'An Exploration of the Value Youth Mentors Attach to their Role in Gaisce – The President's Award Irish National Self-Development Programme'

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CARL Research Project
in collaboration with
Gaisce – The President's Award

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I hereby certify that the material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of The Masters (M.Soc.Sc) in Voluntary and Community Sector Management at University College Cork is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others except to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my own work.

No portion of the work contained in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification to this or any other institution.

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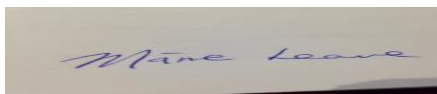
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I hereby certify that all the unreferenced work described in this thesis and submitted for the award of a Master of Social Science is entirely the work of

Philip Mangan

Máire Leane   10 September 2020

Signature of Supervisor   Date

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Abstract

Using Gaisce, The President's Award, Ireland's national youth achievement award programme, this study explores the role of the youth mentor within a non-formal learning environment. Drawing on quantitative survey data and semi-structured qualitative interviews, the study examined the value which school-based President's Award Leaders (PALs) perceive is attached to the role they play in mentoring young people through the Gaisce programme. In relation to their perceived value, 90% of the teacher PALs surveyed reported that they believed that they 'made a difference' to the lives of their Award students.   It also emerged that a core source of affirmation for PALs is the response of students who complete the programme and that of their parents. Secondary value or affirmation comes from school management and, to a lesser extent, from Gaisce. The high attrition rate in the programme was identified as a significant theme - with 40% of participants failing to attain the Award. It was apparent that such a high drop-out rate impacted significantly on the morale of PALs. Although there was unanimous agreement amongst participants that they have no desire to receive monetary or other rewards for the work they do for Gaisce, the importance they place on feeling valued was highlighted by the general consensus that they appreciate receiving recognition for the work they do. Gaisce PALs reported that they spent less than 180 minutes per week engaging in mentor/mentee relationships and had an average of 33 mentees each. Subsequently, many participants reported that delivering on their role as a Gaisce PAL, in tandem with their duties as a teacher, proved challenging in the context of time poverty. It was notable that PALs working in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools believed that students and the parents of students in their schools, who achieved the Award, place a high value on the work they do and on the Gaisce programme - since they are less likely to have had the opportunity to attain as many awards as students in more advantaged schools.

Chapter 1:

Thesis Overview

1.1: Background and Rationale

Gaisce – The President's Award (GTPA), is a personal development programme for young people, which enhances confidence and wellbeing through participation in personal, physical and community challenges (Gaisce, 2019). Launched in October 1985 by President Dr Patrick Hillary, it is worth noting that the awards scheme was designed during a period of significant economic change, and subsequent social change in Ireland. As evidenced by Dukelow and Considine (2017, p. 101), 'The 1980's is not a decade that is fondly remembered – massive emigration, high unemployment, high interest rates, high inflation, cutbacks in social services and inadequate social welfare payments made life a tough grind for many'. The Gaisce Awards was one of the initiatives undertaken by the Government at the time, in response to the changing social landscape and a desire to implement a more effective and all-inclusive national youth policy. This social cataclysm led, in part, to the establishment of the National Youth Policy Committee (NYPC) in 1984, whose stated terms of reference, under the Chair of Mr. Justice Costello was:

> To prepare for Government consideration recommendations for a National Youth Policy which would be aimed at assisting all young people to become self-reliant, responsible and active participants in society. (NYPC, 1984, p. 8)

As evidenced by the National Youth Policy Committee (1984), the primary philosophical theory underpinning the structure of the recommended Gaisce Awards was that of representative democracy, which promoted the concept of active citizenship, public spirit and the encouragement of youth participation in the social and political life of the community. Consummate with this philosophy was the stated focus of promoting the positive self-development of young people, 'particularly those in most need of opportunity and inspiration', to partake in the Awards for the 'betterment of their communities' (Gaisce, 1996).

Consequently, the central tenet to these Awards is the creation of an non-competitive youth achievement framework, which promotes the values of empowerment, inclusion, equality, respect and excellence, and which 'enables young people to carve their own path to self-discovery' (Gaisce, 2019, p. 2).

Since the formation in 1985, the Gaisce Awards, administered under the auspices of the President's Awards Council, have been open to all individuals aged between fifteen and twenty-five years of age, who reside on the island of Ireland. The Awards are constructed as a progressive series, designated as Bronze, Silver and Gold achievements (McKenna, 2019). Since commencement of the Awards programme in 1985, 190,000 participants have received Awards (McKenna, 2019). Gaisce (2019, p. 2) appraises the scheme, stating that 'Participant volunteers are encouraged to dream big and fulfil their potential' and are, subsequently, tested by a progressive leisure-time Award Challenge programme. The programme requires the completion of a community involvement initiative, personal skills development, physical recreation and an Adventure Journey challenge.

1.2: Objectives of Study

A subsidiary objective of the Gaisce programme is to promote intergenerational volunteer engagement, with adults being encouraged 'to give their time on a voluntary basis in furtherance of the awards' (Gaisce, 1996, p. 2). At each Award level, participants are allocated a President's Awards Leader (PAL) who acts as a mentor and provides personal support for growth and positive personal development. One thousand two hundred Irish secondary school teachers are intrinsically linked to the programme (Gaisce, 2020). They advocate for the programme and act as volunteers and mentors to a cohort of secondary school pupils. Accordingly, Gaisce mentors assist in the determination of goals, provide administrative support, aid Adventure Journey planning and offer on-going mentoring, advice, positive youth encouragement and practical support. To support the development of PALs, Gaisce promotes Gaisce Award Leader courses, which are appropriately designed to assist in 'implementing the system of Awards' (Gaisce, 1996). The essential importance of Gaisce's 1,200 volunteer PALs are further explored by McKenna (2019, p. 1):

> PALs are central to the design of Gaisce, and without PALs, Gaisce doesn't exist. While Gaisce has been established in the national consciousness for over 34 years, there's a lot we don't know about the experience of PALs.

To address the identified knowledge gap in this area and to aid further understanding, this research endeavours to explore; the experiences and identities of Gaisce PALs, their characteristics and behaviours, motivations for volunteering, conceptualisation of their

role and how it is valued. This focus of enquiry is captured in the following research question: 'Do President's Award Leaders (PALs) attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President's Award self-development programme?

1.3: Structure of Thesis

Following this introduction, *Chapter Two: Literature Review* provides an overview of some of the theories and research that are most relevant to this study. This review discusses the role that the PAL mentor/mentee relationship and other relationship dynamics exert on the effectiveness of such award programmes. The fundamental aspects of teacher PAL identity – as volunteers, mentors and teachers – are examined, while the identification of the complexity of factors that influence teacher identity (Hargreaves, 2001; Mockler, 2011) are further explored through the concepts of teacher life cycle trajectories (Fessler, 1987), professional identities (Bullough, 2005) and career stage theoretical models (Huberman, 1989). The chapter also discusses the themes of mentor identity and mentor relationship dynamics through the life structure research works of Ericson (1950) and Levinson et al., (1978), while an examination of mentorship lifecycles (Kram, 1983) and educational mentoring (Heller and Sindelar, 1991) are also undertaken. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the theoretical constructs of volunteer motivations (Mauss, 1925; Titmuss, 1970) and further examines how the concepts of volunteer identity (Clary et al., 1998; Wuthnow, 1991), as well as their behaviours and values (Cieciuch and Swartz, 2017), impact on the role and identity of a volunteer.

Chapter Three: Methodology explains the approach taken to research design, ethics, data collection and data analysis. The rationale that informed the epistemological perspective is outlined, and the issues of ensuring trustworthiness in this research are discussed. The decision process that led to the selection of mixed methods as the primary methodology and the approach taken in the quantitative and qualitative data collection are outlined. The analysis of data extracted from the qualitative and quantitative stages of the study is also described and discussed.

Chapter Four: Understanding PAL Characteristics and Behaviours: Quantitative Findings, presents the findings from the research based on online questionnaires completed by 87 participants..

Chapter Five: Understanding PAL Role Conceptualisation: Qualitative Findings, focuses on the analysis of the qualitative data collected from thirty eight open-ended questions answered by the PAL study participants in ten interviews and on the examination of the qualitative data collected from fifteen open-ended questions answered by PALs in seventy seven online survey responses. The interviews were conducted in May 2020 and structured around seven overall themes: Role Conceptualisation, Role Fulfilment, Making a Difference, Being Valued, Recognition, Volunteerism and Motivational Reasoning. The findings of the data, as extracted and then presented, are further discussed.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion, distils, critiques and discusses key findings , reflects on the research process, appraises the implications of the findings and the potential for follow-up research, and makes recommendations for supporting future practice and PAL engagement.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

This overview of a selection of the most relevant literature pertaining to the research question will focus on what has been written about the domain of youth mentoring and, in particular, the role, if any, teachers – as mentors – play in aiding and implementing positive youth development programmes for young people. To gain a fuller understanding of this realm, this chapter is structured around three overall themes that consider how, in a complex educational environment, the principal aspects of teacher PAL identity – as volunteers, mentors and teachers – are construed.

Section 2.2: Context and Definition of Youth Mentorship explores the theories surrounding the aims and definitions of youth mentoring, as well as impact of the benefits and challenges that such mentorship programmes exhibit in this insufficiently researched sector.

Section 2.3: Irish Educational Sector and Identities of PAL Members investigates the key demographics of the Irish secondary school sector and further contextualises Gaisce PAL involvement in this field.

Section 2.4: PALs as Teachers – Understanding Teacher Identities explores the constitution of teacher identity (Mockler, 2011) through the theoretical constructs of teacher life cycles (Fessler, 1987), professional identities (Bullough, 2005) and teachers' career stage modelling (Huberman, 1989).

Section 2.5: PALs as Teachers – Understanding Mentor Identities examines the theme of mentor relationship dynamics and mentor identity, through the theoretical lens of adult life cycles (Ericson, 1950; Kram, 1983; Levinston et al., 1978) and educational mentoring (Heller and Sindelar, 1991).

In *Section 2.6: PALs as Volunteers – Understanding Volunteer Identities* a short exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of volunteer motivations (Clary et al., 1998; Mauss, 1925; Titmuss, 1970) and identity (Wuthnow, 1991) are discussed, while an incisive examination of the influence of beliefs and values (Cieciuch and Schwartz, 2017; Hitlin, 2007) is undertaken.

In *Section 2.7: Conclusion: Conceptualising and Understanding PALs – Insights from a Triumvirate Approach* the chapter concludes with a review of PAL teacher identity as an augmented trilogy of roles as a teacher, mentor and volunteer.

2.2: Context and Definition of Youth Mentorship

To gain some sense of this realm, Dolan and Brady (2011) proffer some valuable insights, professing that the aim of a youth mentoring relationship is 'to create a supportive social bond between a young person and an adult, in which trust and closeness can develop to the best of his or her abilities' (p. 128). While this mentor framework has been found to generate positive outcomes in a contemporary setting (Brady et al., 2005; Hansen, 2007; Rhodes, 2008), many commentators (DuBois et al., 2002, 2011; St James-Roberts et al., 2005) have questioned the consequential beneficial effects that such youth mentoring programmes advocate. As professed by Greenop (2011, p. 35) 'while there is huge popular support for mentoring, the evidence is in fact mixed and benefits are modest'. In support of this view, Eby et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis of one-to-one non-parental youth, academic and workplace mentoring programmes observed that, although such programmes had a wide composition of positive behavioural, attitudinal and motivational outcomes, 'the effect size is generally small' (p. 254). However, in recognising this contested domain, in their appraisal of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada mentoring programme, Erdem et al. (2016) identified that a significant factor for the achievement of a positive outcome in a mentoring programme was the importance of the consistency and stability of the relationship.

In recent years, narratives surrounding the effectiveness of youth mentoring have increased, fueled in part by the proliferation in both the volume and range of mentoring programmes globally. As evidenced by Matz (2014, p. 86) in the US alone, it is estimated that the database of the National Mentoring Partnership (also referred to as 'MENTOR') 'recognises more than 5,000 mentoring programs serving approximately three million youths'. Given the seismic scale of such programmes (Boddy et al., 2012; Cummings et al., 2012; Haggard et al., 2011; Rhodes and Lowe, 2008), Silke et al. (2016) have expressed the view that there exists a need for researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the realm of mentoring dynamics and the significant factors which impact the success of such youth mentoring programmes. Within this terrain, an

understanding of the relationship dynamics between the mentor and the mentee, is to the fore. As contextualised by Jakubik (2016, p. 37) '… A mentor is a close, trusted, experienced counsellor or guide who engages in a long-term, relationship-oriented, development-driven, mentoring relationship'.

While the central tenet of the understanding of the dynamics of mentoring relationships has been propelled primarily from the perspective of the mentee (MacMahon, 2013: Dolan et al., 2011) as professed by Mullen & Noe (1999, Haggard et al., 2011, p. 299) as '[researchers] we know very little about the benefits of mentoring relationships for the mentor'. Silke et al., (2019) support this theory and identify that:

> ...it has been argued that these experiences have not been explored sufficiently to date and that there is a need for researchers to better understand the relational processes or dynamics that are key to promoting positive outcomes for youth mentoring programmes. (Silke et al., 2019, p. 5)

Consequently, to aid further understanding of the contextual role that teachers play as youth mentors, this review is structured as follows: (2.2) Irish Educational Sector and the Identities of PAL Members, (2.3) Understanding Teacher Identity, (2.4) Understanding Mentor Identify, (2.5) Understanding Volunteer Identity and (2.6) School PAL Understanding – A Triumvirate Approach.

2.3: Irish Educational Sector and the Identities of PAL Members

Given the intricate and often delphic nature of the Irish educational sector, it is challenging to understand the identities, characteristics and behaviours of PAL teachers. In the Irish post-primary teaching sector, as evidenced by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the challenge is exacerbated by the fact that the sector is made up of more than 371,000 full-time students, 722 schools and 28,000 post-primary teachers (DES, 2019, pp. 2–6). Schools are further classified by the DES along religious, social inclusion and special educational needs parameters, with over 51% of Irish secondary school students attending schools with a Catholic ethos. Moreover, 198 schools, which serve the educational needs of over 76,000 students, are classified as 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools' (DEIS), while 2,821 special needs assistants (SNAs) support the needs of pupils in schools that are considered National Council for Special

Education (NCSE) schools. Within this educational segment, 22,430 teachers are classified as 'mainstream teachers', and 14,343 teachers are classified as 'special education/other teachers' (DES, 2019, p. 4). Therefore, while recognising that the Gaisce Award programme operates in 93% of secondary school establishments (Gaisce, 2020), it remains challenging to understand the exact identity of one thousand two hundred school-based teacher PALs, their motivations and the role they play in mentoring young students who participate in the programme.

Consequently, mapping a pathway to such a challenge is best taken as a holistic research approach where an understanding of the terrain of PAL teacher identities is framed by their respective role identities – as teachers (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Cummings et al., 2007; Denis, 2015; Dewey, 1897; Goodlad, Soder and Sirotnik, 1990; Hargreaves, 2001; Huberman, 1989; Mockler, 2011; Rogers and Scott, 2008), as mentors (DuBois et al., 2011; Haggard et al., 2011) and as volunteers (Finkelstein et al., 2007; Hitlin, 2007; Hustinx et al., 2015). Therefore, gaining a more complete understanding of the triumvirate of teacher identity could further clarify the value that teachers attach to their roles as PALs,

2.4: PALs as Teachers – Understanding Teacher Identities

A theme that has received much attention from educational theorists, recently, is the factors associated with teacher identity and character (Bejaard et al., 2004; Bullough, 2005; Connelly and Clandinin, 1999; Hoban, 2007; Sachs, 2005). According to Mockler (2011, p. 517), while the domain of education is complex, untidy and uncertain, and despite the advancement of educational polices that are framed as 'what works is what counts', an understanding of teacher professional identity, which provides 'a rich, nuanced appreciation of what it is to "be" a teacher, is critical to understanding the heart of modern schooling' (2011, p. 517).

The author's assertions are based on a three-year study of the articulation of teacher professional identity. Mockler (2011, p. 518) contends that this premise supports the theoretical assertations of Dewey (1897), who advocated for the 'the existential dimension of education'. According to Shrader (1995, p. 21), Dewey's theory is grounded in 'the idea that education and life are inseparable: that schools should not be

insular training grounds or ivory towers, but rather critical portions of the playing field of life itself'. In further support of this discourse, Bullough and Baughman (1997, p. 24) evidence that in contemporary educational environs.

> Students rightfully expect instructional and content competence from their teachers, but they also expect to be greeted by a whole person, a caring person, one who knows who and what he is, who has moral standing, and who can be counted on to continue standing, face to face, with students.

Such contentions support the theory that the identity of modern teachers embellishes the belief that what they stand for defines who they are and, consequently, how they are attenuated toward the good. These nuanced characteristics are further explored by Patterson (1991, p. 16), who contends that 'those of us who are teachers cannot stand before a class without standing for something – teaching is testimony'. In advancement of Goodlad, Soder and Sirotniks' (1990) premise that teaching is a moral enterprise, as an exemplar to such philosophical purpose – the educational works of Kurt Hahn (1886–1974) provides one such moral testimony and warrants pertinent mention. Hahn was the founding father of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, upon which the Gaisce Awards are mirrored. As observed by Van Oord (2010, p. 18) Hahn's educational philosophy was enshrined in 'active "Samaritan service" and experiential learning, enabling students to discover the Christian purpose of life'.

Further identification of the complexity of factors that influence teacher identity (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009) is the observation of the dynamic nature of teacher identities, which, due to a myriad of external and internal individual factors, shift through time. Such internal identity factors include emotion (Hargreaves, 2001; Rogers and Scott, 2008;) and particular life contextualised experiences (Flores and Day, 2006; Sachs, 2005). Within the domain of teacher identity and emotions, Hargreaves (2001, pp. 1056–1057) notes that 'teaching and learning are emotional practices', where 'as an emotional practice, teaching activates, colours, and expresses the feelings and actions of teachers and those they influence', while life experiences, according to Flores and Day (2006, p. 230), include personal biographies and workplace conditions (as contributory factors in the shaping of identity).

Within the educational domain, the dynamics of teacher characterises and identity have been explored in a number of contextual studies (Gee, 2001; Day et al., 2006; Hunt, 2006; O'Connor, 2008). The teacher career cycle works of Fessler (1987, 1992) and Huberman (1989) are of noted relevance, to aid contextual understanding for educational programme practitioners. In his study of the dynamic nature of the work lives of teachers, Fessler (1987) developed a teacher career cycle model encompassing eight distinct stages. The stages are: pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiasm and growth, career frustration, stability and stagnation, career wind-down, and career exit. According to Lynn (2002), 'the model is an attempt to describe the teacher career cycle within the context of a dynamic and flexible social system (2002, p. 179).

In a similar domain, Huberman's (1989) general model of career trajectories was anchored in key findings from extensive Swiss studies of secondary school teachers. The studies revealed teacher life-cycle trajectories framed as cycles of survival discovery, stabilisation, experimentation/activism, taking stock: self-doubts, serenity, conservatism and disengagement. In assessing Huberman's work, Kermer-Hydon (1993, p. 18) observes that within the model, there is 'a dynamic ebb and flow, with teachers moving into and out of phases in response to environmental conditions'. Those environmental conditions that involve everyday tasks warrant further analysis, as they, too, have a causal impact on the understanding of the role and identity of teachers (Huberman, 1999). Consequently, a study of everyday tasks may reveal the existence of role conflicts or ambiguities (between school leadership or mentor roles, between organisational priorities, between the expectations of parents and other domains, and between wider constituencies), which may include a conflict between work life and home life (Huberman, 1999).

In a contextual setting of modern education and sector engagement, as further professed by Kremer-Hayon (1993), an understanding of the career stages model is beneficial for researchers, programme practitioners and teachers through the provision of an additional lens mechanism, which facilitates an understanding of 'some antecedents of enthusiasm or reluctance related to self-evaluation' (1993, p. 18). Mocker (2011, p. 520), in support of this theory, identifies the importance of recognising that 'teachers' work and professional practice is constituted across and out of the three key domains of their

personal experience, professional context, and the external political environment within and through which significant aspects of their work is constituted'.

As a theoretical model, therefore, teacher identities, career stage modelling and practical task recognition provide a beneficial framework for practitioners engaging in this arena. This framework proffers a rich understanding that the implementation of youth self-development programmes are contextualised by where teachers reside within teacher life cycles, the emotional energies associated with engagement of such a process, the impact of the definitional beliefs that teachers have and the environmental support conditions that are offered by institutions to support such programmes. The following section addresses the theory and practical aspects of how teachers, as mentors, participate in positive youth self-development programmes.

2.5: PALs as Teachers – Understanding Mentor Identities

In recent years, a number of studies that have converged on the educational landscape have focused on the emergence of what have come to be termed 'youth mentoring programmes' (Dubois et al., 2011; Haggard, 2011; Larose et al., 2018; Matz, 2014). As observed by DuBois et al. (2011, p. 57), research findings from a meta-analysis of seventy-three independent child and youth mentoring programmes from the period 1999–2010 have indicated that such programmes are based on 'an intervention strategy for addressing the needs that young people have for adult support and guidance throughout their development'. In Haggard et al.'s (2010) mentor definitional study of 124 articles from the period 1980–2009, the authors acknowledge that, while there have been many significant developments concerning the evolution of the 'definitional diversity of such programmes' (Ilieva-Koleva, 2016, p. 12), much of this mentor research has been framed by endeavours to understand the dynamics of the relational role between mentors and mentees.

In seeking to define such mentor relations, Levinson et al.'s (1978) conceptual research work *The Seasons of a Man's Life* provides beneficial insights. The central tenet of their work is that the individual life structure of males can be divided into four major eras: childhood and adolescence, and early, middle and late adulthood. While such a concept aids understanding of the mentorship process, a significant element of this research co-

relates to the advancement of the first general definitions of mentoring when describing its functions. Within such observed mentoring relationships, mentors serve several functions to advance a mentee's personal and professional well-being, acting as teacher, sponsor, host, guide, exemplar and counsellor. Consequently, the framework for mentorship is contextualised as:

> The true mentor, in the meaning intended here, serves as an analogue in adulthood of the 'good enough' parent for the child. He fosters the young adult's development by believing in him, sharing the youthful Dream and giving it his blessing, helping to define the newly emerging self in its newly discovered world, and creating a space in which the young man can work on a reasonably satisfactory life structure that contains the Dream. (Levinson et al.,1978, pp. 98–99)

Erikson (1950, 1968) established a theoretical eight-stage human personality model that conceptualised the transitional development of human personality throughout the lifespan of the individual. The central tenet of this work is the postulation that there is a total of eight lifespan stages between infancy and old age. As contextualised by this Erikson (1950) the seventh stage, Generativity vs Stagnation, is defined as follows: 'Generativity, then, is primarily the reciprocal concern for establishing and guiding the next generation' (1950, p. 240). In his later essays the social theorist (1968) contextualises his premise proffering that:

> Evolution has made man a teaching as well as a learning animal, for dependency and maturity are reciprocal: mature man needs to be needed, and maturity is guided by the nature of that which must be cared for. (Erikson, 1968, p. 138)

In ascribing to Erikson's philosophy, Stevens (1995) puts forward a view that professional teachers who provide mentorship to others are atypical of those having reached the adult stage of personal development, and, by consequence, experience such generative responsibility driven by the desire to help and support others.

