I remember that actually one student who put the photograph of me that was in the paper up onto her blog and said... "*this is my lecturer*", do you know what I mean

sort of thing and ...that sort of stuff ... do you know what I mean. Even in the 'Open Day', some of the students, I remember one 1<sup>st</sup> year was telling potential students I had two Ph Ds, you know, really blowing my trumpet, this sort of stuff. No there is certainly, there is a certain sort of respect there and the fact that they're going off and reading your stuff and saying 'wow, *Jesus, that's amazing*', and all this sort of stuff. There's been a growing no of people coming to me now, more so Masters students , more so people who are interested in doing Doctorates themselves, who now have someone within the field who's done it, who want me to supervise them, you know, so that I've two students, two who're with me at the moment who are looking to start next September and I've a third student who's really interested in coming but we'll see how things go, you know what I mean. So suddenly that's a ...and these are really good people, top-class people, really interesting people and we've got them on to really interesting subjects, which you could talk about a community of learning and a community of practice and that sort of stuff in this area of **(Interviewee mentions Ph D research area)** you know what I mean, it would be great....you know

**Yea, excellent, ok so that's that sort of covered.**

**Question 9 is , there is a small degree of repetition, but coming from a different angle...**

**Question 9**

**In what ways might your research activities detract from your teaching activities with undergraduate students?**

**I know you alluded to the fact there that when you were doing it, there could have been a degree of autopilot, and things like that. Was there any other ways that it could have detracted from it? Did you ever get negative sentiment from an undergraduate student in the context of research or for example...as in an over-focus?**

No I've never really had that problem. Well I think I've alluded to it that once or twice you could find yourself going off on a tangent , so you would have to realise just... "*listen I'm going off on a tangent here , lets' get back to what we're doing*", but at the same time, you see I believe in the broader learning anyway so even if you are going off on a tangent....

**It's liberal.**

It's liberal learning...and that's very important and once you're not discussing something that's of absolutely *no* value...you know what I mean ..., but mmm,

**Yea that's fine, I'd just like to look again it's part again of the Literature Review that there are endless area where students would see benefits, but there are also areas where students would see drawbacks...right?**



Yea

Now, I asked you first, but I will just give you four of the areas...where the drawbacks may be. Now just maybe:

- *discipline-dominant*, the issue you alluded to, you spoke about that, you could be tempted by that .

- *The aloofness*, that you may not be available, you may be on sabbatical or whatever.

Well that would be true in that I would'nt have been as available as I would have been in the past, as I did a lot of my research from home or I'd be in the library down **in (Interviewee names institution where s(he) did his Doctorate)**. So I would'nt actually be on-site, so if some student came to see you for a question or something they might never ring you or e-mail you, but had you been there they might have had a word with you , you definitely were not as available as you had been, so, that would be true, that would be voluntary.

**And the other one there is that research is valued at the exclusion of actual students, so maybe there would be a temptation that if you had a Ph D, if I came to you and said , 'I want to do a Ph D something similar to what you have done'**

Yea

**That maybe**

You could spend too much time with them??...Yea, yea. No I don't think ...I could see how that could happen. So far, it has'nt happened in my experience so far it has'nt happened, I'd like to think that I would look after them all equally to a certain extent, you know what I mean.

**And again....this is not me...it's the literature, I'll show it to you here.**

Ah no, no, I believe you , yea

**And the final thing there is that there's a degree of ownership there, and it comes back to ....that they may feel that it's something that high flutin, for 1<sup>st</sup> years, that they almost feel that this is ...**

That there's too much??

**Yea, that's where I was coming from with that.**

To be honest, I can't answer that because it's only the student that can tell you that.

**Right**

And I do know for a fact, and the thing is there's quite a few mature students, not necessarily mature students, people who are well focused. I know that I've a lot of students in 1<sup>st</sup> Year who would'nt be very interested in what I'm doing and what I talk about, naturally they'd be ones where it would go over their heads and I have mentioned that already, you know.

**If I could just go back there to the next section with the heading Research and Teaching**

## SECTION B: RESEARCH AND TEACHING

### Question 1

**Judged from the perspective of an academic, can they be mutually exclusive or do you see them as part of a nexus (linked)?**

**Would you ever be, with your hat on here... ‘*Mr (s) Researcher*’, and you walk across the corridor a bit and you are ‘*Mr (s) Teacher*’, or do you see them as inextricably interlinked, can they ever be separate?**

I don't know, it's...I'm not sure exactly what you're asking, can they be 'mutually exclusive'??

### **Are they separate ?**

They might, this goes back, like one of your first questions here was like: What do you consider to be research, what do you consider to be knowledge and what should I consider to be learning? And like, to me no matter what you're doing, whether you're teaching, your constantly engaged in research whether you know it or not. You see every time you teach you're re-learning and re-questioning what you're teaching as such, or you should be. If you're a good teacher in my eyes anyway, you know what I mean, you should never take...I would never take anything as fact. The fact is something that is a moveable feast depending on latest research sort of thing, you know what I mean.

### **Yea, when people state things as ‘*fact*’ sometimes...it's their promulgation of the facts.**

So, one of the things I always instil in our students is to be constantly critical...you know...reflectively critical of whatever they see, hear or read. You know what I mean, including what I tell them, you know what I mean, that I am there as a facilitator of learning. You know that's my role really, you know you're not there as the teacher as such but as the facilitator of learning. So I always tell them that we're on this learning path together. I don't have all the answers. I'm not here to have all the answers, we're in this...so mmm...., I think so ...you are always engaged in research. The difficulty is when you're actually engaged in research where you are doing a Doctorate or Masters or write research papers, it's specific to your research subject, so it takes time and you have to go off and do it so it's difficult to try and work that in with your teaching. I was lucky, I got four hours off my teaching schedule and I got some of my hours linked in which freed up two whole days, so it meant I had those two days plus another two days at the week-end plus my time, do you know what I mean.