The exploration of mentor definition and motivation continued in the research of Bozeman and Feeney (2007), DuBois and Karcher (2013), Grossman and Bulle (2006), Kram (1983) and Lerner et al. (2014). In their critique of mentoring theory, Bozeman and Feeney (2007) advocate for the need to redefine mentorship relations as they contend that, 'in the majority of cases it is difficult to sort mentoring from the adjoining

concepts such as training, coaching, socialisation, and even friendship' (2007, p. 735). Consequently, the authors proffer the need for a mentoring redefinition that is readily comprehensible and accessible to research practitioners as a premise upon which to further construct. Accordingly, the authors define mentoring thus:

> Mentoring […] entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé). (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007, p. 731)

Transitional mentor/mentee phases are another arena that has generated substantial study and that is pertinent to aid understanding of the role of teachers as mentors. Kram's (1983) seminal research study detailing phases of the mentoring relationship is of particular relevance. In her study of eighteen mentor/mentee relationships, Kram identified that there is an evolution of four distinct transitional phases categorised as: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition' (1983, p. 621). Furthermore, the author identifies that each phase of the mentor/mentee relationship is characterised by 'particular affective experiences, developmental functions, and interaction patterns that are shaped by individuals' needs and surrounding organisational circumstances' (1983, p. 621). Of particular significance, Kram's Boston study (1983) revealed the existence of other consequential factors that affect the mentor/mentee relationship. Accordingly, Kram (1983) contends that, as a result of changing organisational and individual needs, such mentor/mentee developmental relationships are 'limited in value and time duration (1983, p. 623).

Subsequently, the author professes that organisational practices that advance mentorship should create programme conditions that are designed to improve relationship-building skills between mentors and mentees, and to foster further opportunities for relationship development. Kram's work provides a beneficial insight for current educational mentor programme practitioners in aiding an understanding of the mentorship process and of the causal effect of time limitations on mentor/mentee relations. Furthermore, to aid the development of successful mentor/mentee relations, organisations must provide positive programme opportunities and conditions.

The identification of factors that influence a mentor's motivation for engaging in a mentoring relationship with a mentee is another theme that has received much attention from social researchers. As contextualised by Haggard et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis research and evidenced by Allen (2003) and Allen et al. (1997), such motivations for committing to mentorship by mentors include the desire to benefit others and the desire for intrinsic satisfaction and the advancement of self-enhancement. In the domain of secondary school teachers, the educational mentor research studies of Caldarella et al. (2010), Heller and Sindelar (1991), and Zachary (2003) are also of contextual relevance, enabling further understanding of the complex nature of the roles and relationships that teachers as mentors experience. Accordingly, Zachary advocates the potential benefits that teachers can experience as mentors: 'Teachers as mentors increase their potential to enhance student growth and development, help students maximise education experiences, and enrich their own teaching experience and professional development' (2003, p. 6). In support of this narrative, Caldarella et al. also profess that motivations for mentoring in a school context are fuelled by a desire by mentors to 'express important values or gain greater understanding' (2010, p. 209).

In exploring the realm of educational mentoring, Heller and Sindelar (1991) observe that a mentor's desire is to aid the academic achievement of a mentee. As such, the authors advance that this is a central premise for motivational reasoning, contending that, in such educational domains, 'the protégé receives knowledge, skills, support, and inspiration, while the mentor derives satisfaction, professional fulfilment, loyalty, and prestige' (1991, p. 7). This discourse is supported by findings from Sike et al.'s research work on the dynamics of the Big Brother/Big Sister youth mentoring programme in Ireland, in which they observed that, 'For the majority of mentors, the key attraction was the one-to-one nature of the programme and the opportunity it provided to make a more significant difference to one young person' (2019, p. 43).

The identification of factors that influence successful mentoring in school-based programmes is another theme that has received much attention from social researchers (Boddy et al., 2012; Coller and Kuo, 2013; Grossman and Bulle, 2006; Keller and Pryce, 2010). Accordingly, based on their conceptual framework of youth mentoring where the mentor/mentee relationship constructs of permanence and power were advanced, Keller and Pryce observed that 'The relationships reported most rewarding by

participants and judged most successful by researchers were those in which the mentor balanced youth-oriented efforts to build an engaging and enjoyable relationship with adult-oriented efforts to promote development-promoting structure and scaffolding' (2010, p. 45). Other research that established a link between interpersonal bonds and task orientation was conducted by Boddy et al. (2012). In their evaluation of a 'Schools as Community Centres' collaborative-research mentoring programme, the authors found that the most highly rated relationships were those with certain mentee attributes, an aim that was focused on process and task-oriented activities and well-built interpersonal bonds between mentoring partners. The authors also identified that highlighting a perceived similarity, building a common group and promoting reciprocity within the mentor/mentee relationship were attributes associated with positive mentor/mentee outcomes.

As evidenced by studies of youth-empowered US school-based programmes, Coller and Kuo (2013) observed the existence of several other factors that are associated with successful mentor/mentee relationships. These include building friendship and trust, recruiting experienced children mentors, providing suitable mentor orientation, ongoing support and training, and accommodating mentors' feelings of effectiveness. Furthermore, the researchers emphasised their recognition that relationship length is a critical element in achieving successful mentoring outcomes.

While a number of studies have supported the theory of the beneficial impact of mentorship in positive youth development programmes (Clarke-McMahon, 2013; DuBois et al., 2011; DuBois and Keller, 2017; Rhodes, 2008), alternative views have been articulated by commentators that question both the effectiveness of mentorship in aiding positive youth development (DuBois et al., 2002; Liabo and Lucas, 2006; St James-Roberts et al., 2005) and the effect that such programmes have on changing youth attitudes and educational attainment (Cummings et al., 2012; Hurst and Eby, 2012). Moreover, Silk et al., in recognising that two competing narratives exist, contend that 'evaluations of formal one-to-one youth mentoring programmes have provided evidence to suggest that these initiatives are efficacious at promoting positive developmental outcomes among young people' (2019, p. 8).

While the factors and attributes of educational mentorship have been noted earlier, as evidenced by Pianta (1999), teachers as mentors of children and adolescents play a significant role in this educational domain. Consequently, as professed by the author, 'Relationships with teachers are an essential part of classroom experience for all children and a potential resource for improving developmental outcomes' (1999, p. 21). In seeking to attach value to the role that teachers play in mentoring young people, an understanding of these concepts and findings provides a beneficial framework. However, at its core, an understanding of why teachers teach is pivotal to this challenge. Moreover, the importance of enhancing relationships between teachers and children is contextualised by Pianta, who proffers the following: 'Ask any teachers why they teach. They will say 'it's the kids' and will go on to describe effects that their students have had on them as people' (1999, p. 3).

2.6: PALs as Volunteers – Understanding Volunteer Identities

Within the domain of volunteerism, while many conceptual and theoretical models currently exist, Hustinx et al. (2010) contend that volunteering is a complex phenomenon and, as such, an integrated theory of volunteerism has yet to evolve. To gain some sense of the contextual origins of volunteerism, Mauss's (1925) pivotal essay, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* warrants special attention. In this composition, the social theorist identifies a premise for the evolution of volunteerism and proffers a nuanced perspective that volunteering is the construct of a gifting process, where each gift is the constituent of a process of reciprocity in which the honour of both the donor and recipient are engaged. More pertinently, Mauss (1925, p. 1) states: 'prestations which are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, […] are in fact obligatory and interested'. Furthermore, he asserts:

> All these institutions reveal the same kind of social and psychological pattern. Food, women, children, possessions, charms, land, labour, services, religious offices, rank—everything is stuff to be given away and repaid. In perpetual interchange of what we may call spiritual matter, comprising men and things, these elements pass and repass between clans and individuals, ranks, sexes and generations. (1925, pp. 11–12)

In the same way that the gifting of one's time has evolved to become the expected norm, so too has the framing of this central proposition by academic commentaries. Notably,

Titmuss (1970, p. 212) theorised a sociological model of volunteering that identifies volunteering and charitable works as 'social gifts and actions'; a form of 'creative altruism' contending that such actions are 'creative in the sense that the self is realised with the help of others' (1970, p. 212). In support of this premise, Godbout and Caille (1998, p. 2) advocate that, 'contrary to the modern assumption that societies function on the basis of market exchange and the pursuit of self-interest, the gift still constitutes the foundation of our social fabric'.

Within this social doctrine, in recent studies, identification of the factors associated with motivational reasoning for volunteering has risen to the forefront (Clary et al., 1998; Riemer et al., 2004). As proposed by Wilson and Musick (1999), while the content of such narratives has been framed as 'helping others with no expectation of pay or other material benefits to [him] herself […] this does not mean that volunteer work is of no consequence for the volunteer' (1999, p. 141). In further support of this premise, the academic observations of Grönlund (2011) suggest that current research supports the idea that in the main, altruism, educational improvement, career advancement, and social motivation comprise the motives of volunteering.

To gain some sense of the nature and functions served by volunteerism, Clary et al. (1998) provide some significant insights contending that within this domain two distinct types of volunteering exist: spontaneous helping and planned or sustained helping behaviour. Furthermore, in aiding the understanding of motivations for volunteering, the authors propose a functional model that identifies six types of motivation. This model outlines the functions of volunteering as: Values, Understanding, Social, Career, Protective, and Enhancement. This model is further rationalised by Clary et al., (1998) who maintain that 'the essential message of the functional perspective is that it encourages us to consider a wide range of personal and social motivations that promote […] sustained helping behaviour'. Wuthnow (1991) supports this theory and identifies that volunteering is a mechanism whereby people can express their individuality as it provides those who volunteer with a sense of identity.

Motivation for volunteering is further contextualised by Grönlund (2011) as being dynamic as it alters over time and within different contexts. Finkelstein et al. (2005) assert that such an approach to identity is grounded in the central premise that volunteers

have many social role identities and, as observed by Grönlund, (2011, p. 854) 'social role identities can gradually become central for the individual, a part of one's concept of "self"'. Such a perspective of volunteer identity is also supported by Finkelstein et al. (2005). The authors point out that previous identity studies (Grube and Piliavin, 2000; Piliavin and Callero, 1991) have demonstrated that the robustness of an individual's role identity correlates with a volunteer's actions with regard to donations of money, time and indeed blood donations. In support, Finkelstein et al. (2005) advocate that these research results are intertwined with their own research results, which demonstrate that 'it is [role] identity that directly drives continued volunteer actions as the individual strives to behave in concert with the changed self-concept' (2005, p. 405).

As contextualised by Grönlund (2005) and supported by Taylor (1989), the identity of an individual [volunteer] is also influenced by their beliefs and values. Consequently, there is much to be gleaned from a definition of values. Lee et al. (2000), cited in MacLean and Hamm (2008, p. 356), state that 'Values are principles or standards considered worthwhile or desirable. The help people select and evaluate behaviour, define goals, and set standards for acceptable behaviour'. Within this arena, Cieciuch and Schwartz (2017) identify that while values can be observed as justified and normative, they can also be unrecognised and are often emotional. In his appraisal of individual difference, Hitlin (2007. p. 256) determines that implementing a social identity (volunteering) relates to individual feelings of self-esteem for those whose hold these values: 'Values both influence and are influenced by the role and group identities we claim. They form the core of our personal identity, the individuals' sense of coherence, and representation of the self that abstracts from and exists across situations.'

This summary interrogation of the domain of volunteering demonstrates that the arena is a complex one, which is nuanced by the theoretical concept of creative altruism. Moreover, understanding of motivational reasoning for volunteering is multiplex, with some of the characteristics of the relationship determined by an individual's concepts of identity and self. It can also be seen that volunteer motivations are influenced by their constructs of values and beliefs.

2.7: Conclusion Conceptualising and Understanding PALs – Insights from a Triumvirate Approach

Conceptualising the role of a Gaisce PAL as a meaningful object of investigation across a myriad of relationship disciplines is both complex and challenging. Such complexity involves grasping the multiple meanings attributed to the role of a PAL from the different disciplinary perspectives of teaching, mentoring and volunteering. Of pertinence for this literature review is the revelation of the significance of identity and how each discipline as a triangular element of identity has contextualised such a role. This review also demonstrates that PALs as teachers, mentors and volunteers operate across a dynamic and flexible social system (Lynn, 2010). Accordingly, the need to aid understanding of such PAL dynamics warrants further investigation. Consequently, the methodology associated with these topics is the subject of the next section and the research is framed as follows: understanding PAL characteristics and behaviours; the Gaisce PALs' perception of their role; how PALs are valued and the motivational reasoning for being a Gaisce PAL.

Chapter 3:

Research Methodology

3.1: Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design, methods of data collection and analysis process underpinning this research. The rationale that informed the epistemological perspective for the research will be discussed as will the decisions that informed the adoption of a mixed methods approach. Data collection was divided into two sections: Quantitative Strand A - a quantitative online study that targeted one hundred secondary school PALs and Qualitative Strand B - a set of ten qualitative interviews with secondary school PALs. Decisions made at each stage of the research will be explained, including, the selection of the sample of PAL participant, the survey and interview questions, and the timings and procedures of the interviews. The ethical considerations informing the research are outlined including discussion of the impact of COVID-19 and governmental social distancing. Finally, the approach taken to analyse the quantitative and qualitative data will be explained.

3.2: Theoretical Perspective

An interpretivist epistemological perspective informed this study. As an experienced volunteer in community youth mentoring, the perspective of the researcher was not that of an impartial data gatherer. The fact that the researcher was a practitioner in the field of youth mentoring – both as a volunteer mentor with the Gaelic Athletic Association's Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative and as a youth educator with Foróige, Ireland's National Youth Development Organisation, helped inform the epistemological viewpoint.   Regarding the role of trustworthiness in qualitative research, Rowlands (Carcary, 2009, p. 11) has stated that the interpretivist researcher 'is not perceived as being entirely objective; rather he/she is a part of the research process'. Consequently, this researcher's non-academic volunteer study experiences, which examined attrition levels in a local GAA community (Mangan, 2015), was a motivational factor in undertaking this study. That level of interest could, therefore, deem this author, as being 'a part of the research process'.

Carcary (2009, p. 11) also suggested that 'the interpretivist research paradigm emphasises qualitative research methods, which are flexible, context sensitive and largely concerned with understanding complex issues', all of which are qualities that are well matched to the aims of this study.

3.3: Promoting Quality in Qualitative Data Collection

In light of the reluctance of many critics to accept the legitimacy of qualitative research (Becker, 1990; Maxwell, 2010), a framework that would lend credibility to this PAL research study was employed. Guba's concept, as outlined by Shenton (2004, p. 64), is regarded as a constructive framework that ensures rigour in this field of work. Within this framework, researchers sought to satisfy four criteria relating to the quality of data: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

As asserted by Guba (1981, p. 80) such credibility is when 'investigators attempt to demonstrate the fact that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented'. This was achieved in this PAL study by adopting a well-established research method, as recommended by Guba (1981, p. 80), which was, in this case, mixed methods. Shenton (2004) also cited a theory put forward by Patton (1990), in which he stated that researcher credibility is especially important in qualitative research, since this is 'the person who is the major instrument of data collection and analysis' (p. 68). Such credibility for this study was achieved, as the lead researcher has worked for two decades as a consumer data insight and evaluation analyst, advising Diageo PLC. He is a qualified practising member of the European Coaching and Mentoring Council, a certified international youth coach with the Union of European Football Association, a youth coach with the Gaelic Athletic Association and a qualified Foróige youth mentor. He has also published youth reports in the field of sport participation and attrition for his local community and as such, lends considerable credibility to this research.

Peer scrutiny of the research project is another process that Shenton (2004, p. 67) noted as a factor that can lend further credibility to a study. To adhere to peer scrutiny requirements, each stage of this research was assessed by the assigned supervisor at University College Cork (UCC), Dr Máire Leane; Community-Academic Research Links (CARL) co-ordinator, Dr Anna Kingston and community partner, Dr Yvonne McKenna, Chief Executive Officer of Gaisce – The President's Award. As well as validating the approach being taken as meeting ethical and academic standards, this process proved invaluable in terms of bringing fresh and challenging perspectives to every stage of the research. Furthermore, completing the application for Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) approval provided this academic process with notable rigour, especially in light of new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and further

digital and ethical considerations that emerged as a result of COVID-19, which led University College Cork to mandate increased social distancing and a requirement to embrace online communication.[1] As contended by Shenton (2004), transferability is another feature that researchers must be mindful of when designing a study. This criterion can be met by providing sufficient detail about:

> […] the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting. (Shenton, 2004, p. 69)

The detailed description provided in this chapter of the sampling methodology and the settings, duration and content of the interviews conducted aspire to meet this criterion. Although Shenton (2004, p. 69) identifies the fact that meeting dependability criterion is difficult in qualitative work, it is hoped that future investigators will be able to successfully repeat this PAL study. Finally, given the researcher's mentoring experience, Shenton's (2004, p. 72) advice was also taken into account in an attempt to achieve confirmability:

> Here steps must be taken to help ensure, as far as possible, that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher.

This was achieved through the addition of quotations from the qualitative interviews to support any assertions made, as well as the provision of interview transcripts as currently stored in a password protected University College Cork digitally repository (see Appendix K). Furthermore, to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity and context of this research topic, the researcher undertook Gaisce PAL training, Tusla Safeguarding and Gaisce Garda Vetting. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to understand the complexity of the PAL training and administration process. Moreover, to further comprehend the role of PALs, the researcher also attended ceremonies for the PAL Silver Award, PAL Gold Award and the PAL Civic Merit Award, which provided contextual insights into the roles and practices of Gaisce PALs.

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[1] Researcher's note: While the SREC application for this study was completed as an exercise in good practice vis a vis ethical research, the application was not assessed by SREC as it is a university policy to only provide such overview to research based as distinct from taught masters.

3.4 Research Design: Mixed Methods

This section will provide an overview of the rationale behind the selection of mixed methods as the methodology for this Gaisce PAL Study. The process of selecting a suitable method was informed by a desire to find a methodological framework that would allow for the collection and objective analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data sets and would allow scope to draw on the researcher's mentoring experience. In their analysis of the value of qualitative research, Qayyum et al. support the inclusion of qualitative studies, contending that quantitative data tends to 'result in a broad but shallower picture' (2010, p. 182).

Following an analysis of a number of methodology options, which included both the Delphi Model and the Grounded Theory Model, it was eventually decided that, due to the complexity of both these models and the resources necessary for their implementation, the mixed methods model was the most suitable. This research model allows for simultaneous qualitative and quantitative analysis and facilitates the extraction of a broader set of data from the interviews. This view is supported by Creswell (2003), who identified the 'Concurrent Triangulation Strategy' as the most popular of the six foremost mixed methods models utilised by researchers. Creswell's suggestion that researchers use two different methods 'in an attempt to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study' (2003, p. 217) informed the researcher's selection of a mixed methods model that adopted an approach to facilitate the concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data.

Consequently, this mixed methods strategy was employed in this Gaisce PAL research. Quantitative (Strand A), and qualitative (Strand B) data was collected in the form of responses to a set of closed-ended and open-ended questions (see Appendix F and J). It was hoped that qualitative data obtained in conjunction with quantitative data would result in richer data and would provide the basis for a more comprehensive overview of the role, motivations and experiences and identities of Gaisce PAL and how such roles are valued.

3.5: PAL Research: Quantitative Strand A Survey

Building upon Gaisce's previous quantitative PAL research in 2019, it was proposed that a quantitative Strand A (online) survey with a sample target group of one hundred active PAL secondary school participants from both DEIS and non-DEIS schools should be conducted. The purpose of conducting this questionnaire survey would be to establish the demographic backgrounds of the participants and to provide data that would corroborate the findings of the qualitative survey. As stated by O'Leary, the most basic statistical analysis requires a minimum of about thirty respondents, as 'anything smaller and it can be difficult to show statistical significance' (2005, p. 91). Although the original participant target group was one hundred interviewees, the achieved response rate of secondary school participants was eighty-seven.

3.5.1: PAL Research: Quantitative Strand A Survey: Participants

The eighty-seven participants used in the sample base for this quantitative Strand A survey were drawn from Gaisce's database of one thousand two hundred active Gaisce school PALs who are registered and accredited with Gaisce, vetted by An Garda Síochána, and are active implementers of the Gaisce Award programme in both DEIS and non-DEIS secondary schools. The details of the Gaisce PAL survey were communicated to members of the data base by Gaisce's CEO, Yvonne McKenna, who informed potential participants about the nature and purpose of the study. Prospective Gaisce PAL Strand A survey participants were invited to click an embedded survey link, which directed respondents to complete an online Google PAL survey form. This survey form was attached to the lead researcher's UCC account (118227402@umail.ucc.ie) and is currently available on UCC's institutional Google Drive storage (see Appendix K).

3.5.2: PAL Research: Quantitative Strand A Survey: Timings and Response

The Strand A (online) survey commenced on Tuesday 12 May 2020 and concluded on Sunday 14 June 2020. Survey timings were scheduled to coincide with the end of the secondary school academic year, which occurred on Friday 29 May 2020. A total of eighty-seven secondary school Gaisce PAL participants responded positively by completing the survey. Out of the eighty-seven participants, thirteen did not agree to the publication of extracts from their interviews; accordingly, these extracts have been identified and withdrawn from the final published work (see Appendix K).

3.5.3: PAL Research: Quantitative Strand A Survey: Impact of COVID-19

The effect that COVID-19 had on the engagement rate of participants partaking in Gaisce Strand A survey cannot be readily measured. However, as observed by Gaisce's Head of Communications, Holly Furlong (2020), there was a significant increase in the level of email communication correspondence to Gaisce PALs during the survey period, compared to the previous year. This could have resulted in a reduced open rate of emails due to email weariness. The initial survey email that was sent to 1200 Gaisce PALs resulted in an open rate of 33%, with 361 respondents opening the survey email. While 35 survey responses were completed during the first week of the Strand A research programme, these responses tapered significantly to five during the second week of the programme. Consequently, it was recognised by both Holly Furlong and the lead researcher that additional emails and Twitter communication campaigns were necessary to increase awareness of the survey and encourage PAL participation. As a result, an additional Twitter PAL survey prompt campaign commenced on 27 May 2020 and 5 June 2020 to boost PAL engagement and encourage PALs to partake in the survey (see Appendix M).

3.5.4: PAL Research: Quantitative Strand A Survey: Communications

Communication regarding the nature and scope of the Strand A survey was sent directly from Gaisce's CEO by email to secondary school PALs, utilising Gaisce's current secure customer relationship management digital platform, Salesforce. The content of the communication was devised and developed by Philip Mangan, in consultation with Holly Furlong. As an incentive to encourage potential participants to complete the Strand A survey, Gaisce offered a €50 prize voucher. A new logo to help build awareness for the research campaign was developed, which showcased a joint partnership between Gaisce and UCC (see Appendix M).

3.5.5: PAL Research: Quantitative Strand A Survey: Procedure

Each online survey lasted twenty minutes on average. Participants were asked twenty-seven closed-ended questions and twelve open-ended questions (see Appendix F). Survey respondents were encouraged to express their opinions and make observations about their role as a Gaisce mentor and the field of mentoring. Questions on the subject of PAL mentorship were categorised in line with the study carried out by Silke et al. (2019) - *Relational dynamics in youth mentoring: A mixed-methods study*, and included

the following categories: Gaisce PAL characteristics and behaviours, PAL motivational reasoning, the Gaisce PAL's role and understanding, the benefits and challenges of being a Gaisce PAL, and the perception of Gaisce's programme support. A further category on the effectiveness of the Gaisce programme was added by the lead researcher.

3.5.6: PAL Research: Quantitative Strand A Survey: Materials and Locations

For the purposes of the data collection, online survey responses were recorded using UCC's institutional Google Drive. All data was stored in a password protected UCC digital drive and a copy of the data collected from the survey was retained by UCC for verification purposes. Participants were required to digitally sign embedded consent forms (see Appendix E) prior to their interviews. Survey respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and consent to record their interview responses was acquired.

3.5.7: PAL Research: Quantitative Strand A Survey : Results

The online survey closed on Sunday 14 June 2020 and the data was downloaded on Monday 15 June 2020. The data from the survey was then checked for errors and uploaded to Google Drive through UCC-supplied Google G-Suite. An anonymised summary record of the participants' responses is enclosed (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5).

3.6: PAL Research: Qualitative Strand of Research

The sample for the qualitative strand of the research (Strand B) was drawn from the database of one thousand two hundred active school PALs. When soliciting potential participants, the advice of O'Leary was adhered to: 'in order to generate a sample that is meaningful, and possibly representative, non-random sampling demands conscientious decision making' (2005, p. 93). In this case, a pool of one thousand two hundred Gaisce PALs was available for research use. Observations made by Silverman also validated the approach of working with 'sampleable' or theoretically defined units: 'Theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research question' (2010, pp. 143–144). In Strand B of the research, a group of ten participants was selected, based on advice from Ritchie and Lewis (2003) that small sample sizes are best suited to qualitative research. The researchers cite three main reasons for this (2003, pp 83-84). Firstly, is that there comes a moment when minimal new evidence is obtained from each further fieldwork group. 'In other words,

there is a point of diminishing returns when increasing the sample size no longer results in new material'. Second, statements about incidence or prevalence are not the concern of qualitative research; there is no requirement to ensure that the sample is of sufficient scale to provide estimates, or to determine statistically significant discriminatory variables. This is in contrast to survey samples that seek to draw statistical inferences. Third, the type of information that qualitative studies yield is rich in detail and highly intensive in terms of the resources it requires (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003. Pp 83-84).

3.6.1: PAL Research: Qualitative Strand B: Participants

For this strand of the research, ten Gaisce PAL secondary school interviewees were selected based on an educational criterion, as evidenced by the Department of Education and Skills (2018), which is representative of the current national student demographic of 371,500 students across 723 schools in Ireland. Furthermore, of the current population of secondary school students, 76,000 are DEIS school attendees, representing 20% of Ireland's secondary school student population (2018, p. 3). Consequently, as a representative sample, this study recruited eight Gaisce PALs working in non-DEIS schools and two Gaisce PAL participants from DEIS schools. Moreover, of the eight PALs who worked in DEIS schools, further consideration for the selection of candidates was the criterion that the PAL participants should work in schools representing a broad socio-economic and gender mix. This is in line with Ritchie et al.'s recommendation 'that some diversity is included in the sample group' (2003, p. 79). With this in mind, the participants chosen for Strand B of the research worked in the following schools: a fee-paying mixed gender school, a fee-paying single-sex boys school, a fee-paying single-sex girls school, a non-fee-paying mixed gender school, a non-fee-paying single-sex boys school, and a non-fee-paying single-sex girls school.

As the programme represents a joint Community Action Research Links (CARL) partnership initiative between Gaisce and UCC, final non-biased considerations resulted in Gaisce development officers identifying half the potential interviewees, with the remaining participants being identified by UCC's lead researcher, Philip Mangan. Furthermore, a non-probability purposive sampling method was used to select the sample group. As outlined by Ritchie and Lewis, this method is suited to qualitative research because it is not meant to be statistically representative; instead, it uses the

characteristics of the PAL active population for the basis of selection — a quality that makes it 'well suited to small-scale, in-depth studies' (2003, p. 79).

Although it was initially planned to communicate expressions of qualitative interview interest to all school-based PALs through Gaisce's existing communication channels, the impact of COVID-19 resulted in national school and organisation closures. Consequently, this pandemic resulted in the closure of Gaisce's head office, restricting personnel access to computing servers and digital systems. As a result of these institutional restrictions, a reframed PAL selection process, which utilised a purposive non-probability sampling procedure (Saunders et al. 2009) was undertaken. Apart from being over the age of 18, the selection criteria were that participants were active PALs based in secondary schools, representative of Irish educational demographics and a further criterion that at least two participants volunteered as PALs in DEIS schools. Having identified the criteria for eligibility, three Gaisce regional development officers and the lead researcher identified relevant PALs, made contact, and asked if they were interested in a follow up interview. Following initial contact from Gaisce, the participatory follow-up process was enacted by Philip Mangan, at which stage the purpose and nature of the study (see Appendix H), as well as pre-screening requirements, were made clear (see Appendix I). Consequently, ten non-randomised participants, meeting the selection criteria as active PALs – working in either DEIS or non-DEIS schools, partook in the Strand B qualitative interviews.

3.6.2: PAL Research: Qualitative Strand B: Materials and Location
Participant PAL interviews commenced on Monday 11 May 2020 and concluded on Saturday 16 May 2020. Each interview lasted forty minutes on average. The 10 interviewees were asked a series of thirty-eight questions contained in a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix J). Participants were asked twelve closed-ended questions to establish their demographics, and then the rest of the interview was conducted on an open-ended basis (see Appendix J). Interviewees were encouraged to express their opinions and make observations about their role as a Gaisce PAL and the field of PAL mentoring. Participants were informed of the fact that the interviewer works on a voluntary basis as a youth mentor with Foróige and the Gaelic Athletic Association and has undertaken Gaisce PAL training as a means of building a rapport.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, all qualitative interviews were conducted over the phone. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice phone recorder and a copy of the data collected from the survey was retained by UCC for verification purposes. The audio files were deleted from the recording device once they were transferred to UCC's secure digital repository. The interviewees were emailed consent forms (see Appendix I) prior to their interviews and were asked to sign and return them. All interviewees were informed of the purpose of the study and consent to record their interviews was acquired. Questions on the subject of PAL mentorship included the following categories: Gaisce PAL characteristics and behaviours, PAL motivational reasoning, the Gaisce PAL's role and understanding, the benefits and challenges of being a PAL, and the perception of the programme's support. A further category on the effectiveness of the Gaisce programme was added by the lead researcher.

3.6.3: PAL Research: Qualitative Strand B: Transcription and Analysis

At the data analysis stage, all the interviews were fully transcribed into Microsoft Word. A record of the participants' responses are stored securely in University College Cork's digitally encrypted servers (see Appendix K). Personal details from the interviews were anonymised. All participants agreed to the publication of extracts from their interviews; accordingly, selected extracts from the transcripts are included in subsequent chapters.

The responses to the 12 open-ended questions provided by the 87 participants in Strand A were also transcribed and included in the qualitative data set. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis framework was adhered to and following a familiarisation process of the data, further data analysis followed which included the categorisation of emerging themes. As advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006), a combination of open coding followed by thematic coding was employed. To aid the process of statistical coding, a Quirkos coding software programme was utilised, which resulted in the generation of 2204 preliminary codes across 154 themes (see Appendix L).

On realisation of the richness and volume of data collected during the research process, it was decided to utilise such data as was unnecessary for this thesis, to inform an ancillary summation report for Gaisce. This ancillary report will compile additional knowledge of the current motivations of teachers in undertaking PAL work, gain further insights of the effectiveness of the Gaisce Programme, understand the benefits and

challenges of being a mentor, and gather further insights of the perceptions of programme supports. This report will be presented to Gaisce in October 2020.

3.7: PAL Research: Ethical Considerations:

As required by University College Cork, consent forms with the participant's approval and signature were completed. Within this consent framework (see Appendix E and Appendix I), participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, if they so desired. The identity of the interviewees was not noted, but demographic details were required to contextualise the views of the respondents. All interviews were transcribed and the recordings and transcripts have only been used for the purpose stated on the consent form. In addition, a detailed SREC approval process was prepared[2]. All data was stored in a password protected UCC digital repository.

3.8: PAL Research: Conclusion

This chapter has described the mixed methods methodology employed in the including details of sampling, data collection tools, data collection process, data analysis and ethical considerations. The next two chapters will present and discuss the data analysis from the field research conducted.

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[2] Researchers note: As previously noted (see page 25) the SREC application for this study was completed as an exercise in good practice vis a vis ethical research, the application was not assessed by SREC as it is a university policy to only provide such overview to research based as distinct from taught masters.

Chapter 4:

Understanding

PAL Characteristics and Behaviours

Findings

4.1: Introduction:

The data discussed in this chapter was extracted from the set of quantitative questions in Strand A of the PAL research (see Appendix F). The 87 PAL respondents who took part in this online survey represented more than 12% of Irish secondary schools (DES, 2019). As outlined, in Chapter 3, the survey was categorised into five themes: characteristics and behaviours; role understanding; benefits and challenges; motivational reasoning; and programme support. Of the 41 questions asked, 26 were closed-ended and elicited a factual response, while 15 were open-ended and investigative in nature.

Following interrogation of the data, the data from the closed-ended questions was categorised as quantitative data, while the data from the open-ended questions was categorised as qualitative data. The qualitative data was further analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis and the results of this analysis are discussed in the following chapter, Chapter Five. Consequently, this chapter will present the quantitative factual data gathered from Strand A and is structured around one central theme-based section: *Characteristics and Behaviours of PALs.*

Section 4.2 will outline the demographic profile of respondents; the breadth of their experience as teachers; the nature of their school environment; their current responsibilities related to Gaisce; and the time they devote to the programme. *Section 4.3* will present the key findings and discuss the relevance of the data while *Section 4.4* will conclude with a summary of the data and its findings.

4.2: PAL Characteristics and Behaviours: Results

The following information contained in Figures 1–23, co-relate to data as collected from questions 1–23 Characteristics and Behaviours in Strand A of the research.

Figure 1: County of Work of Gaisce PAL Participants

Q.1A: 87 Respondents: Characteristics
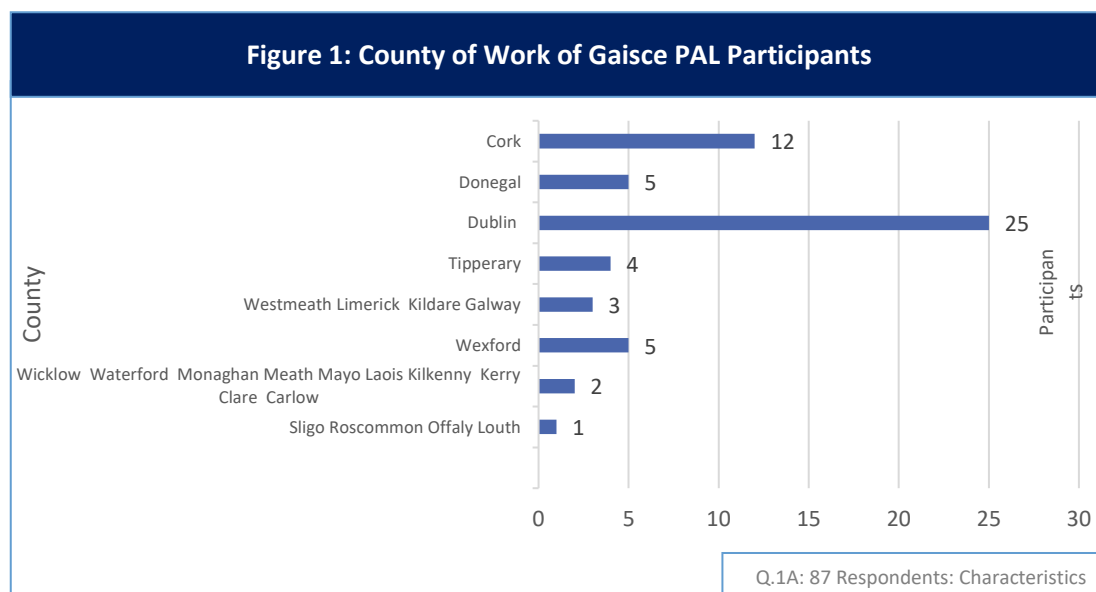
As shown in Figure 1, it is significant that the operating territory of Gaisce – The President's Award covers the counties of the Republic of Ireland only. Among the counties where PALs worked, Dublin emerged as the most prevalent, with 29% of the respondents, while the second, third, and fourth highest numbers of participants lived in Cork, Donegal, and Wexford. No participants from Cavan, Leitrim, or Longford took part in this survey.

Figure 2: Length of Educational Service of Gaisce PAL Participants

Q.2A: 84 Responses: Characteristics
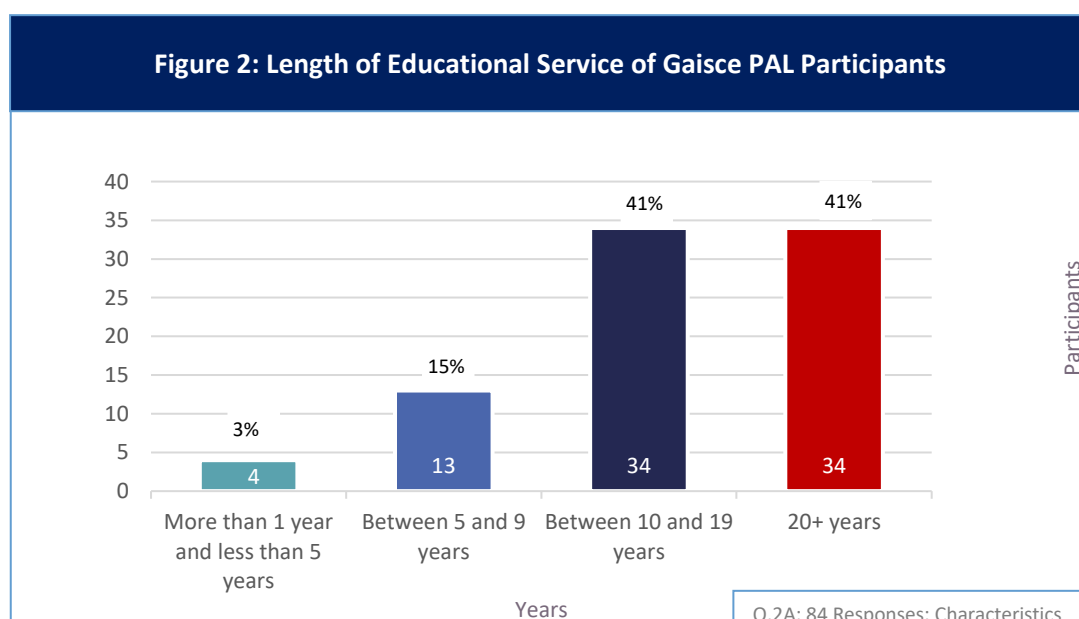
The results, as demonstrated in Figure 2 show that participants across the general sample group had a significant level of educational experience, with 82% of PAL respondents having ten years' educational experience or more. Further analysis also showed that less than 3% of respondents had between more than one year and less than five years' experience working in the educational sector.

Figure 3: Gaisce PAL Participants' Highest Level of Academic Achievement

Award	Participants
M.Ed (Current)	1
B.Sc General	1
PhD (NFQ Level 10)	2
Research Master's Degree (NFQ Level 9)	13
Taught Master's Degree (NFQ Level 9)	25
Postgraduate Diploma (NFQ Level 8/9)	30
Honours Bachelor's Degree (NFQ Level 8)	11
Ordinary Degree (NFQ Level 7)	3
Higher Certificate (NFQ Level 6)	1

Q.3A: 87 Responses: Characteristics

As illustrated in Figure 3 above, when asked in question three about the highest level of educational achievement they attained, the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level nine emerged as the most popular level achieved by participants. Two Gaisce PAL respondents had achieved a Doctor of Philosophy Degree.

Figure 4: Gaisce PAL Participants' Occupational Titles

Roles	Respondents	Roles	Respondents
Assistant Principal	12	Teacher and Acting Year Head	1
Deputy Principal	3	Teacher and Year Head	1
Director of Formation and Services	1	Teacher English and Guidance Counsellor	2
Guidance Counsellor	3	Teacher English and Meitheal Co-ordinator	2
Head of Physical Education	1	Teacher English and Physical Education	2
Programmes Co-ordinator	5	Teacher Home Economics and B Post Holder	2
TY Co-ordinator and Teacher	7	Teacher Maths, PE and CSPE	1
TY Co-ordinator	10	Teacher Physical Education	2
TY Head	2	Teacher Physical Education and B Post Holder	1
Special Needs Co-ordinator	1	Teacher and Programmes Co-ordinator	1
PAL – Parent at School	1	Teacher of Irish, History and English	1
Teacher Newly Qualified	1	Teachers	32

Q.4A: 87 respondents: Characteristics

Question four above focused on the current positions held by Gaisce Secondary School PALs. While the responses revealed that 66% of participants had classified their position as 'teacher', further analysis revealed that 20% of respondents held a B Post or higher school management or leadership role.

Figure 5: Gaisce PAL Participants' Age Range

Age	Participants	Percent
25-34 years old	21	24%
35-44 years old	30	34%
45-54 years old	25	29%
55+	11	13%

Years

Q.5A: 87 Responses: Characteristics
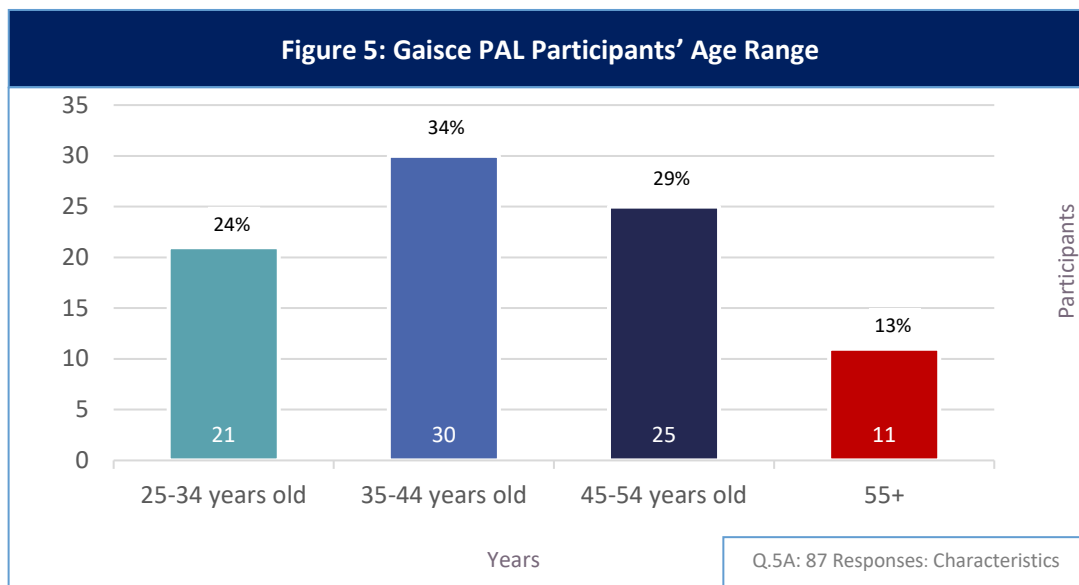
The results indicated in Figure 5 above, highlight that 76% of Gaisce School PALs are over 35 years old, while 63% of respondents range in age from 35 to 54 years old. Meanwhile, the upper age threshold of 55 years or older constitutes 13% of respondents. Ancillary analysis further revealed that 24% of PAL respondents are aged between 25–35 years while 13% of participants are over 55 years old.

Figure 6: Gaisce PAL Participants Gender

Male 20%

Female 80%

Q.6A: 87 Responses: Characteristics
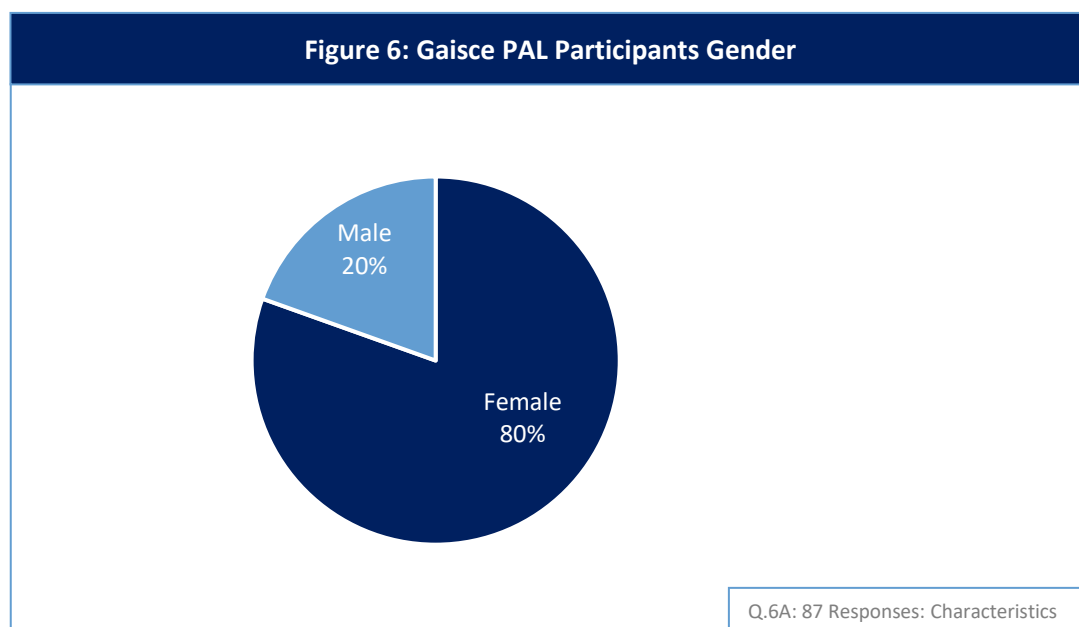
Of the 87 school-based Gaisce PALs who took part in Strand A, 80% were female.

Figure 7: Categorisation of Gaisce Participants' Schools

DEIS school
25%

75%

Non-DEIS School

Q.7A: 86 Responses: Characteristics
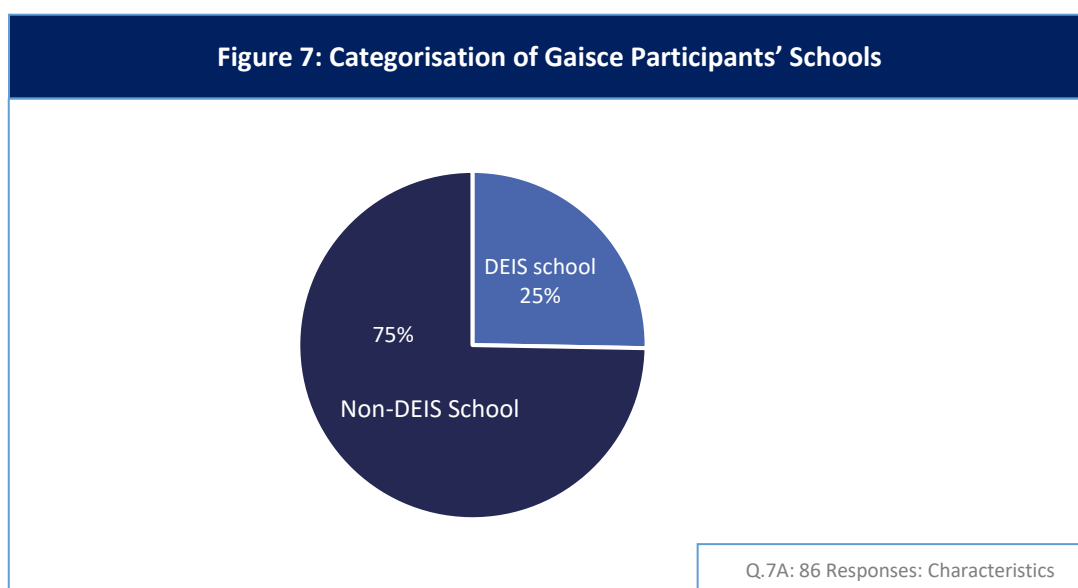
Question seven focused on the Department of Education's (2018) school classification of DEIS and non-DEIS schools. It established that 75% of participants currently work in non-DEIS schools. Of significance, in this survey DEIS schools accounted for 25% of the total cohort of institutions.