So you do need periods of time to ...sometimes you are only getting yourself back into the research and it takes you two hours to get back into it where you're at, you know and you really need blocks of time. You need full days...you know what I mean...you really need full days.

**That's right, that's fine, that's what I wanted to establish and I see the next question is linked in.**

## **Question 2**

**Is it possible for research/teaching to be compartmentalized/separate in terms of managing your time and practice as a lecturer?, that's what we've just spoken about , like you do need as such..**

Yea, I think you need to split up. Even if you're going to do researching and teaching you know what I mean. You need to get your teaching on certain days and block off a certain period of time for your research, you can't have an hour here and an hour there, it just does'nt work, you know what I mean.

**Then coming to this other part, and this idea of a nexus, when they are linked, you were saying that you'd go into the class then and hopefully draw on**

Sorry, sorry, when you go into class?

**When you've completed your...say you've been off for two days. Your research, right!, You've done your research, you've blocked that time off...Monday and Tuesday, hypothetically, right... you come in on Wednesday to teach, do you see that there's a link....or is it do you see when you're in there as a teacher is it 'get in here, get it done'?, that's my question to you.**

I suppose it depends on your attitude to the teaching, do you know what I mean. I think you know, as in...I enjoy teaching,...I enjoy research, but I enjoy teaching, I don't know if I would ever like to quit teaching and do research full-time and I don't know if having done research, if I would just like to teach full-time. I think even though I always want to keep going as a researcher, (I've finished my Doctorate now), I'm still writing new projects and putting new articles together,...nothing to do with my Doctorate like, new stuff, you know

**Yea!, new projects?**

Yea so you know what I mean, so mmm

***Right...that's, that's ok***

So into that aaa....does that answer your question?, Can they be compartmentalized or do they , I mean some people who don't necessarily like to teach and might find teaching as a way to do their research, ... and there's other people actually love teaching who don't like research at all and find research a pain, and it's something they do because they are looking for permanency or looking for a promotion., you know what I mean. They've a reason for doing it like that...you know what I mean. I found it more of a hobby than anything else, I found that it became my past-time. My research became my past-time. So instead of watching Champions League soccer or something, like I was up...

**Yea, it becomes habitual...it becomes part of the everyday...that's fine**

**That's fine, that does answer the question, you answered it precisely, as I wanted.**

## SECTION C : DEFINITIONS OF RESEARCH, TEACHING AND KNOWLEDGE

### Question 1

**On a day-to-day level what does the term “research” mean to you on a day to day level in terms of your practice?**

Ok well, research is, what research means to me is that you are always in a constant state of research in that every time you are in pursuit of clarity, more knowledge...and you know...to confirm what it is you do know, sort of thing, every day in everything you do.

That's how I ...you're constantly questioning the status quo, you're constantly questioning; what it is we know?, what it is I know?...what it is?...is the perceived state of knowledge?

**Right, and hopefully you can inculcate that into the students**

And that's what try to I inculcate in them always,... is to be constantly questioning , so that it is what's it...believed ten yrs ago may not be believed now or may not be believed in five years time. It might be totally different so you are constantly figuring out. And I love simple things.... Like say I'm into singing songs and stuff like that...and I was at a ...so “*Kelly the Boy from Killane*’ ...*he’s the pride of the bold Chelmalires*”

**The ‘Clancy Brothers’...**

I had no idea what the Chelmalires was until last week I went to visit the Agricultural Museum down in Wexford, and it's a Borough, it's the area around Wexford town.

**Yea. I remember it's in Fr Murphy as well is it**

Oh Yea, I think it's in Fr Murphy as well, or else you've these other areas as well...other baronies...is it basically a barony in Wexford....

So I would be constantly, no matter...everything I hear,...if there is a new word that someone says or I see in a book, I'll go and check it out in a dictionary. Or I'll ask them, if I hear someone say...I won't be afraid to say ... “*sorry...what do you mean by that now, what word*”.... do you know what I mean?, because I feel I'm never afraid to ask. and I always try to inculcate that into students, so that's what I understand by research. You're always doing research, you're always trying to improve or increase your understanding about life, you know.

**Yea, yea so that's it.**

So that research could be formal like you do in a library or a thing or it could be informal research.

**Yea like part of the everyday.**

Is it, that's part of the everyday?...You know what I mean, like 'eureka' moments, reading newspapers, listening to the radio or watching the tele..so you're constantly researching, you're constantly learning, yea.

**Ok that's fine, the next question there, again as part of the everyday.**

**Question 2**

**What is your understanding of the term "teaching", what does it mean to you on a day to day level in terms of your practice?**

Yea, the teaching, again the teaching is a way of, again we alluded to it earlier on, you're really focused in on the idea that you're a facilitator of learning, that teaching is really a facilitator role of learning and part of that is whether it's with students here in the college?, or whether its with children at home, whether it's with the crowd I teach football or camogie to, you know what I mean...so that you're constantly trying to instill in them a will to improve their learning, you know what I mean.

**Right, where I was coming from with that question was that there's often this dyadic way of looking at it. One form could be the transmission model, the other one is the one that you've mentioned there, which is the facilitator one and you're geared towards the facilitator one.**

The facilitator one, very much so...yea, yea.

See, I used to believe that, as in, historically I always felt, it was just since we did the Degree ourselves and then started teaching based on that Degree we had done, that is that you realize that, 'No, we're not there to know all, the font of knowledge that you pour it into someone', that it's more a joint venture to actually both improve my learning and their learning, together ....you know what I mean ...as opposed to me being the expert and pouring it into them.

**Ok, so it's not the pale of water and you pouring it into them.**

### Question 3

**OK, and finally and this is it, on Tuesday afternoon, asking them for..... their interpretation of 'knowledge', yea, in the everyday?, now I'm not looking for a high fluetin one**

Yea, no no and whatever I'd be saying would be based very much on what....we've been talking around this for the last for the last while. Knowledge is ...knowledge. I remember, I think it was **(Interviewee names a colleague)** who said that something like this...if someone says 'she's an expert on **(Interviewee names a Discipline)**, or something' and she says...

*'Well, I'm an expert enough to know that I will never know enough'....*

### **Excellent**

And, I think that that's actually a lovely thing to do with knowledge. Is those that are truly knowledgeable, know that they could only, in all their life, they can never, even if they spend all their life working on something, that they'll only ever grasp a part, a fraction, of what is possible to learn, you know, it's really about having a certain amount of humility and realizing that you're never really going to know it all, but realizing what you do know and actually not being afraid to being open to admitting what you don't know, because you'll never learn something else unless you admit you don't know it. I think that's one of the key things,

### **That's right.**

And that's why, I think that's one of the things I mentioned earlier on. If someone mentions a word to me or something in a conversation, I'll actually stop them, I won't pretend I know it, I'll stop them and say to them, "*will you explain to me what you mean by that word, i'm not familiar with that word*" or whatever, you know what I mean, or you know ...and sometimes what you find is that people might actually be using a word in a wrong context as well, you know what I mean, but at least there's clarity or whatever and I think if you're confident in yourself, in your pursuit of knowledge as opposed to being a...mmm...I suppose...what's the word I'm looking for....uncertain in your knowledge, if you're uncertain in your knowledge , quite often you're afraid to ask questions.

### **That's right, yes.**

Whereas if you're more certain in your knowledge, you'll be more open to ask questions and you know what I mean.



**Sometimes....there was a book written some years ago by a psychologist and she said ‘Feel the fear and do it anyway’, so you may be rejected or made to look like a fool but take the risk, and ask the question.**

Yea, I try and instil that with the students, I throw out words there just for the crack...they’d be words that I’d be using because I’d try and increase the discourse,

**Yea, yea,**

You know, but what I do is if...two minutes after using that word, I say...‘*now, would you like to tell me what that word I mentioned two minutes ago actually means*’?,

**So ‘why did you all agree’?!**

And, why do you all.?..., because if you don’t know, then I’m sure there’s twenty other people here who actually don’t know. “*Now, is there anybody here that actually does know*”, then you’d have a bit of a discussion and then you’d try and instil...so then you’d have a bit of a discussion, and you’d listen. If there’s anything I say that you don’t understand, stop me and say ‘*hold your horses there for a second now*’, you know what I mean, and the same with anything.

**Right, that’s ok...that’s fine. I’m happy enough to move on to the final piece, is that alright?**

Grand, yea.

## SECTION D : CURRENT ISSUES IN IRELAND: RESEARCH & TEACHING IN IRELAND

**This is really just a broad sweep, it's just one or two questions. The current issues in Ireland, really it comes back to the genesis of my doing this. The Colm Mc Carthy report last year was saying that purely from a financial point of view, that UCD and places like that, that you had people maybe just lecturing four hours a week for example ...and that they spent the remainder of the time doing research and that Undergraduates were not being, you know, given the value (if you like) of the learning and of the skills and all the body of knowledge that the Ph D people have. So I mean do you have a view on that, where do you come down in terms of teaching versus research and the split, what way should it be?**

Again, it comes down to whether you like to teach and whether you don't or if you like to research and whether you do'nt ,

**I think I get a few different answers from different people...that's why, I was just wondering.**

Yea, I know...what you do is. I think you have people who are teaching who are not teachers, and even though they know loads of stuff, and they are experts in their field, they are very bad communicators. They cannot necessarily communicate all the depth and knowledge that they have. There's other people who might know half as much but can communicate it much better, you know what I mean.

**Yes**

So some people make great teachers, some people make great researchers. Some people can do both, but the trouble is as in my problem at the moment, is that you know...there was a movement within the DIT for the last ten years, seeking University status. Most members of staff were promoted, not promoted...but they were *encouraged* to further their qualifications. I think, you know, a huge amount of people went on and have done Masters, have done Doctorates, or even went on and have done base Degrees that they never would never have had if they had come from the trades, you know what I mean, which most of us do. There was no Undergraduate Degree in what we did to start off with, but I think what's happening now, is that and those who have got a taste of it and who have begun to publish, and that sort of stuff, that now, you know, I've found last year that suddenly funding was cut on me. I was'nt allowed go. As in, No 1, I ended up going to conferences on my own expense and giving papers on my own expense, which I think is absolutely appalling!.

**Yes, yes.**

You know, Absolutely appalling, so here you have...

**Yea it seems to be out of measure with the mission of the Institute.**

Yea, so there's a real issue. So it comes to the stage where I have developed a habit of research and a passion for research, a habit for publishing and a passion for publishing. But suddenly if...the current policy goes on where suddenly you're not going to be supported in that pursuit, then you'd be a bloody eejit to keep going with it..

**Out of your own 'phoca'!**

Out of your own 'phoca', absolutely.