Figure 8: Gender of Participants' Schools Involved in the Gaisce Programme

Participants

60%

17%

23%

52

15

20

A mixed-gender school   A single-sex boys school   A single-sex girls school

Gender of Schools

Q.8A: 87 Responses: Characteristics
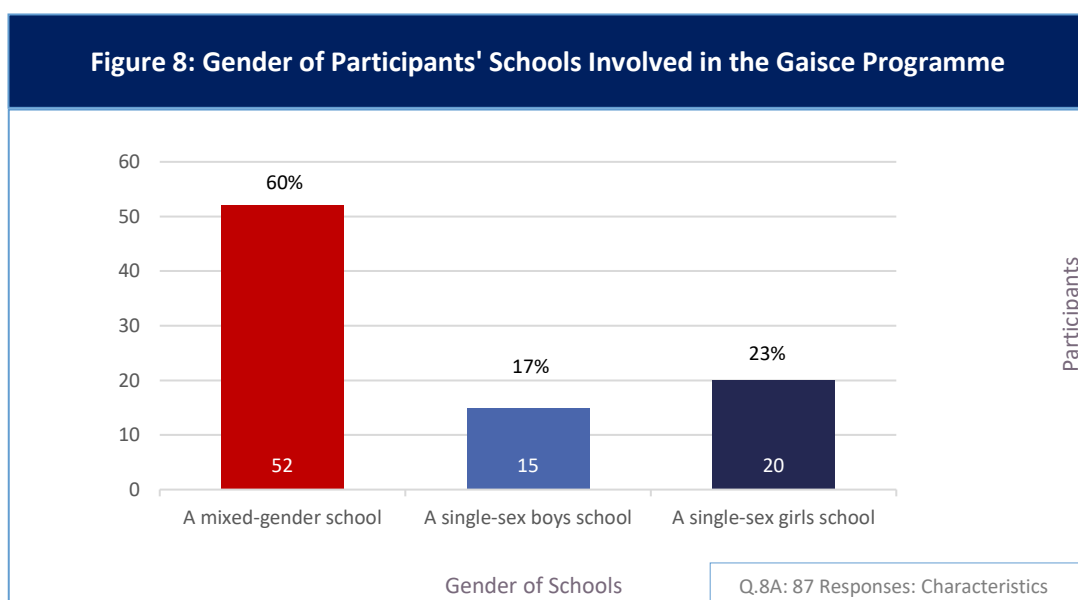
When asked to categorise the gender of their school, 60% of Gaisce PAL participants reported their schools as being 'a mixed-gender school'.

Figure 9: Pupil Size of Gaisce PAL Participant's Schools
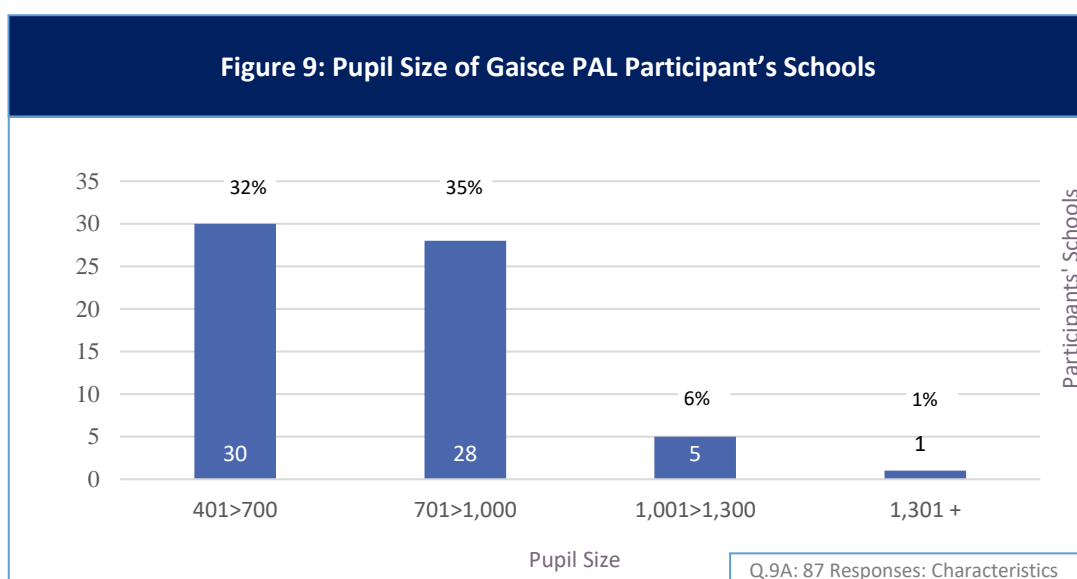
As illustrated in Figure 9, 74% of Gaisce PAL participants work in schools which have more than 400 pupils. Further analysis reveals that one Gaisce PAL is employed in a secondary school whose roll numbers exceed 1,300 students.

Figure 10: Duration of Participants' Schools Involvement in the Gaisce Awards
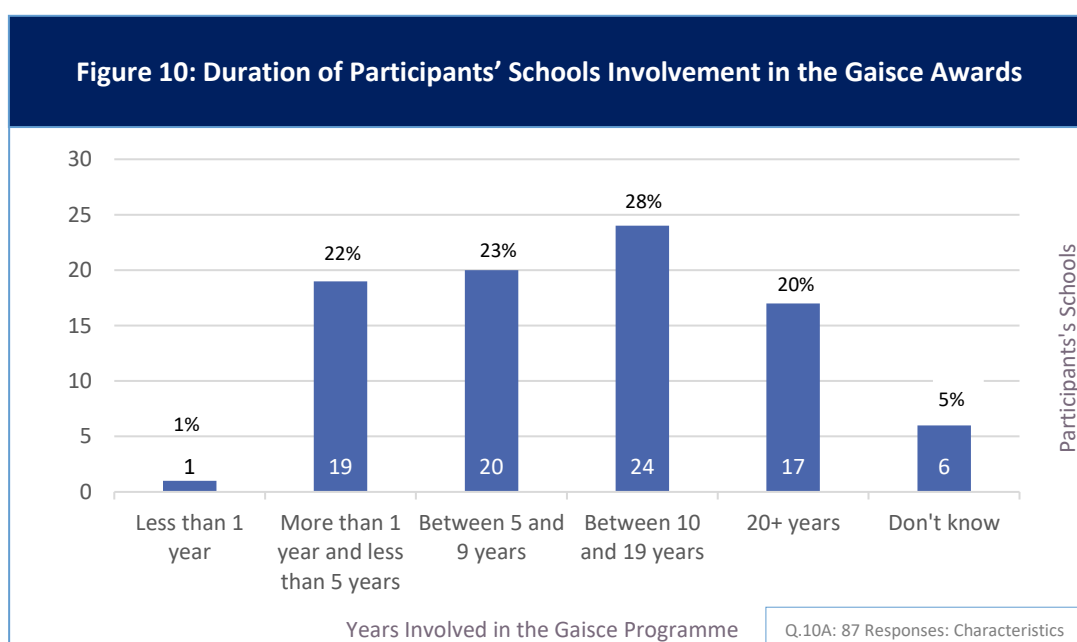
Results as indicated in Figure 10 reveal that 71% of Gaisce PAL schools have been involved in the Gaisce programme for more than five years. Furthermore, 48% of participants' schools have run the Gaisce programme for more than 10 years.

Figure 11: Gaisce Awards Type Offered by PAL Participants' Schools
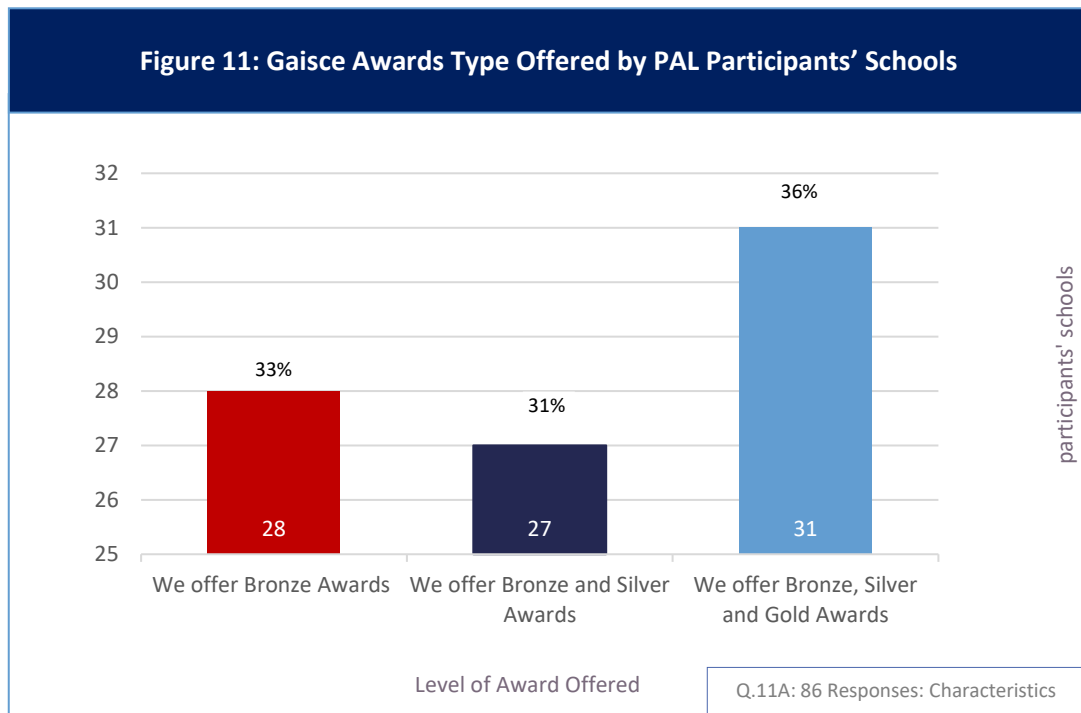
Figure 11 demonstrates that 33% of respondents' schools only offer the Gaisce Bronze Award, while 64% of the PALs surveyed specified that their schools did not offer Gaisce participants the opportunity to progress to a Gold Award.

Figure 12: Participants' Involvement in the Gaisce Programme as a Youth
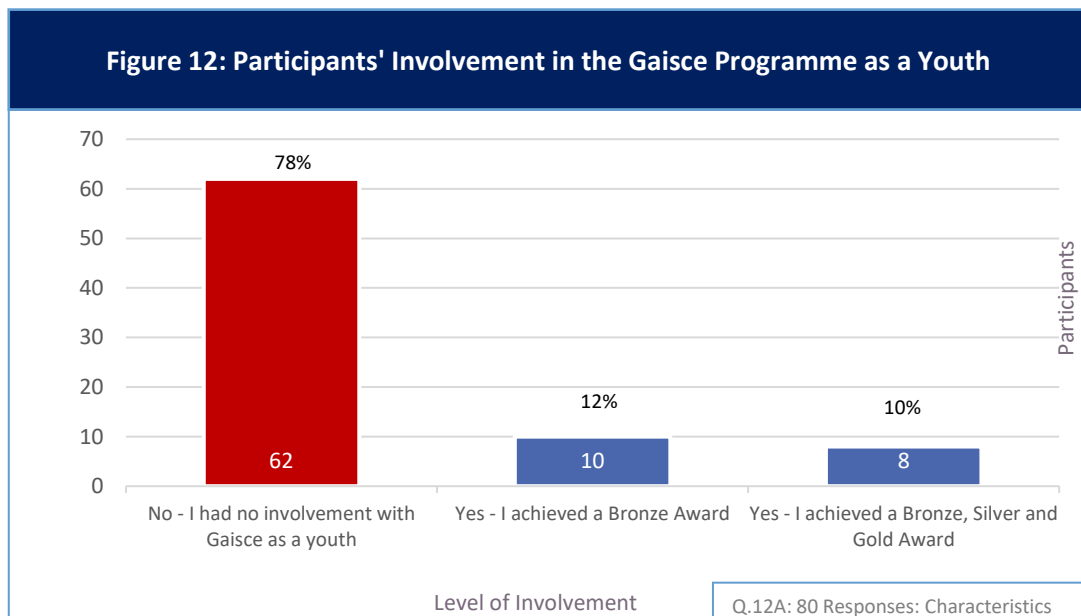
Figure 12 demonstrates that 78% of PAL participants had no previous involvement with Gaisce as a youth. The findings also indicated that 10% of respondents had achieved a Gaisce Gold Award.

Figure 13: Years Involved as a School PAL in the Gaisce Programme
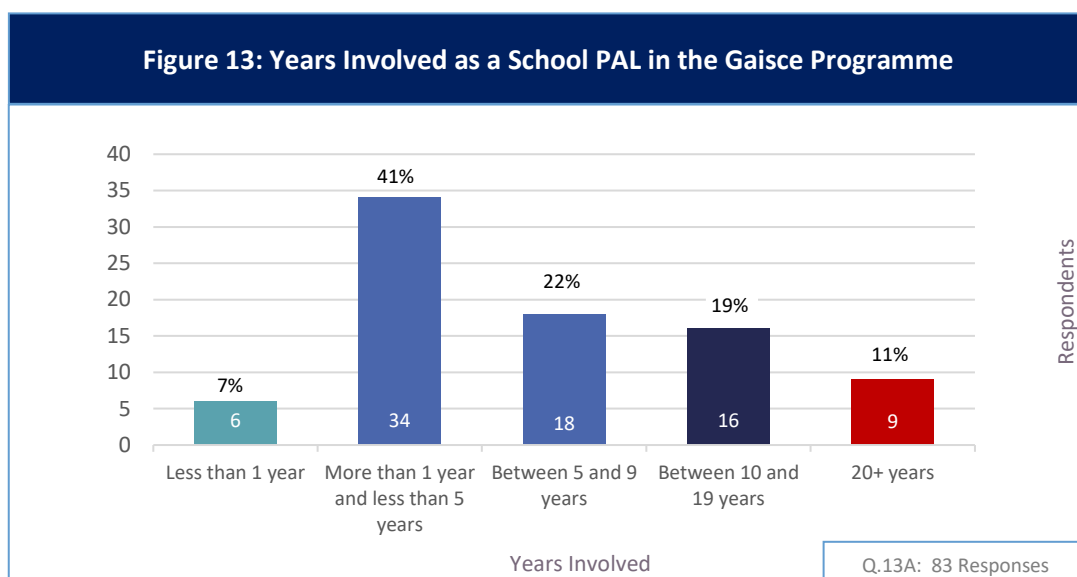
When participants were asked how long they had been a Gaisce PAL in question 13, more than one year and less than five years emerged as the most popular choice, with over 41% of PALs represented in this cohort. However, it should be noted that 52% of respondents have more than ten years' experience running the Gaisce programme in their respective schools.

Figure 14: How Participants Became Gaisce PALs in their Schools
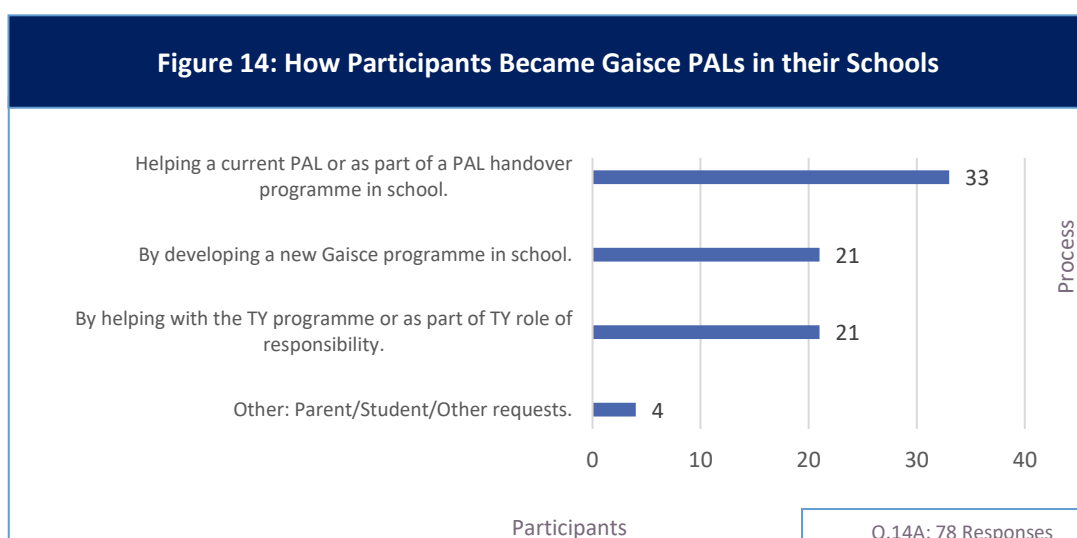
Figure 14 provides a descriptive summary of the process by which participants became Gaisce PALs. Results show that 42% of the respondents became involved in the Gaisce programme by 'helping a current PAL or as part of a handover programme in school'. The findings also indicate that 27% of respondents became Gaisce PALs by developing a new Gaisce programme in their school, while a further 27% of participants entered the leadership programme by 'helping with the TY programme or as part of a TY role of responsibility'.

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Figure 15: Support of Colleagues Offered as an aid to PALs in Schools

- I work on the Gaisce programme alone
- I work with another Gaisce PAL/ PALs and team members
- I work with other non-Gaisce PAL team members

51% · 41% · 8%

Q.15A: 83 Responses: Characteristics
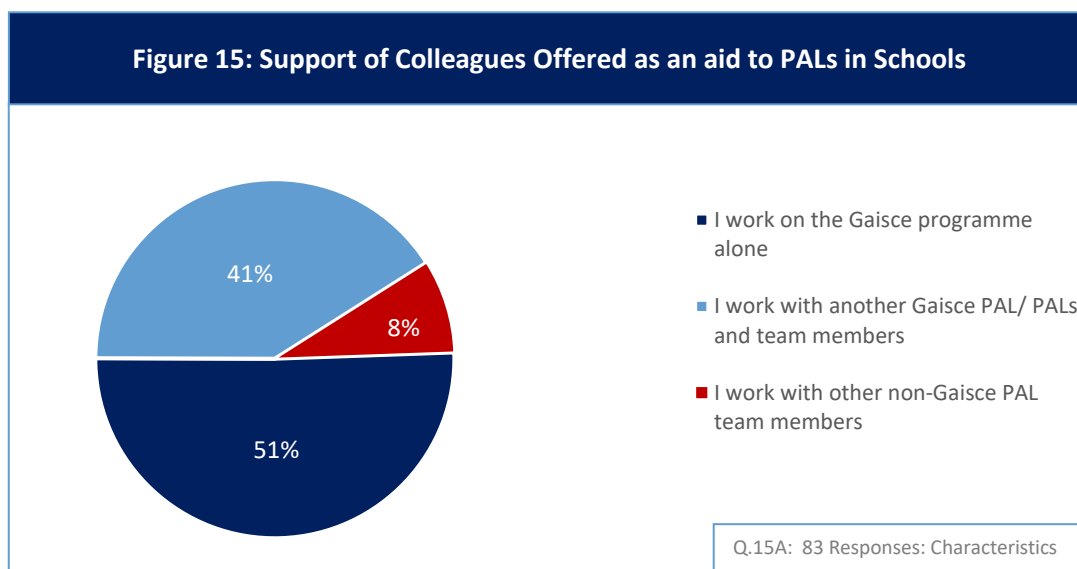
Figure 15 shows that 51% of PAL respondents work alone. Further analysis also showed that during the academic year 2019/2020, Gaisce school-based PALs managed, on average, 33 Bronze Award participants.

Meanwhile, Figure 16 below demonstrates that while there were in excess of 2,500 Bronze Award participants in the respondents' groups collectively, they only managed 204 Silver participants during the same time period. This represented an average of 15 Silver Awardees per respondent during this time.

Figure 16: Award Participants Manged by PALs from September 2019 to May 2020

	Total Number Per Survey Response	Participant Response Rate	Participants Managed Per PAL Response
Participants Managed Bronze	2546	76	**33**
Participants Managed Silver	204	13	**15**
Participants Managed Gold	72	4	**18**

Q.16A - A16C: 87 Respondents: Characteristics

Figure 17: Attendance by PAL Participants at a Gaisce Organised Ceremony

Reasons Non-Attendance: Response 17Aa

No time or other commitments	41%
I have no participants involved	52%
PALs organise own Awards	7%

Q.17A: 85 Responses: Characteristics
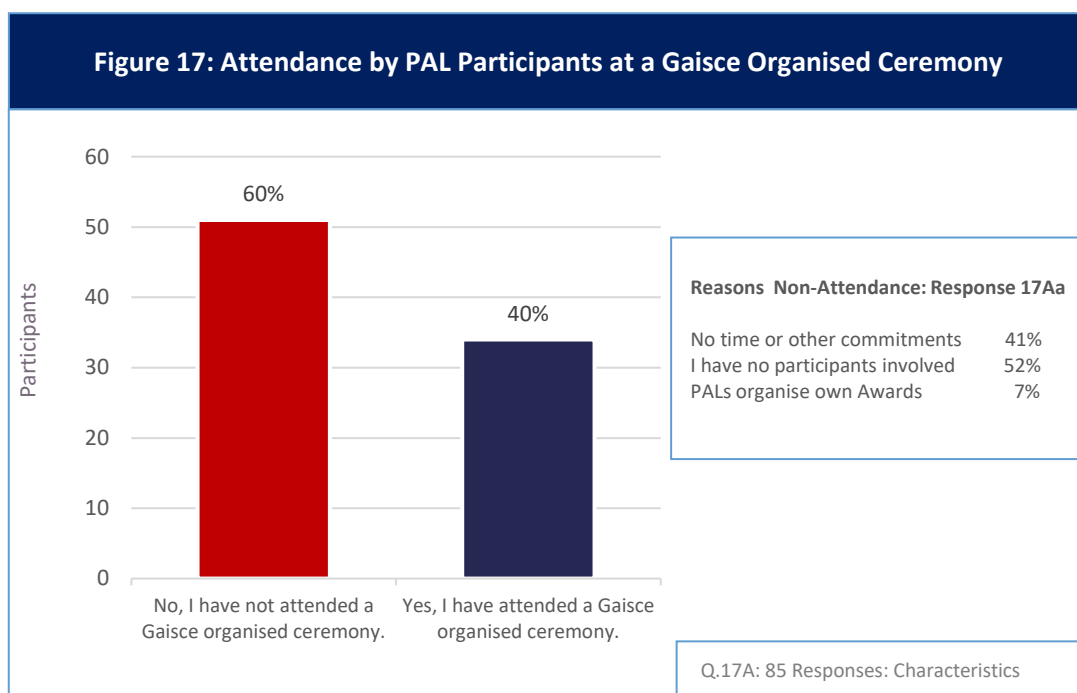
The results shown in Figure 17 demonstrate that 60% of PAL participants have never attended a ceremony organised by Gaisce. Furthermore, while 52% of respondents rationalised that they had 'no participants involved', 41% stated that non-attendance was due to having 'no time or other commitments'.