**And the final one there is this idea of the binary system where in theory you have the Universities here on one side and on the hand the IoT's . There is a predominance in the Universities of research, and there is in IoT's, for better or worse, a predominance of teaching.**

**Do you have a view on that , do you think there should be, what's your view, do you think that the Institutes of Technology should continue to be preparing people for jobs?, now I know every college should....do you understand the question?**

Well, I think one of the problems is this, is that we're in an IoT at the moment here, right. Some of us are involved in research and basically we're being hampered, being expected to be researchers like our colleagues in the Universities, yet our workload is four times the amount, alright, so we're expected to sort of do both things. Now, you can't stretch things that far, and I think within the.... within the ...the strength of the IoT's quite often has been in teaching, because historically we come from a sort of craft areas.

**Vocational?**

Vocational learning and education..and that's great, but what you do need, is that you do need, in my view is that there has to be some flexibility. That there should be some research positions within the IoT's and teaching positions. You know what I mean, so that you are joint positions.

**So a delineation between the two?**

So that you could have, ...like say that there is someone who is just full-time teaching, if that's what they like doing and they have no interest in research or stuff...they could do maybe say twenty hours, right!, Someone who's really into, who likes to teach but likes to research as well might do ten hours. Someone who purely likes to research might do 5 hours, you know what I mean. That way, they will always have some of the thing going on , some teaching of knowledge.

### ***Dissemination***

Dissemination or whatever, or whatever, whereas there is'nt that flexibility here. You know.

**The final question, right...it comes back to this idea of Institutes of Technology and preparing people for vocational jobs right. And it comes to this notion...and it's often discussed, of a liberal education versus preparing for a job. So we could be like almost be a branch of a training department...of a hotel..right...what's your view?**

Yea. My view on that is this, is that I find that unfortunately there is very few , within the traditional Universities...that have...you know, there's very few traditional University courses that are actually about liberal education anymore, anyway!...to start off with...that's Number One

Number two is that, I believe that on the main course that I teach, which is the (**Interviewee names a School Degree**), so it's a liberal arts degree, so even though it's a, (**Interviewee names Schools Degree**), we'll say, I'll take the liberal Arts approach to it. So in my teaching with them, even though I'm teaching practical subjects with them, I'm linking those subjects in with the liberal, with philosophy, with art, with history, with you know philosophy, with these things.....you know what I mean....I'm linking them in ...always.

### **Right, right**

So, and I believe that's important, because I believe that you're trying to develop. You're trying to develop people, you're not training, you know, you're not training. I don't believe the day here is that you're training someone to do a specific job. I think you're trying to educate people so that they can actually develop as people and that they can take , they can move on because the nature of work is gonna change. It's constantly changing, you need to develop people that are gonna be flexible in their learning, open to learning, open to continuous questioning ...improving ...all that kind of stuff.

**So in a way, independent learners as such.**

Yea

**Right, right, I think the analogy is that instead of catching the fish, you're teaching them how to fish.**

You're teaching them how to fish...exactly...yea

**OK, look, that concludes it, have you anything you would like to add or have you enough?**

No that's really it, as I say..do you know what I mean, the main thing is that there's alot of benefits having done research because you're coming from a base of knowledge and you've done the actual research and you can say listen....and people are happy to see that, but also ,some of your students do suffer while you are researching because you can't split yourself both ways.

**That's right**

And and , you know, so that is ...I'll put my hand up and say definitely some of the students....they benefited and they also lost as well.

**But probably it's a short term loss, for a long term gain**

Yea, yea...

**That concludes it.**

## **INTERVIEW NO 6 : FINTAN**

**Just to clarify at the outset that the recipient has received the topic guide and the student information document.**

Yes.

**Are you happy enough with that?**

Yes.

**Okay. Right for the purpose of the interview and anonymity I'll just call you Joe Bloggs is that okay?**

**We'll proceed.**

## **SECTION A: STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS**

**Right, kicking off just to ask the first question, just to look at the student experiences of doctoral researchers, okay. And its looking at :**

### **Question 1**

**To what extent can the discipline-specific, the topic that you would have covered in your dissertation, to what extent can that impact on your teaching of undergraduate students?**

I suppose the subject area that I looked at and the industry that we're associated with in the department here; there is a strong link, more so from the point of view of understanding and knowing the sector. There wouldn't be a direct correlation between what I've studied and some subject matter that you could deliver. However, I think in the broader aspect, most of the things that you could potentially deliver, you could draw aspects into probably every single subject area.

**Right. In terms of if there was somebody who was Joe Bloggs, not doing a doctorate versus Joe Bloggs who is half way through doing it or has in fact may have completed it, would there be any difference experience from the student's point of view? What's your opinion? Do you think would there any difference versus...**

Yeah I think one of the big things or one of the big ways I developed was an understanding of myself as part of the doctorate but also more so how I communicated things and I think the big experience that I have is actually that you tend to, you know, things that you learn you can assess. You can clarify situations, but you can also then communicate that much, much better I think.

**Okay, right, right, that's fine. One of the things that would have cropped up maybe certainly in the literature review and just to put it to you was that some students felt that the benefit for them was that they were getting the cutting edge information, it was beyond the textbook.**

Yes.

**Do you know what I mean?**

Well no that is true yeah. It's a current situation view.

**And that's probably where its coming from with that so that's fine. That's okay, right. So its up-to-date information as such that they were getting.**

Yes it is or even being able to pre-empt maybe a situation that's going to arise.

**Right, right.**

Its giving a heads up as to a situation that's going to be there.

**Question 2**

**Great, okay, that's fine. So that brings me to the second part of it then and I was just looking at the research methods and to what extent can the research methods that you would have garnered in your doctorate whether it was research methodology modules that you did or whatever. Was there any sense that there was a dissemination of that?**

Yes, yes I think that's one of the big things that I suppose also talking about my own self development is that you came from a stage that there was sort of an understanding of the existence of different methodologies and the associated research methods.

**Yeah.**

However, it was really only over time and towards the latter end of the doctorate itself, where the whole philosophy came together and that everything clicked.

**Right.**

And I think what that gave me was probably a better understanding as to how undergraduates particularly perceive, you know, all of the big words, you know, the methodologies, the ontology, the epistemology and the philosophy and you know there's probably a big lack of understanding at that stage. I think really undergraduates is a very strong focus just on possibly methods.

**Correct, yeah, yeah**

And you know the gap is there on every other front.

**Right, do you feel that from their point of view that its daunting for them?**

It is for some of them but I think some of them just dismiss it as being, you know, (10%) ten percent of the overall mark is going for, you know, research methodology and really I think some of them just look at it purely from that perspective, that they've collected information, they've analysed it in their manner and really there is an underlying philosophy there. Its just that they don't realise what the underlying philosophy is.

**Right.**

And how they need to tally it with the, you know, the bigger words as they are.

**Right, right, okay. Could I just bring you back then to this question here because probably the second half of the question says at a capstone level, at a final year level, that's fine if you're talking about methodology with students who are doing, you know, a final year dissertation for submission.**

Yeah.



**But in terms of students, undergraduates where there is a big cohort in years one to three (1-3) is there anything in it for them, if you like?**

No I think to be honest the way a lot of the bigger words are presented as things stand, its daunting for them when they first face it and the difficulty is that I think a lot of them unless they find ease with what they're looking at will actually just, you know, put it in the bottom drawer and almost try to hide it.

**And even at a fairly elementary level we see things like referencing. Would there be a degree of trying to instil that in them or...**

I think yeah, I think the basic mechanics but this goes back to the methods side of things. The methods they tend to be more comfortable with and if somebody is told, you know, use the Harvard method and this is the Harvard method for referencing, you know, that's an easy one because its straight forward and there's an applied element that they can link straight back to what you're trying to get across.

**Yeah.**

And it makes it easier for them.

**Yeah.**

You know things like that as I say but they all seem to link to the methods that are understandable.

**Yeah elementary stuff, yeah, yeah, okay. That's fine. Okay well I'm happy to move on to the third question. Have you anything else to add on those first two or are you happy enough.**

No I'm happy enough.

**Question 3**

**Okay. The third one is do students know about your research in a sense, you know, when you're doing your doctorate do students know that Joe Bloggs was doing this? Had they any notion about it or is it just...**

Some students did. The students that I would have had at the time would have been aware that I was doing a doctorate. They would have been aware of the subject area that I was looking at. As to the extent of the communication of what was going on within that process. It would have been quite limited but post doctorate now I've already presented

at two conferences, to a wider audience, not necessarily just students in relation to that subject area.

**Okay, right, right.**

So I've presented at a couple of forums or for a and you know what I've done was I've taken something which was very company specific because I had a number of firms operating within this entity and there was a lot of very, very company sensitive information contained within the thesis so what I had to do was post event was to anonymise this and to draw from the generalisations so I could put some form of presentation together to indicate but I've had audiences, the like of Enterprise Ireland, FAS, the National Procurement Agency. I've had academics from a couple of the universities within the syndicate-end and also the sector in general as well as students.

**Yeah, yeah, okay. And I'm just thinking in particular of the undergraduate students that maybe you would have been involved with at your teaching level.**

Yeah.

#### **Question 4**

**And it brings me I suppose to question four and I'll maybe just fill you in on some of the research, certainly on the literature review that I've done right. There would have been stuff on the student experiences and some of the points that the students would have made were from a very positive point of view was that some of them sometimes and quote-on-quote, they bask in their reflected glory of having a Professor right teaching them as distinct from Joe Bloggs so if you're Professor Joe Bloggs or whatever and that's a positive thing because in many ways you can, it almost validates their decision. Well I did the degree here and actually I'm getting the best. I'm getting cutting researchers so it validates their decision that they came to the right course or whatever.**

Yeah.

**That's probably the angle I was coming from and that's why I just wanted to bring you to question four. I mean it says here do you think any of your published work for example the availability of your doctoral text, journal articles, etc are they accessed by students and critically have they initiated a discussion about it with you?**

One of the difficulties that I have with my doctoral text because there's so much company sensitive information and it wouldn't have been a thesis that you could have

anonymised from the start because of the nature of the content and all it would take would be for a firm within the sector here to pick it up and they'd know precisely, not only the company that I was talking about but to a large extent they'd know the people that I was talking about, even if I had anonymised it. So as such the students themselves will probably never get their hands on the thesis itself.

**Okay but even leaving that aside. You referred there to some fora or some of the papers, conference papers or journal articles, whatever the case was. Magazine articles, whatever, was there a sense that they would have been initiating things,**

Well it has created the discussion. Now its created the discussion with some former students who are former undergraduates but its also created a discussion with Enterprise Ireland. You know Enterprise Ireland are very keen in this whole process that I've looked at and how I've described it and the framework for the establishment of these entities as well.

**Yeah.**

As well as the methods of evaluation.

**Okay, right, right.**

So it just doesn't necessarily lean back to the undergraduate but I think as you say in terms of the undergraduate looking at the professor it does certainly validate what they're doing, you know when they have somebody in who has something that's current and develop something, to a large extent the way of looking at it as being something that's new as well.

**Question 5**

**Its new, yeah, right, okay. I'm coming to the next question. It may not be totally dissimilar. Do you get an opportunity to initiate discussion about your research again would be a subject content or research activities with undergraduate students and in what ways and what examples? Now you've alluded to some of them there but is there anything else there that you would actually, Joe Bloggs come in to say right I'm going to actually proactively, mise, do something?**

Well I am. I'm actually lecturing in June for four days in Munich university and that's the central theme for the four days is the outputs of the paper.