Time was also at the forefront in Figure 18 below, which illustrates how 91% of PAL participants surveyed spent less than three hours per week implementing the Gaisce Award Programme in their schools.

Figure 18: Weekly Time Spent by PALs Managing Gaisce Programme

Q.18A: 79 Responses: Behaviours

44

Figure 19: Weekly Time Spent by PALs Volunteering in non-Gaisce Activity

Q.19A: 69 Responses: Behaviours
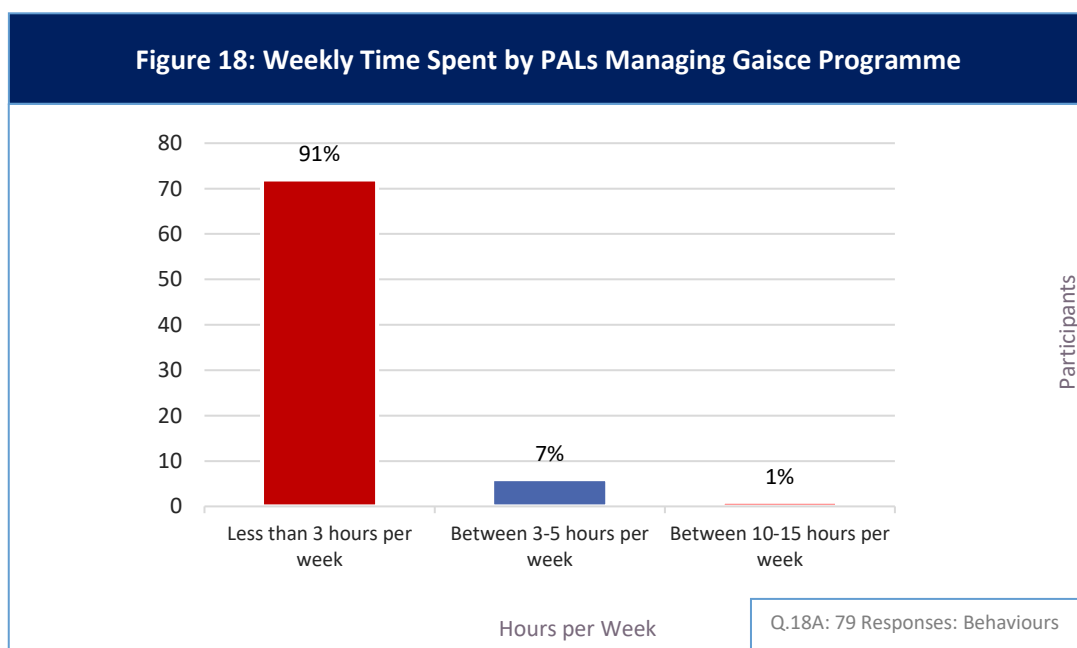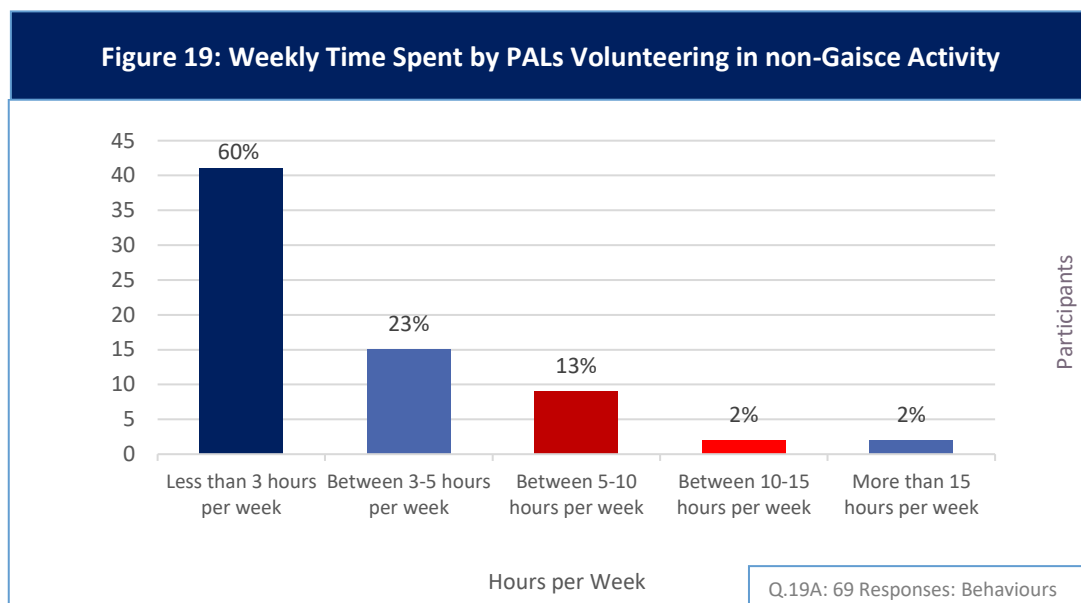
Participants across the general sample group demonstrated a significant level of commitment to volunteering activity. As can be seen in Figure 19 above, 40% of Gaisce PALs spent more than three hours per week volunteering for non-Gaisce voluntary activities.

Furthermore, as evidenced in Figure 20 below, 74% of PAL Strand A respondents professed to actively volunteering, with sporting activities being the most popular activity undertaken, at 43%. Community/Education volunteering was also a popular choice of activity, ranking second among participants, at 29% of the total.

Figure 20: Type of non-Gaisce Volunteering by Gaisce PAL Participants

Q.20A: 73 Responses: Behaviours

Figure 21: Adventure Journey Planning Approach by PAL Participants

Legend:
- We organised it through an Adventure Centre
- We organised it independently
- We used an independent guide

45% (36), 49% (39), 6% (5)

Apporach Type

Participants

Q.21A: 80 Responses: Behaviours
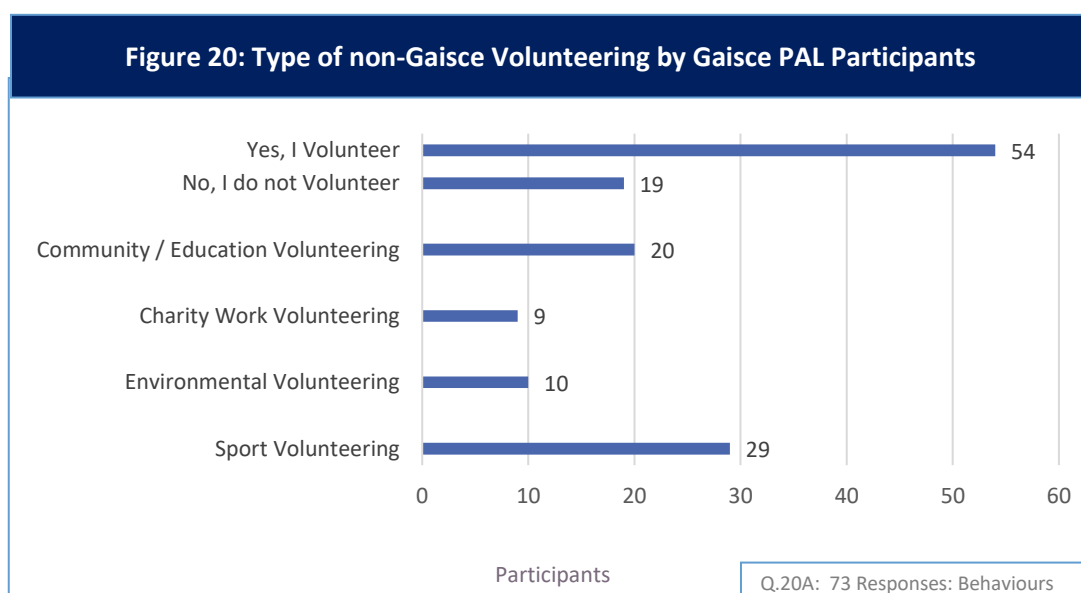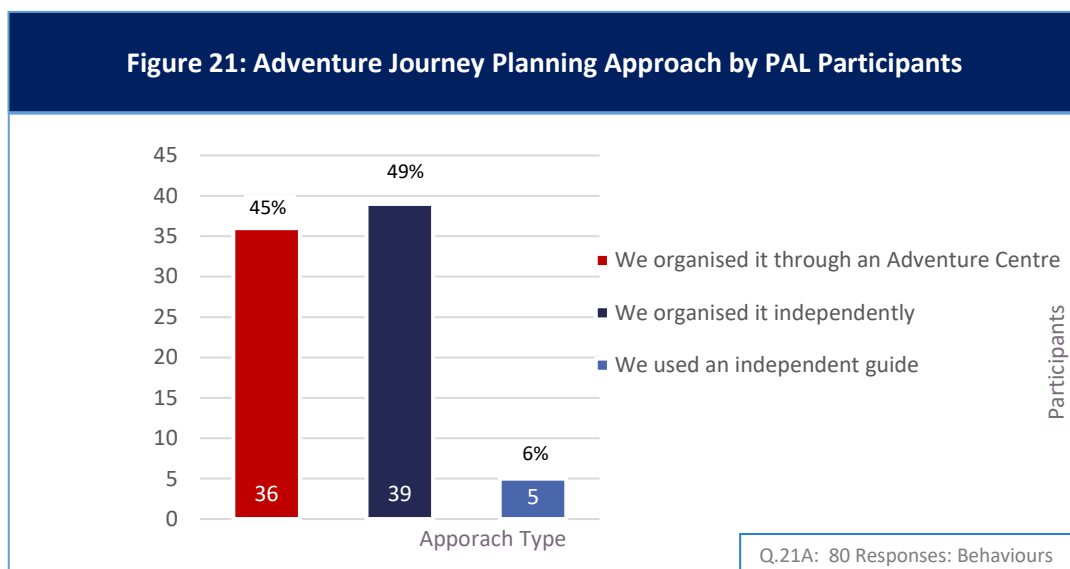
The results, as shown in Figure 21, indicate that 45% of PAL participants organised their Adventure Journey through an adventure centre. The findings also indicated that 49% of the respondents self-planned their Journeys, with a further 5% of respondents availing of the services of an independent guide.

Overall, an examination of participant responses to question 22 below highlighted that 83% of Gaisce PAL school respondents found their Adventure Journeys to be 'moderately and/or gratifyingly challenging'.

Figure 22: Challenge Ratings of Adventure Journeys as Experienced by PALs

Challenge Rating:
- Not particularly challenging: 9
- Moderately challenging: 29
- Gratifyingly challenging: 37
- Excessively challenging: 2
- Other: 3

Participants

Q.22A: 80 Responses: Behaviours
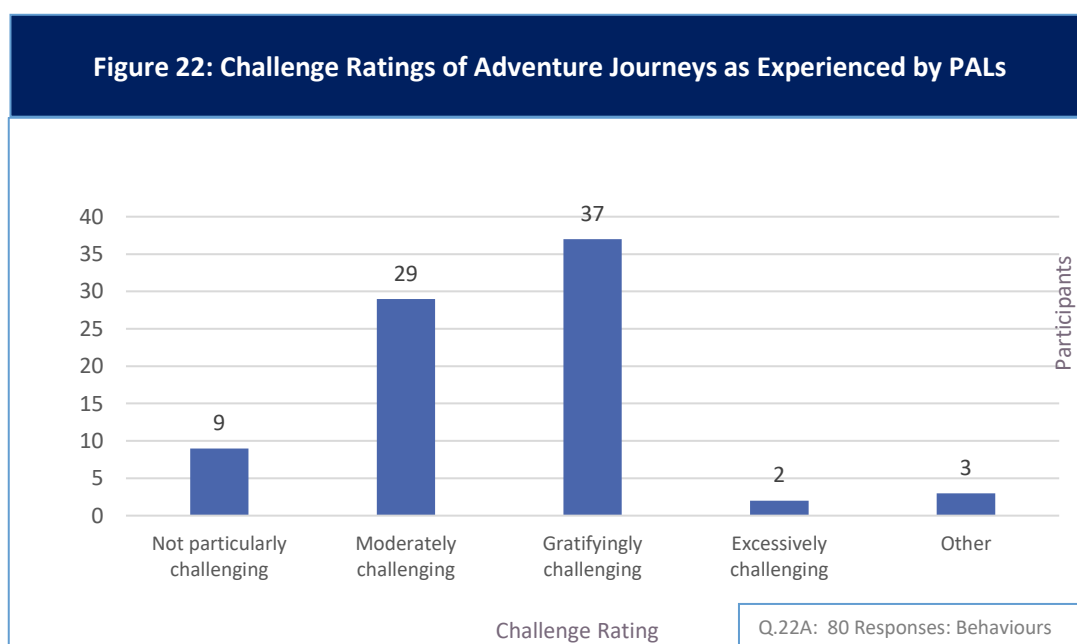
Figure 23: Number of Adventure Journeys Undertaken by PAL Participants

Q.23A: 78 Responses: Behaviours
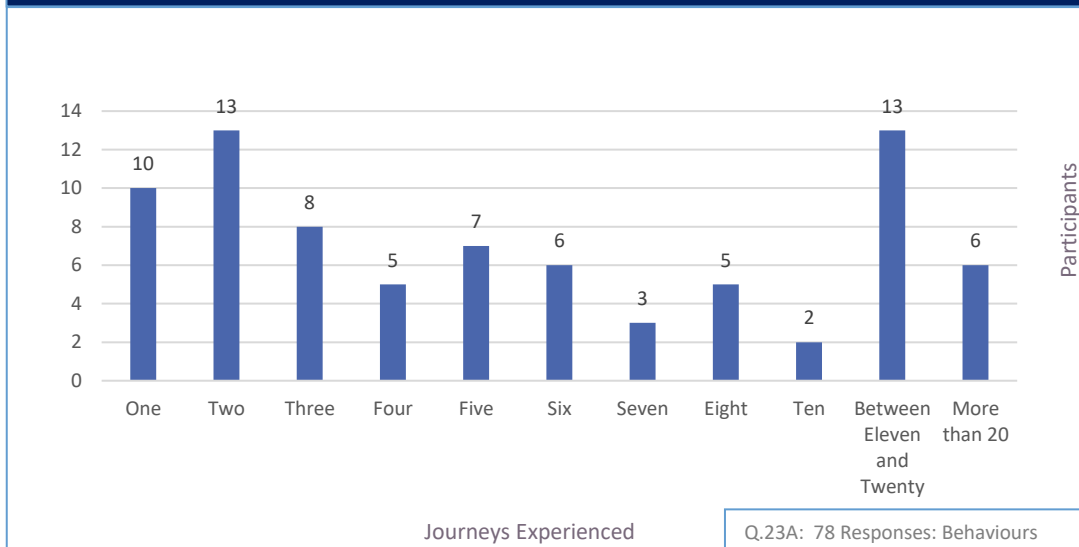
Overall, 70% of Gaisce PALs reported to having completed three or more Adventure Journeys with their Awardees, while 30% of respondents had completed fewer than two Adventure Journeys. In contrast, 26% of participants had completed more than ten annual Adventure Journeys, which covered a distance in excess of 25 kms per Journey.

4.3: Characteristics and Behaviours: Discussion

Several interesting findings emerged from this quantitative study data and consequently add further insights for understanding the behaviours and characteristics of a Gaisce school PAL.

4.3.1: Gaisce Territory Considerations and Survey Validation

As stated by Gaisce (2020), there are currently 1,470 Gaisce PALs engaged in the Republic of Ireland. Accordingly, Irish school-based PALs represent 76% of all Irish PALs and implement the Gaisce programme in 93% of secondary schools in Ireland (Gaisce, 2020). According to the Department of Education and Skills (2019), there are 371,500 secondary students in 723 schools across Ireland. Of significance, Strand A results highlighted that, while 29% of the respondents worked in Dublin, the second, third and fourth highest number of participants worked in Cork, Donegal, and Wexford. In particular, 74% of respondents were employed in schools that had more than 400 students, while further analysis demonstrates that respondents' school size totalled

50,200 pupils, which represents 13.5% of the Irish school population. Of significance, Strand A respondents' school size totalled 50,200 pupils, which represents 13.5% of the Irish school population. As a result, this quantitative Strand A is of pertinent relevance and has validated O'Leary's (2005) minimal statistical analysis requirement of thirty responders.

4.3.2: Understanding PAL Teacher Progression

Notably, 78% of Gaisce PAL participants had no involvement in the Gaisce Awards Programme as a young person. Consequently, while legacy is not currently perceived as a motivation for enrolment as a Gaisce PAL, it is important to develop an understanding of volunteering and the motivations for volunteering. As such, Strand A findings (see Figure 13) have revealed that 69% of PALs enrolled as Gaisce PALs by 'helping a current PAL' or out of a desire 'to develop a new Gaisce programme in their school'. Further analysis (see Figure 17) also highlights that, while PALs spend less than three hours per week implementing Gaisce, there is a strong voluntary ethos at the forefront, with 40% of Gaisce PALs gifting more than three hours of their time each week – volunteering with the external non-curricular community, education, charity, environmental, or sport organisations. Silke et al. (2019, p.43) state that 'mentor motivation for participating in the programme may influence programme success' and as such 'it is of importance for researchers and practitioners to be aware of mentor's motivations for volunteering'. This view is supported by Clary, Snyder et al. (1998), who advocate that volunteer enrolment, retention, and satisfaction are linked to the ability of the volunteer experience to meet their motives. Moreover, the authors identify six motivational functions associated with volunteering: values, understanding, career, social, enhancement, and protective. The motivational reasoning of Gaisce PALs is further explored in Chapter 5.

4.3.3: Gaisce PAL Service Length and Volunteer Identity

Another major finding of this research is the apparent connection between length of educational service and length of Gaisce service by school-based PAL practitioners. Notably, 82% of PAL respondents have more than ten years' educational experience, while 52% of respondents have in excess of ten years' experience running the Gaisce programme in their schools. Additionally, a willingness by the PALs to continually volunteer and assist in programme activities is also demonstrated (see Figure 23) by the

fact that 70% of Gaisce PAL participants have completed three or more 25km Adventure Journeys, while 26% of respondents have completed more than ten such journeys. Figure 15 illustrates further commitment to the programme, demonstrating how 51% of participants indicated that they currently implement the Gaisce programme alone. Such commitment is congruent with Finkenstein et al.'s (2005) findings that revealed the correlation between volunteer role identity and perceived volunteer expectations with long-term and committed volunteering. Therefore, as suggested by Finkenstein et al., the implementation by volunteer-dependent agencies of 'strategies that facilitate the development of a volunteer identity and the social pressures that maintain both this and the volunteer' (2005, p. 416) is worthy of further consideration.

4.3.4: PAL Age and Psychosocial Development

Another significant finding from the investigation relates to the age of Gaisce School PALs, with the identification (see Figure 5) that more than 76% of Gaisce PAL respondents are over 35 years of age. Of further consequence (see Fig 16), PALs currently mentor and support an average of 33 Bronze Award participants each year. In this context, Stevens (1995) puts forward a compelling observation that professional teachers who provide mentorship to others are atypical of those having reached the adult stage of personal development, and, as such, experience generative responsibility driven by the desire to help and support others. Results of this quantitative Strand A also indicate that 41% of Gaisce PAL participants have reached 45 years of age, which, as contextualised by Erikson (1950) represents the seventh stage of psychosocial development – Generativity vs Stagnation. As observed by Barnett (1984), serving as a mentor may thus satisfy the inborn desire for generativity. This is defined by Erikson as a later-life development phase, with resulting levels of satisfaction experienced by the mentor in the areas of development, growth, and culmination or accomplishments for the mentee.

4.3.5: PAL Gender Characteristics and Safeguarding

Another noteworthy finding from the current research is that 80% of the Gaisce PAL survey respondents were female. While Gaisce do not record PALs by gender (Gaisce, 2020), such findings are consistent with research results from the Department of Education and Skills (2019) who found that 70% of national secondary school teachers in Voluntary Secondary and Community and Comprehensive Schools are female. It is

important to note that 20% of PAL survey respondents were male, which is lower than the national male teacher demographic of 30%. This warrants further investigation into the causal low rates of PAL male engagement in the Gaisce programme. As Silke et al. (2019 p.44) explained in *Relational Dynamics in Youth Mentoring Study,* 'four out of five male volunteers said they were concerned about the possibility of the potential for a child abuse allegation to be made or for their motives for getting involved in the programme to be questioned'. The issue of child protection concerns as a causal difficulty with the enrolment of male mentors in youth mentoring programmes was further explored by Miller (2007), who identified that the ability of programmes to overcome these concerns is critical to their ability to enrol mentors for young males. The challenge of safeguarding the programme's Adventure Journey was highlighted by a number of PAL respondents and is further explored in *Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion.*

4.3.6: Educational Achievement and Leadership Engagement

Results from the survey indicate that 82% of the participants have a National Framework of Qualifications level nine qualification or higher. The relevance of educational attainment in the dynamics of mentoring relationships has been observed by Yavas and Riecken (1985), who found that those who donate the gift of time to educational institutions and programmes are more likely to have a higher level of education and have greater incomes than non-donors. This view is supported by Bowie et al. (2006), who emphasised that mentorship and youth development programmes benefit from those who have higher levels of formal education, as well as training for that particular programme. Additionally, Bullough further maintains that mentor identities are effectively subsumed under teacher identities as 'teachers do what they know and mentor as they teach' (2005, p. 153). Strand A results also highlights that 20% of PALs hold a B Post or a higher school leadership role. This finding is of particular relevance as, in their analysis of exemplar youth mentoring programmes, Bowie et al. suggested that leadership and organisational capacity correlates to the ability of programmes to deliver quality services effectively, including, 'strength of management, soundness of finances and a commitment to ongoing improvement, among others as a measure of performance and capacity' (2006, p. 79).

4.3.7: PAL Relationship Dynamics: Gaisce PAL Busyness

In addition to these significant findings, one theme that warrants further attention and discussion was observed throughout the findings of this Gaisce Participant Survey. As illustrated, this study has shown that 51% of PAL respondents work alone (see Figure 15) and manage an average of 33 Bronze Award participants (see Figure 16), while 91% spend less than 180 minutes per week managing and implementing Gaisce programme activities in their respective schools (see Figure 18). Consequently, further analysis demonstrates that these behaviours result in the average mentor/mentee relationship being less than six minutes per week. Silke et al. observe that 'there is a consensus in the mentoring literature that frequency and consistency of contact, as well as length of youth-mentor meetings, are important' (2019, p. 44). This view is also supported by Bowers et al., whose findings 'provide support for the effect of mentoring relationships that are closer and longer in duration' (2015, p. 133). Furthermore, 41% of Gaisce PAL respondents were unable to attend a ceremony organised by Gaisce due to 'time or other commitments' (see Figure 17). One of the central challenges identified by Gaisce PALs in this research relates to teachers having time to meet with students in the context of their busy lives and the often-hectic lives of secondary school students. As observed in this report, 'busyness of a teacher PAL's school life' is a recurring theme in both Strand A and B and is subject to further analysis (see Chapter Six).