**Okay.**

Now one of the beauties of discussing it in Germany is that to a large extent I'll be able to probably have a more in depth discussion and some of the things that are contained within the thesis that nobody will ever see but you know that I will be able to maybe expose some of those in that environment.

Because its not company sensitive there and its highly unlikely that, you know, there will be an association or a linkage.

**Yes, yes.**

But in that environment yes certainly that is on the cards for four days.

### **Question 6**

**Right, very good, okay. We're moving on from this again, number six. In your experience are undergraduate students open to the idea of embracing above? In other words there's a school of thought out there that sometimes the students may think well here comes Joe Bloggs again, God this is like, he's like up there. He's a Professor or a Doctor and he's such in depth knowledge of this topic and here I am a meagre second year undergraduate. This is too much for me and maybe you know there's a sense that well here he goes again.**

Okay so maybe a sense of intimidation, or a sense of somebody trying to push something in the higher level.

**Yeah.**

I think one of the things and I reflect back on the sort of exponential learning that they suggest takes place during a doctoral study is that you struggle, you question yourself and you push yourself on to a very different level and a very different level even beyond sort of postgraduate level.

**Yes, yes.**

But I think at the same time you've got to be very aware as to your end user and who they are and what they are and what their abilities are? I think you've always got to be very conscious of that. There are certain things that I would go off and I've some colleagues that completed the doctoral programme with myself and we might go for a pint and we'd have a conversation and if you sat in the wings of that conversation you'd wonder yourself as to what are these guys talking about.

**Yes, yes.**

However, I think when you get to the target audience you need to reflect it at their level and yes offer the things which will encourage them to maybe start developing a little bit.

**Raise the bar, yeah.**

But you need to be conscious and you need to be aware as to what's going on just to avoid this isolation or intimidation or alienation to a certain extent.

**Very good.**

Which I think if you were to focus it at that doctorate level, you know, you would alienate people.

**Just lose them.**

You know I've lost friends on the back of it I think (laugh).

**Question 7**

**(Laugh). Billy No-mates (laugh). Okay right. Question seven then is just, do you believe your research activities enhance the experience of undergraduates have of your teaching? If yes in what ways, and no, why not?**

Look I think yes on the basis of the new learning and the new thinking and bringing something extra to the table. I think as well from the point of view of even beyond the topic and the subject area I think the philosophical side is the better understanding of people.

**Okay.**

How they learn. Why they learn?

**That's right. Liberal art if you like, liberal learning yeah okay.**

I think that sort of developed. I think as I think the sort of broader thinking from my own perspective as well is very much part and parcel of it too that albeit it yes that I looked at a very finite subject area but there was breadth of areas.

**Of course there has to be.**

I had readings beyond that, you know, that didn't necessarily reflect even in say for example my literature review but that you've broadened your depth and breadth of reading.

**Of course you're satisfied you go the total context in the background against a background or whatever. Yeah that's okay.**

Yeah.

**And if no, why not? Is there any way where you think well maybe sometimes if it hasn't been an enhancing experience?**

Well I suppose I'm a year out of it now as such at this stage and I suppose a year is probably a short time, you know, in terms of post doctoral experience and I've had a number of events, you know, but as things develop over the next number of years I'll be developing the piece of work that I've done and maybe adding the experiences you know from that.

**Right, right. I suppose where I'm coming from with that question, again it comes back to the student and I know you could rightly say well go ask the students but do you think from your point of view, having been through the doctorate that in any way do you believe your research activities enhance the experience of undergraduate students have of your teaching, if there's a no, why not? You don't think of it in any way being...**

No I don't think so but I think its more so from the point of, as I said answering the first part of it as to how you handle it.

### **Question 8**

**Right, that's okay, that's absolutely fine. Okay question number eight is have undergraduate students reacted differently to you since you started or attained your doctoral qualification. In what ways if any for example do they ask you specific questions about your work or activities or if they want to collaborate in your research. The sense that, you know, again its like this notion that people, that sometimes people will say well he was Joe Bloggs and now he's Dr. Joe Bloggs. When you became Dr. Joe Bloggs did you notice any difference and various participants, some have said no.**

Well I changed the name on the door plate (laugh).

**(Laugh).**

Or the door most certainly and changed the business card content but at the same time people still address me as Joe Bloggs and I wouldn't have really any other way.

**Yeah.**

And that's right the way from literally apprentice right the way up. I think the big thing that arose from that was that we had an undergraduate student who graduated about three or four years ago and he went onto a postgraduate programme and its within our own institute but within a different college.

**Right.**

And he approached me to supervise his thesis on the basis that I would have a very firm understanding as to what he was looking at.

**Yes, yes.**

And on the back of that there is a potential collaborative piece of work that will be forthcoming in terms of a potential book but also from the point of view of the piece of work that he's doing, its going to be remarkably good on the basis that not that I've given him the subject area, he's chosen that himself but I've given him very strong guidance in relation to what things are going on out there which can influence this and maybe as to where he needs to go to seek certain elements of his own information.

**Okay.**

So it will be his piece of work but I will have strong influence in guiding him and that's one of the reasons why he came to me and it was on the back of the doctorate qualification also.

**Question 9**

**Okay, that's fine. And question nine here in what ways might your research activities detract from your teaching activities? It know it maybe a bit repetitive here but...**

Yes I think when you're teaching you're trying to research. It can cause great distraction because you've got this big body of work that you're working on. It also takes up a huge amount of time and you know your day-to-day teaching unless its very much routine and you're pulling the same set of PowerPoint's there's almost a reluctance I think to get in the night before and to update PowerPoint's but you've got to be very disciplined to make sure that you're still managing to update, to keep abreast of what you're currently delivering.

**Yes.**

Not necessarily related to your doctorate research.

**Yes, yeah.**

Because there may not necessarily be any influence or input from that. Now certain things may. There might be something forthcoming that you can actually add in to enhance what you're delivering but I think sometimes it can distract and detract and one of the other things its probably a little bit beyond what you're describing. Some of the people who went through the professional doctorate structure as I did who were involved in certain industries found that their jobs almost suffered on the back of it because they had this distraction from their day-to-day job too.

**Yeah, some text, one called I think its by a guy called Phelps, on doing a PhD and like he would argue that its almost a full-time job.**

Well it is yeah. You are taking on two jobs and in terms of the time allocation, you know, you'd find yourself getting up at five o'clock in the morning trying to get two or three hours work done on the doctorate before you came to your real day job that was paying the wages.

**The wages, yeah, yeah but where I'm coming from with that question is I suppose just and again this is the literature review and again literature from the student's perspective, there's a lot of literature of their experiences of doctoral researchers as lecturers, etc, when they're doing their doctorate and when post doctorate, right and like there are myriad benefits that the student see. I mean some students, some of their positives are they've cutting-edge discipline. They have research-specific skills, they can garner. They get a sense of the lecturer's inculcating a questioning, enthusiastic, enlightened approach, all those things. They can bask in the glory of this idea of being affirmed that they made the right decision, right but I suppose the corollary of that is there are some negative experiences right and where I'm coming from this question is some of the things that they may come up with in terms, maybe you'd call it negative, but it might be too strong a word to use but what they would saying is some of the issues they would have is that maybe that its too discipline-dominant. That the lecturer who is doing the research becomes too disciplined dominant in what they're doing right.**

Yeah, yeah.

#



**Another thing they come up with is that the non availability of lecturers to students.**

Well, you know, that happens as well because you know you're tied up and I think you have to become more disciplined. For example I wrote and I wrote the book of what I did from home and but if you're at home you're not in the building to see students, you know, so if students are looking for you you're only going to be here maybe two, maybe three days a week that you are available to see students.

**Yes, yes, yes.**

That could certainly tally with that. The other thing is I suppose when you're doing doctorate research is that there is an allowance off your teaching timetable so there might be a gap created that you know a subject area that you had subject specificity in and they're replacing you with somebody who maybe isn't quite as skilled as you.

**Correct or maybe as experienced.**

And that, you know, and you know that is four hours a week which could be two or could be four modules.

**That's right, yeah.**

For the duration of, you know, probably a four year programme or a five year programme of study.

**That's right its almost a full-time job.**

So you are creating a gap there as well.

**Okay, that's okay. I mean some of the other points then its just the other things they come up with is that the research is favoured to the exclusion of undergraduates or sometimes they may have a sense of non ownership. That is like well this big thing is going on but we're only a mere undergraduate.**

Or possibly an inconvenience to the process.

**Yes (laugh).**

Yeah, yeah. No there are adverse ways to look at it to. As I said one of the big things is the distraction, you know, as you say and one of the things that I found was that you become so focused on what you're doing is that even in your leisure time when you think that there could be a game of golf on the cards or maybe a night out...

**That suffers as well.**

You're sort of saying I can't and as I said I commented earlier on you loose friends on the back of it. You loose touch with friends because time has to be sacrificed somewhere. You sit down and you pragmatically map out a week.

**Prioritise.**

And if you are putting in, in some instances, in my own case I could have been putting in up to maybe forty or sixty hours on certain weeks, you know, out of teaching time, forty to sixty hours a week into the research and the writing, you know, which is a fair chunk.

**A massive block of time.**

You know there would be periods that, you know, you might be limited to maybe twenty or twenty-five hours but you've still got to, you know pulling that twenty, twenty-five hours out of maybe a six day week if you want to have one day with the family.

**Right, right, that is huge.**

It is a lot of time.

## **SECTION B : RESEARCH AND TEACHING**

**Its huge, it's absolutely huge. Okay and it comes back then to this area here and its just to look at research and teaching right and I'll quickly go through these. Judged from the perspective of an academic can it be mutually exclusive or do you see them as linked. Like do you have your research cap on and you open the door and you walk across the corridor and you become a teacher.**

Yeah I think, yeah I think they are.. to a large extent to manage the process probably have to be mutually exclusive because you do act in a certain way when you're a teacher. You do act in a certain way when you're a researcher.

**Okay.**

And I think you have to have that caps idea that now I've got this cap on and that's one of the reasons why as a researcher I used a different environment. I had actually a room specifically in the house that when I went into that room that the kids knew not to knock, the wife knew not to knock. You were in that zone and you were the researcher within that timeframe.

**Yeah, period, alright okay. Is it possible for research teaching to be compartmentalised or separate in terms of managing your time and practice and I suppose really you've pre-empted that. You've answered that question.**

Yeah.

**Okay we're coming then to these questions and I mean midday on a Wednesday its probably some questions you wouldn't be thinking of being asked.**

## SECTION C : DEFINITIONS OF RESEARCH, TEACHING AND KNOWLEDGE

### Question 1

**1. What does the term ‘research’ mean to you and I mean at a very practical day-to-day level.**

I think it means really what I feel it means is finding and discovering, you know, that’s what research is all about and understanding then.

**Fine, okay. That’s okay.**

### Question 2

**2. Secondly what does the term ‘teaching’ mean to you on a day-to-day level in terms of your practice?**

I think teaching is communicating something that hopefully that you’re expert in to other people and bringing them to the same or similar level or to a level that they can gain an understanding from to go off and then develop themselves to become better or the same.