4.4: Conclusion

A summary of the key findings for the quantitative factual data gathered from 29 closed-ended questions of Strand A was presented. The findings were structured around one central theme: *The Characteristics and Behaviours of PALs.* This theme examined the demographic profile of the respondents, the length of their educational service, the type and characteristics of their educational environs and the nature of their programme responsibilities. It also outlined their time and volunteering commitments to the Gaisce programme as currently experienced. In Section 4.3, key quantitative findings warranting further analysis were presented. Of significance, as outlined in Section 4.3.1., the survey respondents' combined school pupil size represented 13.5% of the total Irish school population.

Key findings from the survey revealed that 80% of PAL participants are female; 69% of Gaisce PALs enrolled in the programme 'to help a current PAL' or 'start a new Gaisce programme'; 82% of PALs had more than ten years' educational work experience; 70% of PALs had completed three or more Adventure Journeys; 76% of Gaisce PALs are over 35 years of age; 51% of PALs work alone and 91% of PALs spend less than three hours per week working on the Gaisce programme. While the central theme of *Busyness of a Teacher's Life* is at the forefront, so too is the evidence that demonstrates a strong commitment by teachers to the Gaisce programme, with 52% of Gaisce PAL participants being involved with the Gaisce programme for more than ten years.

The next chapter, Chapter 5: *Conceptualisation of a PAL Role: Making a Difference and Attaching Value* will present qualitative data from both Strand A and B.

Chapter 5:
Conceptualisation of a PAL Role: Making a Difference and Attaching Value

5.1: Introduction

This chapter is focused on the analysis of the qualitative data collected in Strand A and Strand B of this Study. A total of 41 responses to open-ended questions were thematically coded using Braun and Clarke's (2006) analysis procedure. Of the 39 online Strand A quantitative questions asked to 77 participants, 15 were open-ended questions. While in the qualitative Strand B interviews 10 participants were asked 38 questions of which 26 were open-ended. Transcripts from these interviews are stored in a password protected UCC digital repository (Appendix K). Similarly to *Chapter 4: Understanding PAL Characteristics and Behaviours Findings,* the analysis will be structured around four central themes: *The Conceptualisation of the Role of a PAL; Making a Difference; Being Valued; and Motivational Reasoning.* In this chapter, these themes have been further sub-divided to provide a clear framework for discussion within each section.

Section 5.2: This theme on the conceptualisation of the role of a PAL explores participants' perceptions and facets of their PAL roles, examines their perceived functional identities and experiences as PALs, and discusses the relevance of such findings.

Section 5.3: This theme of making a difference seeks to establish and discuss how Gaisce PALs believe they make a difference to their Gaisce Award participants' development, explores the dynamics of their relationship with their Gaisce mentees and examines the levels of fulfilment, if any, that participants derive from their role as a Gaisce PAL

Section 5.4: The theme, being valued, investigates and discusses whether Gaisce PALs feel valued for the contributions they make as PALs, who values them and if they believe that their roles as PALs warrant recognition and reward.

Section 5.5: The theme, motivational reasoning, explores PALs' rationales for volunteering for the role of a Gaisce PAL and seeks to identify their motivations for continuing to remain involved.

In conclusion, *Section 5.6* outlines the key findings. It presents an opportunity for a summary discussion about the research question: 'Do PALs attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President's Award self-development programme?'

5.2: How Do Teachers Conceptualise Their Role as a Gaisce PAL?

As previously stated in Chapter 2, a holistic approach is best when mapping a pathway to the contextual role that teachers play as youth mentors, where their respective role identities frame an understanding of the realm of PAL teacher identities – as teachers, as mentors and as volunteers. Consequently, Strand A (online) and Strand B (audio interviews) sought to gain a complete understanding of the triumvirate of teacher identity to clarify the value that teachers attach to their roles as PALs. To aid further understanding, respondents for Strand A and Strand B were asked a semi-structured question: How do you see yourself in your role as a PAL – as a youth mentor, youth influencer, youth leader or other? The results for Strand A are shown in Figure 24.

Figure 24: How Teachers Perceive Their Roles as PALs

Strand A Research   Role Function   Q.24B: 77 responses : 104 entries
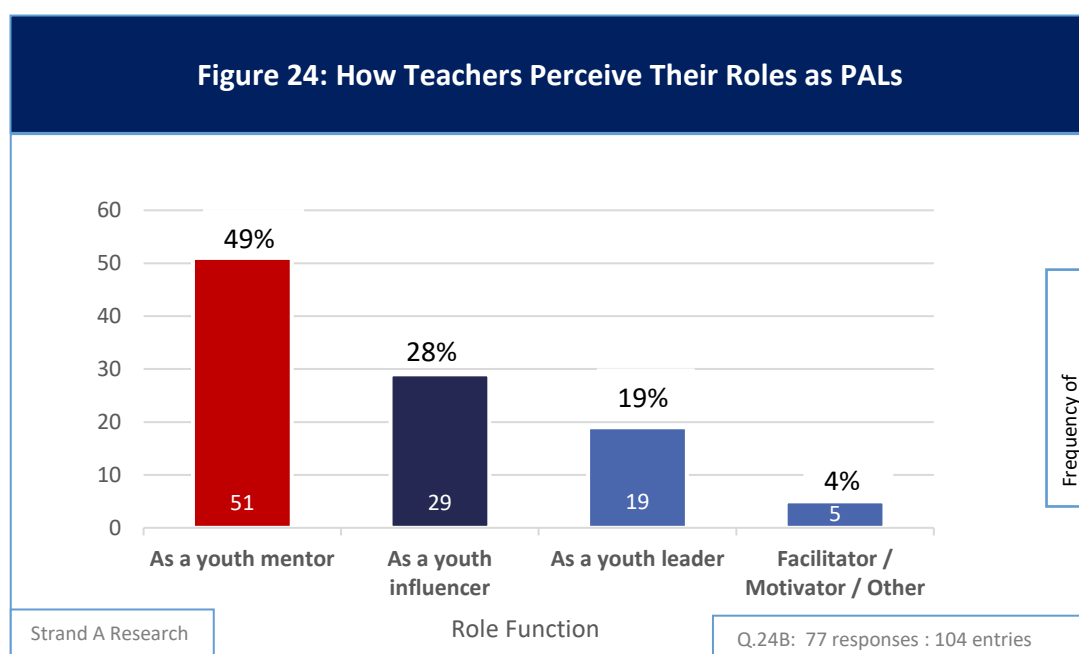
Of significance, 49% of PAL Teacher Strand A respondents classified their role as a youth mentor, while 28% of respondents classified their role as a youth influencer. When combined, 77% of all respondents conceptualised their role as either that of mentoring or of youth influencing.

5.2.1: Identifying the Different Facets of the PAL Role

Strand B respondents identified two dominant factors affecting the conceptualisation of their role as a Gaisce PAL. The first was the prominence given to the role of the mentor functions, while the second finding concerned the affirmation by respondents that the role of a Gaisce PAL is multi-faceted, dynamic and everchanging.

It's multi-faceted. I would like to think that a big part of that is mentor. I would like to see, if I'm going to use the word mentor like, you know, from the point of view, we are there to support, I can be the ear, I can listen, I can rationalise things, if there's problems being presented, if there's an issue with a class, an issue with a subject, you know, we try to encourage, we try to empathise, we try to support, we try to motivate, all these things.

<div align="right">Interviewee No 7</div>

Congruently, within each facet of such identities, most PALs also spoke about the functionality of their mentoring roles, citing the practical themes of enabling, facilitating, giving, helping and supporting their Gaisce Award participants. Of note, these observations are consistent with the established findings of Roberts (2000), who identified that, traditionally, a mentor had been described as a guide, role model, advisor, teacher and supporter.

5.2.2: PAL Role Conceptualisation: Identity as Mentors

In describing what mentoring entailed, many participants in Strand A highlighted the work of helping students recognise and develop their capacities. Further, two interviewees conceptualised their roles as capacity building and helping students to identify strengths and develop self-belief. As Akuamoah (2015) identified, within the broad domain of mentoring, such a constructed approach is a principle recognised as 'developmental mentoring', 'where the emphasis is on mentees to find their solution to the challenges' (2015, p. 19).

I suppose mentor would be the closest to that, but I'd even say to you just, you're there to encourage them, essentially. Like you do mentor them into their roles and you asked them, you know, 'Where are your strengths? Where are your weaknesses? What do you want to improve upon?' And you do help them throughout the year.

<div align="right">Interviewee No 8</div>

Mentoring, definitely, I suppose that requires some mentoring, getting them to think about what they're good at, what they're interested in and what, you know, family at home are able to help them out with as well.

<div align="right">Interviewee No 5</div>

But the main thing about it is you encourage them to do their best and you encourage them to see how capable they are. And if they put their mind to something that they can achieve anything they want. Yes, a lot of ups and downs. That's when they'll come and chat to you and that's when you mentor them.

<div align="right">Interviewee No 8</div>

5.2.3: PAL Role Conceptualisation: Identity as Teachers

As evidenced, many of the Strand B participants identified that the role of a Gaisce PAL is also dynamic, everchanging and tied to the situational life context of the Gaisce Award participants. In support of such situational observations, prior school mentoring studies by Britner et al. (2006) identified that within school life environs, 'different mechanisms may be operating in mentoring relationships as a function of mentor and protégé age, gender and ethnic origin, as well as the status of mentors (adult, teacher, peer), the type of mentoring (one-on-one vs group) and the context of mentoring' (2006, p. 747).

Notably, from this study, many mentors linked their role as Gaisce PALs to the values and philosophies of being a teacher. At the same time, participants expressed how their teaching philosophies helped shape their roles and identities as Gaisce PALs

> I suppose it comes back to why I became a teacher. I suppose it's about, like, I very... like my philosophy towards education is very much about... it's not just looking after their academic, it's about, you know, nurturing their whole kind of development as a human being.
>
> Interviewee No 3

> And you just lead by example with them and chat to them and form the positive relationships. And then you helped them, in truth, to the best of your ability.
>
> Interviewee No 8

5.2.4: PAL Role Conceptualisation: Identity as Motivators and Facilitators

Another central finding of a Gaisce PAL's role conceptualisation was that of being available to offer help, support, encouragement and guidance to their Award participants' progression throughout the challenge programme. Such supportive factors, as evidenced by Boddy et al.'s (2012) mentoring relationships study, are of further relevance. The authors' contend that in such mentoring programmes, 'the most highly rated relationships were distinguished by certain mentee characteristics, a focus maintained on process- and task-oriented activities, and a strong interpersonal bond between mentoring partners' (2012, p. 392). Such supportive role relationship dynamics were further observed in Strand B of this PAL study.

> I didn't get into being a PAL for financial gains or to move up the ladder in the school, is literally to, I suppose, to help, help students progress or achieve in something that they probably would've never done.
>
> Interviewee No 2

I think it's them, the kids themselves, Philip, it's you know, it's the feedback, it's helping them too, you know, I would be very, I'd be more facilitator now than anything else because I'd be very much about them. They'd be like 'Miss, give me something I can do for my community' and I'd be like, 'No, you need to find it, like, it's up to you to find'. I just feel like I'd be very much about supporting them and facilitating them.

<div align="right">Interviewee No 3</div>

I'm there to guide them and to help them and to kind of encourage them and, you know, keep them going through the programme and, you know, to motivate them more. You know some are, as I said, more motivated than others. So, I'm here to help them and support them. But I think it's more of what the programme does for them rather than I'd say than what I do for them. I'm a part of it, obviously.

<div align="right">Interviewee No 10</div>

5.2.5: Gaisce PAL Role Conceptualisation: Discussion

Several notable findings emerged from this category and, therefore, are pertinent to the focus of this report. The central tenet of such findings revealed that the role dynamics of a Gaisce mentor/mentee relationship is both complex (Snowden et al., 2011) and, as contended by Interviewee No 6, 'multi-faceted'.

Results from the study indicated that 77% of Strand A respondents viewed their primary functional role as a Gaisce PAL as one of mentorship, or protégé, and influence (see Figure 24). In particular, this finding is consistent with previous studies, which observed that in such mentoring relationships, mentors serve several functions to aid the advancement of the mentee, including acting as a sponsor, guide, counsellor, exemplar and teacher (Haggard et al., 2010; Ilieva-Koleva, 2016; Levinson et al., 1978).

Another interesting insight of this research theme relates to the categorisations by both Strand A and Strand B respondents as to the mentorship functions of a Gaisce PAL. Here, participants have synthesised their mentorship role as one primarily construed as helping, giving, supporting, encouraging, facilitating and empathising. Such functional elements were previously identified as components of the mentorship process by Roberts (2000, p. 145), who observed that mentoring 'appears to have the essential attributes of: a process; a supportive relationship; a helping process; a teaching-learning process; a reflective process; a career development process; a formalised process; and a role constructed by or for a mentor'.

As identified by the respondents, the findings of this role research segment have determined that role functions of Gaisce PALs are multi-faceted, dynamic and everchanging within the Gaisce Award programme tapestry and further influenced by the daily school environs of Award participants. Such multidimensional constructs are intrinsically embedded in the ethos and nature of the four challenge elements of Award, which is focused on community help, personal skills development, improved personal physical attainment and Journey accomplishment. Consequently, as observed, the role of the mentor and relationship dynamics change and transition with each challenge dynamic and is further influenced by a student participant's academic and time demands.

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, such transitional aspects of mentoring phases have been identified by Kram (1983), who revealed the existence and influence of other consequential factors that affect the mentor/mentee relationships, such as surrounding organisational circumstances and an individual's needs. Specifically, within this PAL study, the majority of respondents highlighted that such important circumstances include the Gaisce Adventure Journey Challenge, where the dynamics of their mentor/mentee relationships are at the forefront and, as highlighted by respondents, where an informal opportunity is provided for mentors to reveal different characteristics and valued personality traits to their mentees. This was exemplified by one respondent:

> So, definitely, definitely a mentor or an influencer... So, yeah, definitely that. I actually loved it in [school x] from the point of view, as in that, when I was teaching it was... one way, and then to have them as a PAL – and even in [school y], it's the same. That you can just show a different side to yourself, still have the same values and just, you know; I mean, I did have the girls say to me on trips, 'I never thought you were so much fun, you know,'... I'd be quite quiet, or anything like that, so, yeah.
>
> Interviewee No. 10

The next thematic section *Do PALs Make a Difference*?, will present qualitative data from both Strands A and B of the study.

5.3: Do Gaisce PALs Make a Difference?

The second key objective of this research was to explore what value, if any, the PALs attach to their roles. Central to this proposition were the insights obtained from the datum question 19C, which were collected from the responses to both Strand A (online survey) and Strand B (audio interviews). Participants were asked: Do you think you make a difference as a PAL to your Gaisce participants? The results from Strand A are shown in Figure 25 below.

Figure 25: Respondents' Beliefs that they Make a Difference to their Gaisce Participants
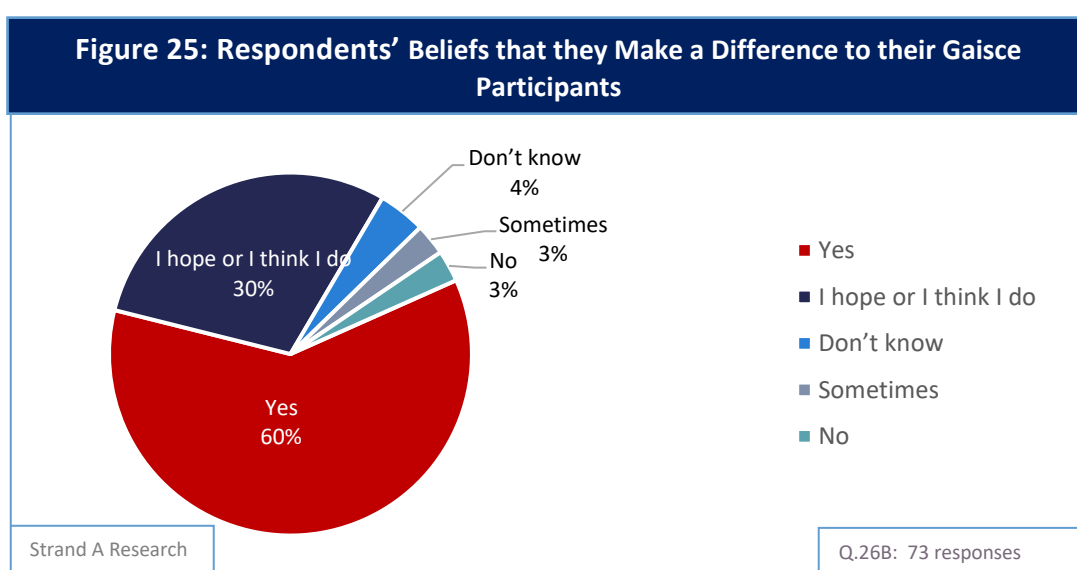
Of significance, in Strand A, 90% of Gaisce PALs replied positively to the research question, with 60% of the participants confirming their 'yes' beliefs. Four respondents were 'not sure', while one respondent replied negatively. Affirmative responses for Strand A included:

> Yes, purely as a safety net to say, 'Yes, go challenge yourself… I'll be here.' To motivate and help them discover how strong and determined they are.
>
> Interviewee No 53

> I definitely do, but the students may see me as a pest who chases them week in/week out for 'stuff.' It usually ends well, and it is easy to see the growth and maturity when they complete it.
>
> Interviewee No 72

> Yes, encouraging participants to stay on their journey and supporting them. Helping students see the potential in themselves. Someone they can check in with if they are unsure. Having someone that is looking at their progress encourages and motivates them to keep going.
>
> Interviewee No 71

When asked if they believed that they made a difference as a PAL, all ten respondents in Strand B replied positively to this question. Notably, respondents validated their experiences of making a difference by motivating, encouraging, building confidence, and enthusing their students. Such attributes were previously identified by Larose et al.'s (2005) teacher–student mentoring study, in which the authors determined that close mentoring relationships in school environs predict substantial changes in several cognitive and emotional outcome variables for students. Moreover, Britner et al. (2006) contextualise such variables as including 'attitudes toward school, academic confidence, self-concept, attitudes toward helping, feelings of school connectedness, representations of parental and teacher relationships, and perceptions of support from significant adults outside mentoring relationships' (2006, pg. 757).

In Strand B of this research study, all respondents indicated that as PALs, they did make a difference and exemplified their responses as:

> Yeah, yeah, I do. I mean, I think that not so much what I do, but I think more what the Gaisce programme does for young people. I mean, it's not about... I'm there to guide them and to help them and to kind of encourage them and, you know, keep them going through the programme and, you know, to motivate them more.
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee No 1</div>

> I think you do. Like, you know, we treat them like adults and, you know, that's of massive benefit to them. You know, they have self-autonomy, and self-responsibility for everything. Now they have guidance and they've helped, and they know that we're there and everything but that sense of achievement for them at the end is that, like, you know, 'You were there but I did this myself'.
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee No 3</div>

> I think I've made a difference. I tried to be positive and I tried to encourage kids as much as possible to do their best and to just be encouraging. I mean, even if it's just the one kid who knows how to bake a loaf of bread…COVID19…because they did baking all the time. I mean, it's again, it's going back to this idea of being a facilitator. I am just there to help, you know, nudge kids in a right direction or to guide them along in what they're either already doing or what they want to do. And it's just giving them encouragement to do that. So, I would hope that I have made a difference to my Gaisce participants.
>
> <div align="right">Interviewee No 5</div>

Yes, definitely. But it's more about having someone in their corner that encourages them and says 'You know, you could do this, you could, you can, you're a great singer, you can go for the lead role in the musical. Why wouldn't you? What's stopping you?' So, it's more about building up their confidence and making them see the potential that they do have within themselves - if that's not too cheesy.

<div align="right">Interviewee No 8</div>

5.3.1: Making a Difference: Enjoyment and Fulfilment

Many of the Gaisce PALs spoke about the enjoyment and satisfaction they derived from being a Gaisce PAL and how the role of a PAL has met, and continues to meet, and surpassed their normative expectations as a teacher volunteer. These motivational behaviours of the Gaisce PALs supported established research that 'in the main, altruism, educational improvement, career advancement, and social motivation comprise of the motives for volunteering' (Grönlund, 2011, p. 853).

Of further interest in this strand of the research is the observation that the fulfilment of a PAL's role is intrinsically linked to their motivational desire in seeing their students achieve. Such findings were also evident in Strand A's results (see Figure 27), which show that 42% of the respondents felt motivated to continue in their roles as they derived enjoyment and satisfaction from being involved with positive youth development

It's exceeded, it's exceeded… it's the reason I keep doing it. . I felt that could get more for the kids and it used to be only for TY Bronze but now I've taken it on and gotten people to Silver and now Gold. So, I think I've over-achieved from what I first thought it was going to be.

<div align="right">Interviewee No 2</div>

Yes completely, it totally has, it's a really fulfilling thing. Like, I really like, we've built it into our school awards in October, so our annual school awards are in October so all our Gaisce kids get their awards at that school award. And what's really nice is that, like, a lot of the kids who are getting a Bronze Awards would probably never get to go to the school awards if they weren't getting a Gaisce Award. So, like, yes, it's very fulfilling. The role is really great and it's really nice particularly when you've been doing it for as long as I have (laughs).

<div align="right">Interviewee No 3</div>

Yes, it does, no, it does, it's very nice. What we did this year with the reboot was that two years hadn't been presented. So we finally got to present medals for the Fifth Years and Sixth Years and they were very grateful of it, like, you know. Parents were very grateful of it, you, know. So, when you kind of see that and you see the fruit blooming from the tree, you know, that's what puts a smile on any teacher's face that's worth their salt, you know?

<div align="right">Interviewee No 6</div>

Yes, I do find my role fulfilling. It's actually it's, it's just easy to keep on top of and I don't know if that's because I've been doing it for six years now, you know, I just, I know the kind of the ins and outs and the ups and downs of it. But has it met my expectations? It has completely exceeded my expectations, being in Gaisce.

<div align="right">Interviewee No 8</div>

5.3.2: Gaisce PALs Making a Difference: Discussion

It is clear from this strand of research that in their role as Gaisce PALs, teachers perceive that they do make a difference in the lives of their award participants. While one of the central findings in this study is that Gaisce PALs professed to 'making a difference' to an award participant by helping, supporting, motivating, reassuring, facilitating, empowering and interacting, it is also evident that Gaisce PALs enjoy high levels of satisfaction and personal fulfilment. Notably, the findings from both research strands support the consensus in the literature that the identity of modern educators is configured by the contention that what a teacher strands for conceptualises who they are and how they are oriented towards the good (Bullough and Baughman, 1997; Goodlad et al., 1990; Patterson, 1991). As evidenced by 90% of Strand A responses (see Figure 25), Gaisce PAL teachers believe that they have made or do make a difference, and by inference, such actions help identify that the identity of a Gaisce PAL is rooted in the good.

Of further significance, within the educational tapestry of social interactions, there exists a research consensus that the school setting is second only to family as a stabilising influence in the lives of adolescents (Blum, 2005; McNeeley et al., 2002) and that, as such, as suggested by Blum and Libbey (2004, p. 230), connectedness is contextualised as 'the belief by students that adults in the school, care about their learning and about them as individuals'. Within the school domain of the Gaisce PAL participants, it is evident that the Gaisce programme and structures had an influence and role to play in helping to build such student connectedness. Specifically, several Strand B respondent examples were

identified that demonstrated that this student connectedness is related to the philosophy of why teachers teach. Furthermore, such study participant responses also demonstrated the nuanced appreciation of what it is to 'be' a teacher (Mockler, 2011, p. 517).