**Okay and because there’s often this argument this model of the transmission model, you know, imparting versus the facilitator model. Have you any view on that?**

Yeah we’ve looked at both sort of approaches here from the point of view of teaching and learning and looking at the things such as problem based learning and I think a lot of it depends on your target audience or the subject area that you’re delivering.

**Yeah, absolutely.**

There are certain elements and I found with one of the subject areas that I was teaching specifically there were certain things that you had no alternative but to stand up and deliver a presentation and a lecturer but then there were elements that you could roll out the, you know, the facilitator mode so I think you’ve got to be able to jump between the two.

**Okay, that’s fine.**

### Question 3

**3. And this one what does the term ‘knowledge’ mean to you on a day-to-day level?**

Well I suppose one of the really interesting things that I found about knowledge was and the real philosophical understanding was that knowledge depended on who you are and where you’ve come from, you know, and how you perceive things, how you understand things and that’s what you draw knowledge. You take facts, you take situations, you take data, you take issues.

**Who you are and where you've come from.**

Yeah the epistemological influence on it, you know, that's a firm shaper as to how you know, understand, feel, grasp, learn...

**Perception of things.**

Yes, all of these things, you know, and that's a big issue and that was one of the bigger outcomes that I had from my own self learning was that, you know, this is why I'm sitting here, this is why I'm perceiving this in this manner but if I sat somewhere else and put on a different hat how would you perceive this to be or if you analyse this a different way.

**Right so you're very much a developmental trajectory almost was it?**

Yeah, yeah.

## SECTION C: CURRENT ISSUES IN IRELAND: RESEARCH & TEACHING IN IRELAND

**Right, and finally then its just a wrap up question its got to do with I suppose the genesis of when doing this research because last year I looked at the McCarthy Report and I had to this MA and I was trying to get ideas or whatever and this really bought my attention to it was that in Colm McCarthy, of ‘An Bord Snip Nua’ and he was saying, he was an insider if you like himself right.**

Yeah.

**And on the education section the McCarthy Report he was arguing that the best brains like the people with the doctorates and have done, who have been immersed in all of this work and research, etc that sometimes the big cohort of the audience in university are not actually getting the benefit of those people.**

Yeah its true. Well I suppose looking at my own role I was a lecturer, I’m now a Head of Department. I now have three hour commitment to academic activity and the bulk of that is taken up, in fact all of it is taken up with thesis supervision.

**Right.**

So I don’t have direct contact other than the odd guest lecture with an undergraduate cohort. In fact most of what I’m doing now is at postgraduate level so I think what we’ve doing is that, you know, when we promote people to a large extent we’re pulling them away from the coal-face. We’re promoting them maybe on, I would like to think, you know, proficiency or ability but that proficiency or ability going back to the Pareto principle is, you know, their ability to delivery maybe good lectures and things and you’re pulling them out of that environment and you’re making it, in my own instance you’re making an administrator out of them. Decision-making within their own institute structure is very much up another tier so there’s very little decisions that you’ve got autonomy in relation to but I think that could be quite right, that you are removed unless you know you’re one of the favourite ones who ends up being supervised or you know there is the opportunity for a guest lecturer.

**Right, right.**

But when you look at the job specification for example for, for you know, the institute that I’m currently in, you know, to teach you need a honours degree, you know, which is fine but to become promoted you need to have postgraduate, potentially doctoral.

**At a minimum yeah.**

And that's how you would be considered for maybe a rank or two ranks above but to have postgraduate doctoral I would think maybe more so, what would be more appropriate is a strong management qualification as opposed to a strong research qualification because inevitably you become an administrator with sort of a semi-manager hat on, you know, whereas at the coal face where you need the expertise for teaching and delivery, I think that's where we should be focusing on. You know where we need our PhD's and our doctorates, you know, because that's where it delivers.

**And I mean I can show you the literature review. There's arguments such illustrious institutions as Harvard where, you know, they promote themselves in their pamphlets and their marketing spiel on having these big names but people never them you know (laugh).**

Yeah but you never see them because they're on the guest circuit, you know, maybe clocking up private income.

**Yeah and there's big ethical debate going on about all of that you know.**

Yeah.

**Right that's okay and just I suppose to conclude then in terms of the binary system that prevails within the HEA we still have if you like universities, the old HEA right, universities and then you have IOT sector right and there is if you like the breakdown of hours in the university sector versus the IOT sector for teaching is quite stark in the sense that there's more teaching expected.**

Yeah.

**And have you a view on that. Do you think there should be more research or less teaching or more teaching less research? What's your view?**

I think it depends as to where you are and what you're doing. You know there is a strong case where an individuals contract lets say for sixteen hours a week that they're best left to sixteen hours delivery because there's an expectation in their contract that they need to stay abreast of say for example from an industry specific point of view. They need to stay abreast as to what's going on in their industries from technology change; from the industry change and that in itself is practice based research.

**Yeah.**

So you have somebody teaching and you know assimilating things from the sector and being able to incorporate them and deliver them and you know stay abreast of new technology. I think really it all depends as to where you're sitting. If you're on, you know, a say a practice based programme which is a very applied nature I think that's what you're looking at. I think if you're on something which is a bit more academic, you know, the balance has to shift, you know, you need, you know, somebody whose got current research or you know supervising current researchers but you need their strong inputs too. It's probably a very difficult one to get a fine balance on but I think a lot of it probably finds its own level within the different types of structures and the different types of institutes depending as to whether they're practiced based, applied based, academic based.

**Where other priorities maybe. I've covered everything. Have you any you'd like to like to conclude on or add to it.**

No, no.

**Satisfied enough.**

Yeah.

-----**INTERVIEW ENDS**-----