> I suppose it comes back to why I became a teacher. I suppose it's about, like, I very... like my philosophy towards education is very much about... it's not just looking after their academic, it's about, you know, nurturing their whole kind of development as a human being. I just loved the idea that this fit so perfectly into our kind of, our kind of ethos behind Transition Year, about developing all their skills rather than just their academic skills and leadership and community involvement and all that is such a key point to the development of a young adult and Gaisce fits that kind of criteria for us, developing everything rather than just focusing on academic.
>
> Interviewee No. 3

The findings of this thematic segment are of particular relevance to Gaisce, as they demonstrate that a PAL's functional role, while intrinsic to the operational existence of the organisation, is rooted in Goodlads, Soder and Sirotnicks' (1990) premise that teaching is a moral enterprise, and as inferred, Gaisce PALs thus represent a moral compass, which can aid Gaisce's future organisational direction.

The next thematic section, Are Gaisce PALs Valued?, will present qualitative data from both Strands A and B of the study.

5.4: Are Gaisce PALs Valued?

A central tenet of understanding the role constructs of a Gaisce PAL is related to an understanding of the 'valued characteristics' of PALs (Cotteral et al., 2007, p. 208) and, as such, how others perceive the values of a PAL in their school environs. To gain a fuller understanding of who values the role of a Gaisce PAL, participants of Strand A (online survey) were asked an open-ended question: In your role as a PAL, who values you? Meanwhile, participants in Strand B (audio interviews) were asked two value questions. The first was a semi-structured value question: Do you feel that you are valued for the contribution you make as a PAL – by Gaisce, the participants themselves, your school and the parents of the participants? Then, the second question offered a singular choice for the multiple-choice question: Who values you most for the work you do as a PAL? The results from Strand A are shown in Figure 26.

Figure 26: PAL Participants' Beliefs of Those Who Value Their Roles

Strand A Research	Co-horts who value the role and influence of PALs
	Q.27B: 73 responses: 137 entries
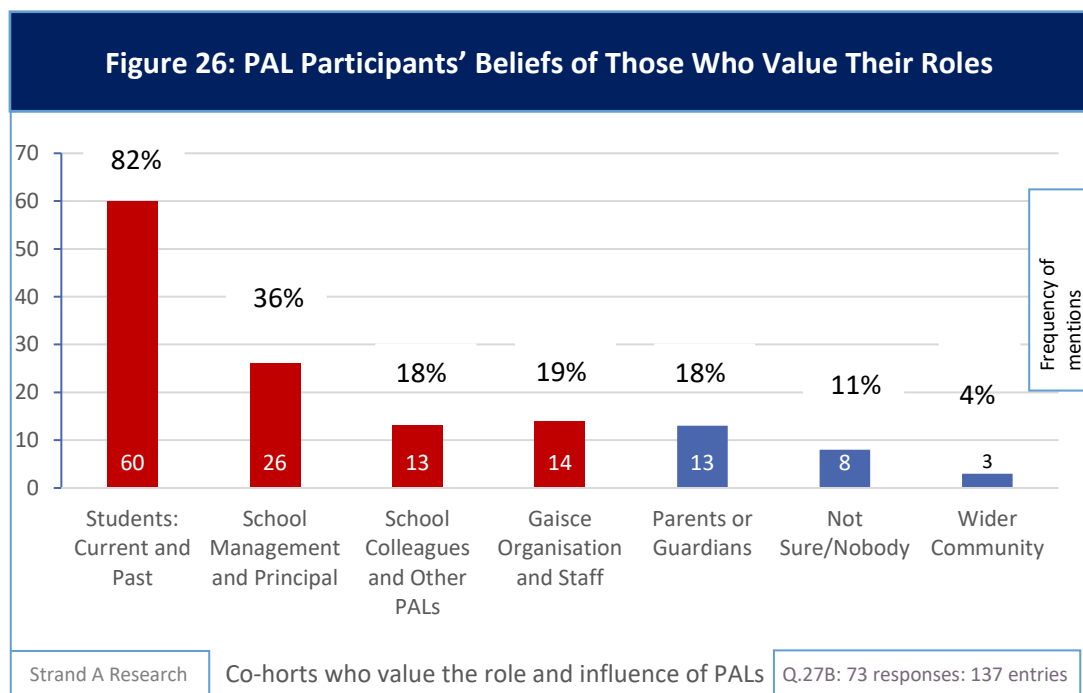
Results to this open-ended question, as indicated above, revealed that 82% of participants believed their role as Gaisce PALs was valued, predominantly by students. Furthermore, 36% of responses indicated that school management or a school principal also valued their role, while 19% of respondents felt they were 'valued' by the Gaisce organisation and staff.

5.4.1: PALs Being Valued: By Students

Both Strand A and Strand B participants' responses demonstrated that most PALs felt valued by their students. Although the contextual reasons as to why teachers hold such beliefs remained unexplored in this study, Montacute et al. (2016, p. 384) proffer that the attributes of 'kindness and positive teacher-learner' relationships are valued from the perspective of students, while Brewer (1997) maintains that the values of trust and cooperation are intrinsic to the foundation of human sociality

> I have already received some Thank You's from students, which is probably the most important kind of yardstick that I would use to, kind of, measure any sort of value, my own, that my contribution has made.
>
> Interviewee No 5

While all Strand B PAL respondents acknowledged that their award participants recognised them, there was notable enthusiasm from Gaisce PAL DEIS respondents as to the value of recognition by students in their schools. Additionally, the value of

the beneficial impact of the Award on the lives of DEIS school participants was further noted, prompting a suggestion that the Gaisce Award programme has more meaning for kids in those schools who might have fewer other opportunities to prove themselves or fewer activities that they are involved in that allow them to shine. Consequently, such observations warrant further study.

> … but, like, others, for the kids, especially in a DEIS school, for the kids who probably will never again or have never, you know, been awarded something. Those parents are very appreciative of it and the fact that when they get to go to the annual school awards. Like for some of them, you know, like the only time they step in over the school, you know, threshold and join us and it's for a positive thing rather than the negative thing….For them then, like their parents who may never, ever, you know, have their son or daughter, like it's great then to have them in and to have them part of an awards night and things like that. So, yeah, I would say in general, you do feel valued for what you do.
>
> Interviewee No 3

> The participants, yes, one hundred percent. And did you love us? They buy into us. They're always very thankful and, do you know, they do enjoy it and they're grateful that someone's willing to do that with them.
>
> Interviewee No 8

While not asked in Strand A of the PAL research, the overall consensus, as expressed by eight of the ten participants in Strand B' to the question 'Who values you most for the work you do as a PAL?' was that of feeling valued by the students.

> Yeah, the participants themselves, like, I'd say Philip, to be honest, you know, because at the end of the day, you know the support from Gaisce is great but, you know, they're just glad that we're doing it for them. But the kids really appreciate it and obviously, from year to year, that appreciation or that value you get differs because, some years, you have kids, you know, you just go through the motions and then there are other years that the kids get really involved. It really depends on the cohort of participants but, in general, it would be the kids, yeah.
>
> Interviewee No 3

> It's the students. It's students first before everything that they would value the kind of time and effort that I put into making them resources. And the fact that I come up and sign for them every week or go through their portfolios with them and find, you know, solutions for them as well, I would really hope that they would value that.
>
> Interviewee No 5

5.4.2: PALs Being Valued: By School Management and Co-workers

In general, 53% of Strand A respondents affirmed being valued by their school management and/or school colleagues in an unprompted being valued question (see Figure 26). Of further interest was the overall affirmative consensus of being valued by management and co-workers as expressed by nine Strand B interviewees to the semi-structured valued question: Do you feel that you are valued for the contribution you make as a PAL – by Gaisce, the participants themselves, your school and the parents of the participants?

Within the context of mentorship, as observed by Kram (1983), such organisational leadership support is of pertinent relevance as 'organisational practices that advance mentorship should create programme conditions that are designed to improve relationship-building skills between mentors and mentees and to foster further opportunities for relationship development' (1983, p. 621). In evidence of such supportive practices, the recognition of a PAL by school management and Gaisce at award ceremonies was frequently mentioned in Strand B participants' responses.

> Our school are, like, they've made Gaisce part of the annual school awards and that puts it on a pedestal for me, and that's kind of the most support that a school can do if they recognise it like that. And it would be great if they'd added to the timetable but I suppose it's voluntary so they couldn't. The school are very supportive.
>
> Interviewee No 3

> Yes, yes, definitely, the school are absolutely brilliant with running the programme. I know there was a few, a few years ago, there was a few kids doing Gaisce, as I said, we're a DEIS school and money can be an issue with some of the families that we have in school and it was actually school management organised with the local Saint Vincent de Paul, to pay for the Adventure Journey for some of our students, which was fantastic. Absolutely fantastic
>
> Interviewee No 8

> The school is very supportive, we have a new Principal now and I don't know, yes, as far as I know, he knows quite a lot about Gaisce and appreciates it. The previous Principal certainly did as well appreciate the value of it.
>
> Interviewee No 9

5.4.3: PALs Being Valued: By Gaisce

In Strand B, in response to a semi-structured question, all ten Gaisce PALs confirmed that they 'were valued' across the different social constructs of students, parents, Gaisce and school management. When prompted to identify where or by whom they felt most valued, Gaisce was at the forefront of recognition by nine out of the ten PAL participants.

> Yes. Yes, I do. Like for example, with Gaisce, I do feel that we're valued and appreciated. I was at the Civic Merit Award in Farmleigh House last year and that was a really lovely occasion.
>
> Interviewee No 1

> …from Gaisce themselves, they are, in fairness, they are like, if it's a Christmas Card, if it's the Award ceremonies, they always have a 'Thank You' sent to you and anything like that. So, yes, they do, or even an email from one of the guys - Niall who constantly emails you to see how you are getting on, even that, shows you are appreciated.
>
> Interviewee No 2

> Definitely. Definitely. I know Gaisce do. Like I said earlier, you can pick up the phone and you can talk to anyone you need to talk to. But there's constant emails. There's constant newsletters. Do you know, the Christmas card, I don't know why, but I also love getting the Christmas card. But, you know, they just, it's those little things that kind of acknowledge, 'Thanks a million for doing this'. And, yeah so, definitely by Gaisce. And any time I'm talking to Mary, you know, she is fantastic. So, one hundred percent, I do feel valued by the organisation themselves.
>
> Interviewee No 8

5.4.4: PALs Being Valued: By Parents

While there was a majority consensus regarding 'being valued as a PAL by students', in relation to the sub-theme of 'being valued as a PAL by parents', this question elicited a diverse range of responses from the general sample group. It highlighted the fact that some Gaisce PAL Award respondents have somewhat distant and remote relationships with the parents of their Award participants.

> Parents. Some are, some aren't, Philip. That's just, you know, for some of them, it's just, you know, yeah, grand, it's another thing to add to the list.
>
> Interviewee No 3

> And then last but not least I suppose, the parents, mixed bag like, you know, there's some who would be really into it and there's some who wouldn't really properly understand, you know, the value of it. But you know, those who do, really do. But that's just life.
>
> Interviewee No 9

Of significance, two DEIS participants from the Strand B sample group also expressed aligned opinions regarding the extent to which parents valued their roles as a Gaisce PAL. The review by Cummings et al.'s (2012) of 30 school intervention programmes revealed that parents and students from small income families have high ambitions, value school and use their best endeavours to support the education of their children. Furthermore, the findings evidenced that, as such, 'teachers and other professionals may underestimate the aspirations of socio-economically disadvantaged children and parents and not appreciate the importance with which school is viewed' (2012, p. 4). As observed in Strand B, the dynamics of such parental and PAL engagement was noted by DEIS school respondents

> But in the run up to Awards Night, it is, it is fantastic because they know - they're like - we treat our Awards Night, it's invitation only and we invite all nominees. But the kids like and I find with Gaisce that you'd have kids who've never been to an Awards Night in school- for three years, four years it used to be. Get their invitation to come to awards night and get their Gaisce Awards and it's their first time experiencing something like that in school because they may not be the most academic kid, they may not be the sports star, they may not be the Class Spirit Kid, you know - the personality…. The parents would ring in school to ask to speak to me and say 'Thanks a million'. You know, they'd come and pick them up from the Adventure Journey and come over for a chat…. So, yeah, definitely one hundred percent, I feel valued.
>
> Interviewee No 8

5.4.5: PALs Being Valued: Recognition and Reward

The concluding sub-theme in seeking to understand the conceptualisation of the role of a Gaisce PAL involved investigating Strand B's altruistic motivations by asking the question 'Do you think your role as a PAL should be recognised or rewarded?'

While this question was not asked of Strand A participants, the results from Strand B demonstrated that the respondents were unified in their approach, with a singular consensus that the role of a PAL should not be rewarded. Moreover, while it is clear from Strand B of the research that Gaisce PALs do not engage in the programme for their benefit but for the benefit of the students and that they do not want a monetary reward, it was also clear from participants' responses that they do appreciate the acknowledgement from Gaisce. Furthermore, four respondents professed that their

PAL role was recognised by Gaisce's Civic Merit Award, which rewarded participants with five years of PAL experience for their length of service to the Gaisce programme.

> I do feel it is recognised, rewarded, if you mean in some sort of financial way, I would say no, because it's a voluntary, you know, it's a voluntary activity, it's an extracurricular activity, I don't feel that it should be rewarded in that sense.
>
> Interviewee No 1

> I'm not a teacher for recognition or rewards. I'm not a PAL for recognition or reward. I don't think anyone who goes in to be a PAL, you know, or puts themselves forward does it to be recognised or rewarded….So, like, I don't need anything for that, just them doing it and achieving it is reward enough, you know.
>
> Interviewee No 3

> Well, no, because you don't do it for recognition or to be awarded. You do it for the kids who are in front of you and what you want to do with them during the year, like, you want to achieve with them. So you don't do it to get a clap on the back. And I know that probably sounds like a cliché, but you really don't. You just do it for the kids, yeah, and that's really it.
>
> Interviewee No 8

In Strand B, four Gaisce PALs were the recipients of Gaisce's Civic Merit Award. All four respondents expressed warmth and gratitude for the recognition they received for the level of service they had committed to Gaisce.

> They do, they do, I can't say they don't recognise it. I mean, I thought the Civil Merit Award was a brilliant thing. I really felt that that was a very nice thing. You know, you go along, you do your day's work, you're doing your work, and then Gaisce thank you and you say, 'Oh, right, okay, that's very nice'. So I felt that was a very very good initiative. Now, you see, I think, I think it is rewarded in that sense, but the whole thrust of the Award is that you're giving in a voluntary capacity. The students are giving in a voluntary capacity. They're helping and they are challenging and it's voluntary.
>
> Interviewee No 4

> So, yes, that was in Farmleigh and it was a lovely ceremony. It was in Farmleigh at the time, and I think John Lonergan, it was John Lonergan was the guest speaker and it was Christmas time and it was a really lovely setting.
>
> Interviewee No 9

5.4.6: PALs Being Valued: Discussion

This theme has revealed a consensus that PALs – in their roles as volunteers – do believe that they are being valued for the work they do, primarily by their students, school management, colleagues and, to a lesser extent, Gaisce and the parents of the participants (see Figure 26). As noted in Chapter 2, there is a substantial body of evidence to suggest that a teacher's philosophical beliefs are fundamentally critical to the outcome of such mentoring programmes (Finkelstein et al., 2005; Grönlund, 2011; Taylor, 1989) with the popular conceptualisation, as observed by Moore (2005), of good teachers as being charismatic and caring subjects with an orientation aimed very specifically at 'making a difference to pupils' lives' (2005, p. 5). Within this domain, the results from Strand A showed that the students greatly appreciated the work of teacher PALs and, in particular, the parents of those who completed the Award programmes. However, as identified by both Strand A and Strand B respondents, the existence of programme attrition was evidenced and recognised as an ongoing challenge and of concern for Gaisce Teacher PALs.

> The biggest challenge is trying to keep the students motivated to continue with the award and with their ongoing commitment. They start off very enthusiastically, but this can often dwindle or even lapse. I think parents are not informed enough despite being given the literature, etc. by me. Perhaps a video for parents as well as for students could be developed that PALs could email/text to parties to view, and/or a reminder could be sent to parents/students to continue to engage.
>
> Interviewee No 8

Consequently, the participants' responses of both Strand A and Strand B of the study to questions of 'being valued' revealed participants' categorisation of students into the following determinants: students who sign up for the Award and do not partake in activities, students who sign up and partake but do not complete the programme and students who sign up and complete the programme.

> We would get, I would say from the ones that sign up, we get seventy, maybe sign up, let's say seventy-five, we at least get twenty that don't, they've actually enrolled online but they say they can't complete it, or 'I can't do this'
>
> Interviewee No 3

> [So many (Gaisce participants) would have completed last year for you?] Maybe thirty or so out of year group of say ninety.
>
> Interviewee No 7

In the case of 'being valued by students', the nuanced responses of both Strand A and Strand B participants evidence such categorisation and raise important issues for Gaisce in determining the future programme planning, implementation and potential for further consideration of endeavour recognition for those who partake but fail to complete the Gaisce programme.

This theme has also revealed that, as highlighted by each Strand B respondent, Gaisce PALs were unified in their assertions and philosophical beliefs that as teachers, the role of a volunteer PAL does not warrant external reward for their endeavours. Moreover, both Strand A and Strand B participants were consolidated by their intrinsic enjoyment and satisfaction that was derived from observing students' achievements.

> Seeing students achieve
>
> Interviewee No 6
>
> I find it very rewarding
>
> Interviewee No 27

In particular, while also recognising that the role of a Gaisce PAL does not warrant further recognition, four Strand B respondents were gracious in their praise of Gaisce's special recognition for their long-standing service, as evidenced by their receipt of a PAL Civic Merit Award medal at government buildings. Such recognition reveals an interesting distinction emerging between PALs not wanting reward but nonetheless appreciating recognition. Such nuanced appreciativness, consequently, warrants Gaisce's further consideration for advancing an appropriately designed, future PAL merit and award recognition scheme. However, with regard to the promotion of such schemes, as advised by Musick and Wilson (1999) some contextual consideration is advised. While the authors' acknowledge that 'there can be little doubt that [volunteer] benefits are usually unintended consequences of behaviour that is motivated not by extrinsic but intrinsic rewards', they further contend that 'Indeed, there are justifiable fears that attaching rewards to altruism will undermine motivation and distort values' (1999, p. 167).

Consequently, the concluding thematic motivation section, *What Motivates Gaisce PALs to Volunteer for this role?*, will present qualitative data from both Strand A and B of the study.

5.5: What Motivates Gaisce PALs to Volunteer for This Role?

The motivational reasoning of a PAL is the concluding theme, providing a succinct framework to help contextualise the participants' rationale for volunteering for the role of Gaisce PAL. Given the complexity and contested nature of the domain of motivational reasoning (Mele, 2003) and endeavouring to avoid the premise that 'motivation sometimes biases beliefs' (Mele, 2003, p. 201), participants of Strand A (online) and Strand B (audio interviews) were asked: What motivates you to continue to be involved as a Gaisce PAL? The results from Strand A are shown in Figure 27.

Figure 27: Motivations of PALs for Continuing to Remain Involved Gaisce.

Motivation	Participants
Enjoy being involved with positive youth development.	33
Motivated as a supporter and helper to students.	18
I have a belief in the programme.	14
It's part of my role as TY co-ordinator.	7
An opportunity to work with students in a different way.	3
Giveback ethos.	4
Other motivating reasons.	4

Strand A Research   Q..29B: 77 responses

5.5.1: Motivation of PALs: Positive Youth Development Enjoyment

These results show that 42% of the respondents felt motivated to continue in their roles as they derived enjoyment and satisfaction from being involved with positive youth development.

> I love to see students overcome hurdles or barriers, grow into independent young adults, [and] gain from experiences as opposed to just doing them.
>
> Interviewee No 23

> I enjoy encouraging the participants throughout the year and seeing their satisfaction on award night - sometimes it is the only medal they get - and their self-esteem is clearly seen.
>
> Interviewee No 72

73

In Strand B, mentors also spoke of feeling motivated to continue in their roles as they derived enjoyment and satisfaction from being involved with positive youth development.

> I enjoy doing the programme, I see the value and the benefits of the programme. I think the participants also enjoy the programme and then sometimes they only maybe see the value of the programme at the end of the programme, in some cases. Other students you know, some are really into it and are very keen and very enthusiastic and others kind of go along with it but maybe don't see all the pieces fitting together until the very end, if that makes sense?
>
> Interviewee No 1

> I think it's them, the kids themselves, Philip, it's you know, it's the feedback, it's helping them too, you know, I would be very, I'd be more facilitator now than anything else because I'd be very much about them. They'd be like 'Miss, give me something I can do for my community' and I'd be like, 'No, you need to find it, like, it's up to you to find'. I just feel like I'd be very much about supporting them and facilitating them. And I'd love to feedback then because it would be like, 'Well, if you handed it to me, Miss, it would have been easier', but at least I learned this and I know I don't want to do that either, you know.
>
> Interviewee No 3

> But I loved getting them to start something and see it through, you know, just that stickability, and to see it through to the end. And I also know lots of them did it, took up something, especially the community involvement, took it up for Gaisce, but they actually...kept it on. So, I think then you're going to have volunteers for life if you start volunteering at a young age.
>
> Interviewee No 10

5.5.2: Motivation of PALs: As a Supporter to Youth

A subsidiary theme of motivational reasoning was that the emphasis in the role of a Gaisce PAL was one of offering continued support and motivational encouragement to Award participants.

> I love helping the students. I enjoy the Gaisce project, and I really believe in its core values.
>
> Interviewee No 17

> Helping young people to receive recognition for their achievements [and] also witnessing the huge positives of young people involved with their local communities.
>
> Interviewee No 84

A further premise of motivational reasoning of Strand B respondents was also that the emphasis in the role of a Gaisce PAL was one of offering continued support and motivational encouragement to Award participants.

> The kids, really, honest to God, it's, it's the small little gratification, 'Thank you', like something so simple like that, would light up my day. 'Thanks for the help', like even e-mails now over online, when I'm trying to get them through their Bronze or Silver, like just something like 'Thanks for your help, sir', it makes me feel like I've done something right, like.
>
> Interviewee No 2

> I really enjoy encouraging young people to set goals for themselves and to achieve them, but also, just, I think it's a very worthwhile programme for young people to be involved in, to get them out into the community, to see the world beyond school and just simply to kind of see that they are more than capable of being able to do things. And to achieve things in order to kind of improve themselves and their lives.
>
> Interviewee No 5

5.5.3: Motivation of PALs: Building a Different Relationship

The desire to work with students outside the classroom setting, creating a different relationship, was evident among the participants.

> It just creates a huge buzz throughout the whole school year. Like the Adventure Journey gets them to sign up. They love it. They love the thoughts of it but, when they actually see the work that they do and get involved in, it does create a huge buzz and the kids love it and that's why I stay involved in it, essentially.
>
> Interviewee No 8

> I love working with students outside the classroom setting. Gaisce allows opportunities for students who may have been quiet or not the sportiest to thrive and become leaders. I have seen students grow in confidence and self-belief after dealing with volunteering situations or getting lost on a trek but finally finding camp and seeing students who would not hang out in school gel in different environments.
>
> Interviewee No 11

> Working with students on something which isn't particularly academic to develop a more supportive relationship.
>
> Interviewee No 47

5.5.4: Motivation of PALs: A Giveback Ethos

A further theme of a giveback ethos – the desire to offer continued support to both students and other PALs – was at the forefront in participants' responses.

> To give the students the experience I had.
>
> Interviewee No 61

> To share the experience of being a PAL with younger less experienced PALs who ensure Gaisce continues operating in the school.
>
> Interviewee No 87

5.5.5: Motivation of PALs: Integrity and Professionalism of the Award

Another factor frequently noted was the participants' expressed belief in the merit and integrity of the Gaisce Award programme. Fourteen respondents emphasised this as a reason for continued involvement.

> I think the Award programme and the Award itself has great merit, and I want to give my students the opportunity to achieve it.
>
> Interviewee No 41

> I believe in the Gaisce programme. I value the sense of achievement and satisfaction it gives to young people. I like that it supports personal development of the young person. I enjoy the experience of working with young people in nurturing their personal growth.
>
> Interviewee No 86

The respondents, once again, also expressed a desire to work with students outside the classroom setting, creating a different relationship with them. Six Gaisce PALs in Strand B highlighted the professionalism of Gaisce staff and the ease of implementing the programme as notable factors in their consideration of continuing to volunteer as a PAL with the programme.

> But, like, in terms of a PAL at the moment, it is, like, it's very streamlined, Gaisce, there's the website and the diary entries and everything. It's very easy to manage. It's a, you know, really… programme, which means that, like, it's not an enormous amount of work for a teacher. So as a voluntary extracurricular activity, there isn't, you know, there's not a massive amount of paperwork and there's not a heavy workload for you. So, like, for the benefit that the kids get out of it, it's very minimal work for you and as a teacher and an educator, that's a big thumbs up for me. So, less work but good achievements (laughs).
>
> Interviewee No 3

Ah it was brilliant, it was very well run and the lady who did it, Marion, she knew her stuff and she was spot on, she was just well on task. You know, we have been doing a lot of in-service training there recently for the Junior Cert and it was absolutely shocking. You know you had people who had just come out of the Clown College and they are telling us what to do. Whereas, this lady just knew her stuff, had all the answers and you could see she was very, very experienced – it's just a pleasure to work with someone who knows their job.

<div align="right">Interviewee No 6.</div>

5.5.5: Motivation of PALs: Discussion

In this research study, PAL participants were found to have a variety of motivations for volunteering for the Gaisce programme, which included the enjoyment of being involved with positive youth development and supporting and helping students, as well as being motivated by an intrinsic belief in the integrity of the programme and its beneficial impact on their Award participants. As indicated (see Figure 27), results from this study also highlighted the prevalence of a diversity of motivational reasoning, and, as such, support Bussel and Forbes' (2002, p. 201) findings that 'people volunteer to satisfy important psychological and social goals'. In the specific case of one Strand A survey respondent, the motivational commitment propelling them to continue as a Gaisce PAL programme leader was explained, as detailed below:

> Develops relationships with young people and offers job satisfaction. [I] have [had] some enjoyable experiences as a result of Gaisce, e.g. supervising [the] Adventure Journey; also, [I] find I am more likely to try out new things and try to commit for at least 13 weeks if it's what I ask of my students.

<div align="right">Interviewee No. 62</div>

Another significant finding from this PAL investigation relates to the altruistic motivations of Gaisce PAL volunteers, with the identification that all Strand B respondents were unified in their assertion that the role of a Gaisce PAL should not be rewarded or recognised beyond the current levels of support. However, of significance, small valued Thank-You's (Christmas cards) and on-going expressions of gratitude from the Gaisce support team for the volunteer work they did as PALs, provides a beneficial indication of the potential merits of a PAL appreciativness programme.   Appropriately construed, (Musick & Wilson, 1999) such a scheme which   maintains PAL motivation, and increases appreciativness warrant consideration for future Gaisce implementation.

"I suppose talking to you and the questions being asked, it really, kind of, hit home that what I do is important. And it, kind of, allows me to, sort of, like, I don't know, a kind of pat on the back, so to speak, without being overly kind but, yes, from you asking the questions, it kind of made me think, right, these questions are being asked by someone doing a report on Gaisce and it made me think 'I must be doing something right because a lot of the answers for me were positive'

Interviewee No 2

Consequently, as identified by Codbout and Caille (1998, p. 2), 'the gift still constitutes the foundation of our social fabric'. This view is also supported by Cox (2000), who further identified that while volunteers had a variety of motives, 44% of motivational reasoning could be classified as altruistic. Results from this study also showed that all ten Strand B participants found the role of a volunteer Gaisce PAL to be both a rewarding and fulfilling experience. Moreover, four mentors reported that their expectations of what the role of a Gaisce PAL would be 'was exceeded', thus demonstrating that, as observed by Silke et al., understanding mentor motivation for participation in such youth development programmes is of consequential importance and 'as such understanding may influence programme success' (2019, p. 43).

Furthermore, programme professionalism and the perception of the integrity of the Gaisce Award programme (see Figure 27) were also highlighted as significant motivational factors in PAL volunteering. As indicated in Strand B, six Gaisce PALs highlighted the exemplary assistance offered by Gaisce staff and development officers and the ease of programme management as motivational factors for remaining involved in the programme. While a number of important highlights emerged from this motivation theme, the dominance of discourse from participants about current challenges to the integrity and trust of the Award, as well as competitor Leadership Award growth from other national sporting and national youth organisations, merits further consideration for Gaisce policy and operational practitioners.

And one of the things that we identified in that in the thesis that I was a part of was this idea of the commodification of well-being, of the well-being programme, so that people like the GAA were bringing out a programme, the GAA All Stars programme or the leadership training and things like that. And they are specific well-being, they are programmes that schools can invest in, in order to fulfil the 100 hours requirement over the three years. And I think really Gaisce needs to look at doing something like that.

Interviewee No 5

And another challenge I'm finding, as well as that, Gaisce is providing scope of the leaders of tomorrow. I think that gradually Gaisce is going to find a lot of competition from other groups like the GAA, like, you know. So, the example that I had in my school was that, all of a sudden, the GAA Future Leaders programme was brought into the school and because the GAA are Master Marketeers, it started to outshine Gaisce a bit, you know. So, this is something that I think Gaisce themselves will need to take a look at their own marketing and when they hit the kids like."

Interviewee No 6

In particular, the views expressed by six of ten Strand B respondents intrinsically linked their motivational rationale for remaining involved in implementing the programme in their schools as integral to the esteem and stature in which they deemed Gaisce to be held.

Again, it's a mark of integrity that the school is involved in this and that we are helping the community. Gaisce has a mark of, you know, this person, has get up and go, it has a quality assurance about it, not in the same way, but along the same lines like those Olympic rings they stand for quality, they stand for excellence, they stand for effort, they stand for endurance. So Gaisce has developed that kind of reputation around it.

Interviewee No 4

Moreover, their linkage of the ethos and values of Gaisce to participants' own values and identities, as teachers, mentors and volunteers, was evident.

I think that, you know, sometimes as a society, we kind of lose this value on hard work and that sometimes people want to, you know, get the Award without doing anything and that would have been part of my experience previously with Gaisce where, you know, sometimes people were signed-off on for having achieved this or having achieved that and, you know, they didn't achieve it, they didn't do it.

Interviewee No 7

5.6: Conclusion

To conclude, in endeavouring to understand if PALs attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President's Award self-development programme, this chapter's focus presented qualitative findings, as gathered, following a Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis of 41 open-ended Strand A and Strand B questions.   As previously outlined, several key results structured around four central themes: *The Conceptualisation of the Role of a PAL; Making a Difference; Being Valued; and Motivational Reasoning* emerged from this study.

Most notably, in seeking to comprehend the conceptualisation of the role of a PAL, it is clear from these findings, that the nature of PAL mentorship dominates the discourse. While 77% of all respondents conceptualised their role as either a youth mentor/influencer, congruent with this identity was the recognition by PALs that such role identities are mutli-faceted and contextually changing within the dynamics of the Gaisce PAL/Student Award Participant relationship. These findings further revealed that Gaisce PALs serve several functions to help students including acting as a sponsor, guide, counsellor, exemplar and teacher. It was also evident from the findings that functional structures of the Gaisce teacher PAL are also a key element in attaching value to the lives of their supported students. Such functions include helping, giving, supporting, encouraging, facilitating and empathising. Specifically , these findings also emphasised the importance of the Adventure Journey where the PAL mentor and student mentee relationship are to the fore and further signal the important opportunities that such Journey prospects offer in helping to promote school connectedness..

In seeking to identify if Gaisce PALs had any impact or influence on their Award participants, Gaisce PAL respondents were resolute in their affirmations, with 90% responding that they had made a difference to the lives of their Gaisce participants. Such validations were exemplified by the respondents discourse which outlined, that in roles as PALs, their actions of motivating, encouraging, building confidence and enthusing their students had a consequential and beneficial effect. The results also evidenced that PALs as teachers, advocated a teaching philosophy of guided discovery, and embraced 'the existential dimension of education' (Dewey, 1897). Furthermore, within this domain, PAL narratives demonstrated that the philosophical

guidance of Gaisce PAL teachers were intrinsically linked to helping their students participants through the Award process as evidenced by one participant's assertion ' You were there but I did this myself'.

For the penultimate theme of the study, *Being Valued*, findings revealed that, as Gaisce PALs, teachers do believe they are valued for their volunteering, primarily by their students, school colleagues and management and, to a lesser degree, by Gaisce and the parents of the participants. The findings also identify that the value that PALs attach to their volunteer roles,   supports Grönlund's premise that, in the main, such motivations are rooted in altruistic actions with Gaisce PALs volunteering for no financial gain or monetary rewards. Of significance, these findings also highlight that PALs were united in the belief that the role of a PAL did not merit any further recognition. However, it was notable that PALs inherently valued being modestly appreciated and thanked by Gaisce and their students.

While a number of important insights emerged from the concluding findings related to motivation, of particular relevance was the finding that PAL participants were found to have a variety of motivations for volunteering for the Gaisce programme.   These included the enjoyment associated with a positive youth development programme and a desire to support participants. Of further significance was what PAL participants expressed as belief in both the integrity of the programme and the professionalism and support offered by the Gaisce organisation and staff. However, some notable discourse arose surrounding the perceived and real threat of competitors who are offering similar youth leadership and national self-development programmes through the auspices of schools and TY environs which is of noted concern to PALs.

The next chapter, *Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions* will discuss the data as presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, in the context of the Literature Review

Chapter Six:

Discussion and Conclusions

6.1: Introduction

The aim of this study was (i) to investigate the characteristics, behaviours, role conceptualisation and motivations of a teacher PAL group who implement the Gaisce programme across 723 secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland and (ii) and to explore if and how President's Award Leaders (PALs) attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President's Award self-development programme? This concluding section will consider the process, implications and potential for follow-up research arising from the study. The chapter is divided into the following sections: *6.2: Study Findings Summary, 6.3: Limitations and Validation of Study, 6.4: Discussion: Challenging Perspectives, 6.4.1: Challenge One: Being Valued, 6.4.2: Challenge Two: Busyness of a Gaisce Teacher PAL, 6.5: Recommendations and Suggestions for Research and Practice and 6.6: Conclusion: Making a Difference.*

6.2: Study Findings Summary

Employing on quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, this nine-month investigation produced a rich data set pertaining to the breadth of the work undertaken by school-based PALs in Ireland. Analysis of the data demonstrated that 77% of all respondents conceptualised their role as a teacher PAL as either that of mentoring or of youth influencing. Furthermore, 42% of Strand A Gaisce PALs reported that they experienced fulfilment and enjoyment from their roles in a positive youth development programme. In terms of how they perceived that they are valued by others, 82% stated the belief that their role as a Gaisce PAL was most valued by students. Results also indicated that 66% of PAL respondents wished to continue in their roles – motivated by an altruistic desire to remain involved in a positive youth programme by helping and supporting students. Of significance, 90% of respondents believed they 'made a difference' to the lives of their Award students. 'Making a difference' was understood by PALs to incorporate helping, supporting, influencing, empathising, facilitating and motivating Gaisce programme participants.

The results from Strand A (online) and Strand B (audio interviews) conclusively demonstrated that teachers do attach value to the role they play as Gaisce PALs in mentoring young people, thus validating the stated research question: 'Do President's

Award Leaders (PALs) attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people who participate in Gaisce – The President's Award self-development programme?' .

6.3: Discussion: Exploring Perspectives

The value that PALs attach to their role, as identified in this research, highlighted why PALS engage with the Gaisce programme and what keeps them motivated to continue. 82% of PAL participants stated the belief they are valued by their students. Furthermore, the responses of participants to questions attached to value underscores some of the challenges facing PALs which, in turn, warrants further discussion and analysis. In particular, participant responses to the questions: "In your role as a PAL, who values you?" and "How much weekly time do you give to managing Gaisce participants?" provided valuable insights into the challenges of delivering the Gaisce programme in tandem with their duties as an educator.

One of the key findings of the research was that the primary motivator for PALs is the relationship with the student participant and the subsequent success of those students. It also emerged from the data that a core source of value or affirmation for PALs is the response of students who complete the programme and that of their parents. Secondary value or affirmation comes from school management and, to a lesser extent, from Gaisce. The high attrition rate in the programme also emerged as a significant issue - with 40% of annual participants failing to complete the Award programme. In relation to the extent to which PALs feel valued and how Gaisce can identify other ways of augmenting their sense of value/affirmation, it was noteworthy that there was unanimous agreement amongst participants in the qualitative interview strand that they do not want monetary or other rewards - but they do appreciate recognition of their work.

6.3.1: Exploration One: Being Valued: In your role as a PAL, who values you?

As noted above 82% of PAL participants stated the belief they are valued by their students. However, a deeper investigation of the data revealed a range of responses, which highlighted how teachers felt most valued by "conscientious" (Interviewee No. 73) and "motivated" (Interviewee No, 7) students who completed the Award programme and, subsequently, the

parents of such students. The positivity which many of the PAL participants referenced in terms of their engagement with students who completed the Gaisce programme contrasted with their experience of witnessing the number of students who signed up for an Award but who failed to complete it. This trend is evidenced by Gaisce (2020) which states that, for the period 2018/2019, the national attrition level from those who registered to those who completed the programme was 40%. The data also revealed that attrition levels in the Gaisce programme were of concern to 26% of teacher PALs. The experience of endeavouring to deal with such participant attrition was illuminated by two respondents:

> Like again, I followed up and tried to sort of say to them and they just kind of said 'I stopped or something got in the way' and I tried to go back to them. It was just kind of a loss, so I lost them really.
>
> Interviewee No. 2

> As my dad [a teacher] advises and says… you can't save everyone, you save who you can save.
>
> Interviewee No. 3

While it is beyond the scope of this study to assess the impact that such attrition levels have on youth outcomes, established research has indicated that prematurely abandoning a youth mentoring programme may increase the detrimental effects on youth behaviours, emotions and social development (Grossman and Rhodes, 2002; Kupersmidt et al., 2017). Furthermore, such programme attrition may negatively impact the relationship dynamics of school connectedness as well as a student's belief 'that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals' (Blum and Libbey, 2004, p. 230). Moreover, according to Shochet et al. (2006, p.170), 'school connectedness has been specifically shown to predict future depressive symptoms in adolescents'.

Consequently, it is to be expected that teachers might be concerned about the impact which "dropping out" might have on students and might lead them, in the long-term, to question the duty of care which they have as PALs and to give rise to unease at the prospect that engagement with a programme such as Gaisce might have a negative impact on students who fail to complete it.

6.3.2: Exploration Two: Busyness of a Gaisce Teacher PAL: How Much Weekly Time do you Give to Managing Gaisce Participants?

Findings from this study show that 91% of PAL participants spent less than three hours per week implementing the Gaisce Award programme in their schools. Furthermore, time poverty and busy school schedules were cited as notable causes for concern, with more than 60% of survey participants describing it as a 'challenge'.

As observed in this report, the 'busyness of a teacher PAL's school life' is a recurring theme in both Survey A and B. Interestingly, evidence from this study also suggested the existence of a causal relationship between Award programme attrition and the "busyness" of a teacher. Three responses that exemplify this relationship are outlined below:

> Yes, motivating students to do the community involvement aspect of the Award and to record it properly. It is also a challenge motivating those who lose interest during the year. Time restraints are always a challenging factor.
>
> Interviewee No. 41

> Keeping young people motivated to keep doing Gaisce. Organising the Adventure Journey safely. Getting time to support students more fully.
>
> Interviewee No. 69

> Yeah, they're straight into the Leaving Cert courses, yeah, they're just run off their feet. That's why we don't get as many of them. We only get a couple that would want to do Silver. Like, it's a huge shock for them when they, you know, like in Transition Year, they can do different things and they're a little bit more in control but now there's a crushing timetable on top of them and they've all these Assignments.
>
> Interviewee No. 4

The recurring theme inherent in these responses raises concerns and questions about whether such Gaisce PALs who feel challenged by time poverty – and whose expressions of limited availability for meeting and building relations with their Award constituents – can in fact 'make a difference' or 'attach value' to the lives of their mentees. In established mentoring research, Pryce (2012, p. 285) advocates 'that the experience of transformation aspired to by the iconic mentoring relationship represents an exceptional level of effort and commitment'.

6.4: Recommendations and Suggestions for Research and Practice

Based on the observations from both Strand A and Strand B, a number of suggestions and recommendations for further Gaisce practice and research can be made. Concerns surrounding attrition levels emerged as an interesting theme in the sense of its significance for research and practice in this study. From this perspective, it is clear that the cause and effect of attrition levels in the Gaisce programme warrants further research and analysis. While established findings indicate that early attrition to such self-development programmes may have a harmful effect on youth behaviour (Kupersmidt et al., 2017), it would be beneficial for future Gaisce research to better identify and comprehend the impacts on mentor/mentee relationships that such Award attrition has. Furthermore, practical research into how Gaisce can reverse this trend and ultimately increase the number of students who complete the programme and attain the Award would be worth undertaking since it was apparent from the research that attrition levels impact significantly on the morale of PALs.

In light of the finding that the key motivation of PALs and their primary source of value/affirmation in their roles is from student success on the programme, then anything that supports student success creates an optimal working context for PALS. Therefore, these findings provide key insights into the priorities of PALs and how a strategic support structure designed around those stated priorities could warrant exploration.

The results from both the quantitative and qualitative research illustrated that due to the "busyness" of school life, Award participants and Gaisce PALs spent less than 180 minutes per week engaging in mentor/mentee relationships, with an average of 33 mentees per participant recorded. In light of prior research that has consistently indicated how frequency of contact is linked to positive youth and programme success outcomes (Silke et al., 2019), the challenge of developing a meaningful relationship with students within such a limited timeframe as a PAL is apparent. Therefore, it might be beneficial to explore ways in which the development of a team of PALs, allowing for a flatter delegation of different PAL duties within schools, instead of the current system whereby participating schools have established the practice of a hierarchical chain of

PAL command, might be considered. Furthermore, as identified in this study, 51% of PALs work alone and consequentially, the challenges of running the programme during the COVID-19 pandemic, new practices to improve communication and online engagement might also warrant review.

While the role which schools play in the implementation of the Gaisce programme is crucial, in light of the finding that time constraints within the school day impacts on the amount of time teacher PALs can devote to Gaisce, the manner of how the programme is located or where it is positioned vis a vis school curriculum/timetable warrants review. Alternative, albeit radical approaches such as a summer programme, a post Leaving Cert gap-year style programme or a programme which can allow participants to earn credits in State exams might be given some consideration.

In addressing ways in which Gaisce can implement practical measures to help PALs feel more valued, further analysis might be done around the prospect of initiating a recognition scheme which values not just the number of successful participants but also the energy and dedication required to be a long-term PAL and the benefit of engaging with the programme, even for those who ultimately do not go on to achieve the Award. Although PALs clearly stated that they did not want any form of monetary reward, perhaps a monetary enticement for schools which have displayed an enduring commitment to Gaisce, which may be recognised for example by the gifting of an accredited mountaineering training programme or equipment, may have the effect of placing a greater value on the work done by PALs at school level.

Although Gaisce PAL mentors expressed high levels of role satisfaction and fulfilment in both the qualitative and quantitative studies, and while 80% of Gaisce PAL respondents were female, apprehensions were raised in the area of youth safeguarding. In particular, the challenge of safeguarding the programme's Adventure Journey was expressed by a number of PAL participants, who cited a lack of mountaineering expertise and inadequate resources as areas of unease. As a result, it may be beneficial for Gaisce policymakers to address these concerns, developing alternative models in order to maximise volunteer recruitment and mentor retention.

Finally, while recognising that past Gaisce research has been focused on specific issues requiring investigation at a specific moment in time (Clarke-MacMahon, 2013; Furlong; 2019; Genesis 2012), it is clear from the findings of this research project that a continuous collaborative system of social research is warranted. While the essence of the Gaisce Award is rooted in an existential dimension of education (Dewey, 1897), the adoption of a continuous process of organisational learning may prove beneficial. As asserted by Angelides et al., (2008), such processes are successful because they support reflection and experimentation and offer everyone involved the opportunity to consider new possibilities.

6.5: Conclusion: Making a Difference

This research provides empirical evidence to support the assertation that, in their role as Gaisce PALs, teachers perceive that they do attach value to the role they play in mentoring young people. Notwithstanding some relevant concerns regarding high attrition levels and concerns surrounding how time management effects mentor/mentee relations, the overall consensus is that Gaisce teacher PALs have a significant impact on both the lives of their Award mentees and on Gaisce's organisational existence.

The central tenet of this work is that the model is dependent upon the dynamic and ever-changing role that PALs play as teachers, mentors and volunteers. As emphasised by respondents, 'making a difference' was classified as helping, supporting, influencing, empathising, facilitating and motivating their student participants. The positive engagement of DEIS students which was highlighted by PALs who teach in DEIS schools was another theme which emerged from the qualitative interviews and which might also warrant further research. This would be particularly worthwhile in light of discourse surrounding the wider social impact of the Gaisce programme on the constructs of representative democracy (Costello, 1984) in a growing neoliberalist domain (President Michael D. Higgins, 2019). Furthermore, the degree of societal and economic change which has taken place in Ireland since the Gaisce programme was founded might also inform aspects of such a review.

The commitment to Gaisce, exhibited by PALs, is evidenced by the finding that 52% of volunteers have spent more than ten years implementing the programme in their schools.

This is further supported by the consensus amongst the PALs surveyed that they had no desire to receive any additional monetary reward for their role. While a commitment to experiential learning was in evidence, with more than 70% of Gaisce PALs having completed more than three Adventure Journeys, it is noteworthy that the advent of COVID-19 social restrictions has impacted on and challenged the intrinsic ethos of the Award programme.

In conclusion, this study has shown that the role of the teacher PAL is central to the success of Gaisce. The importance of this role is best exemplified by a respondent with more than forty years' experience as a Gaisce PAL:

> Well, put it this way Philip (laughs), this is, like, in any teacher in any school, like, if any school is good at, for example, badminton, there's a teacher who is promoting it, okay. So, if there's nobody promoting it that school won't be good or basketball or rugby or whatever activity you want. So, if there wasn't a teacher doing it, there would be almost nobody doing Gaisce in our school.

<div align="right">Interviewee No. 4</div>

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