Vocational Teacher Educators' Identity: a symbiosis of roles and contexts

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This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

I declare that the word-length conforms to the permitted maximum.

Signature .....

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of the professional role identities of vocational teacher educators (VTEs) when compared with mainstream teacher educators (MTEs) in Malta. VTEs are underrepresented in research and policy and misapprehended as an occupational group, even though they are crucial players in sustaining a high-quality vocational teaching workforce and have a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Using identity theory from the structural symbolic interactionism (SI) perspective (Burke & Stets, 2009), this study examines the identity changes of VTEs during an initial teaching education (ITE) programme in Malta and investigates how employers view the role identities of VTEs in Malta. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with twenty-two participants, adopting Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis (TA); and metaphor analysis. The results show that VTEs and MTEs underpin their teaching differently, influenced by the perceptions they have about their professional role identities. Moreover, both VTEs and employers were almost unanimous in their perspectives of what VTEs should be. There is no 'one size fits all' solution for each country, yet this study contributes to a field with a limited research base, by providing recommendations for policymakers and vocational education and training (VET) practitioners.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family.

Contents

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List of Abbreviations

CEDEFOP	Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FoE	Faculty of Education
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HSC	Health and Social Care
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
KSCs	Knowledge, Skills and Competences
LLS	Lifelong Learning Sector
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
MTE	Mainstream Teacher Educator
MTL	Master in Teaching and Learning
QA	Quality Assurance
SI	Symbolic Interactionism
TA	Thematic Analysis
TE	Teacher Educator
UoM	University of Malta
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VST	Vocational Student Teacher
VTE	Vocational Teacher Educator

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The social stigma attached to the vocational education and training (VET) context, gave impetus to this study. Not long ago, the mentality in Malta was that the only way to meet expectations of a good income and a better career, was to go to university. In particular, the distinction between 'intellectual work' (academic education for white collar employees) and 'manual work' (vocational education for blue collar workers) is still felt. However, both post-compulsory vocational and academic streams of education offer advanced education where students are prepared for future occupations.

The VET sector, which is deeply rooted in the traditions of crafts and industry, educates and trains individuals of all ages and at different stages of their careers and lives. Programmes vary from initial VET (IVET) which leads to upper secondary vocational qualifications, to continuing VET (CVET) for individuals to improve their knowledge, skills and competences (KSCs) during their working life (Misra, 2011). Specifically, with its diverse programmes and qualifications, VET is becoming increasingly important to address the needs of the labour market in a fast-changing economy. Although there is no consistency in the way VET is understood across societies, it is concerned with the "social development of labour" (Clarke & Winch, 2007, p.1).

The European Commission (EC), with the help of Cedefop (the acronym of its French title, Centre Européen pour le Développement de

la Formation Professionnelle), an agency that supports the development of European VET policies, recognises the need to maintain and grow a skilled workforce in order to combat unemployment. Hence, it has turned its attention to education providers to equip citizens with useful skillsets to participate fully in society. The quality of teachers within the VET sector is one of the major aspects in achieving this goal (Misra, 2011). To improve educational outcomes, strategic developments in formal and non-formal education and training should not only be directed to the learners and their teachers, but also to those responsible for the instruction, supervision and support of future teachers. This study gives the opportunity to demonstrate the importance of such individuals.

1.2 Research Problem

Those who support future teachers, teacher educators (TEs), play a significant role in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes and the continuous professional development (CPD) of all teachers, from across the entire state and private education sectors. An ITE programme, which is a pre-service teaching programme, is the entry point into the teaching profession, where student teachers study a combination of both theoretical and practical subject areas, such as pedagogy, psychology, philosophy of education, sociology of education, methodological and didactical preparation, and complete teaching practice. All of these provide them with a good foundation of what teaching is all about. Such courses are provided by TEs, who are “at the core of good teacher education” (Vloet & van Swet, 2010, p.149). According to Loughran (2006), their work significantly impacts upon the

quality of future classroom teachers. As a result, attention has increased on these key actors within the education sector. Research has focussed on their roles and identities, the challenges they face and the support they receive (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Murray & Male, 2005; Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007; Murray, Swennen, & Shagrir, 2008; Kosnik & Beck, 2008).

Nonetheless, although research has increased in this area, more needs to be understood about TEs, their different roles, and their professional development needs in relation to their practice (Izadinia, 2014). Not recognising the importance and significance of their profession will heavily impact upon the formation of their role identities, which is a crucial aspect for them personally and for the service they deliver (Lunenberg & Hamilton, 2008).

The EC (2013) admits that most European Union (EU) countries still do not share an understanding of TEs' roles, competences or qualification requirements,

> in most member states, government policy on the quality requirements for teacher educators, or on their academic and professional development, does not exist or is underdeveloped; this is especially the case for those who educate teachers in early education, adult education, as well as vocational education and training. (p.7)

The situation affects educational attainment of the competences TEs need, to fulfil roles effectively. Thus, policies need to be established to support the profession and guarantee consistency and quality.

Professional role identities have common aims, values and philosophy (EC, 2013) and are important in any professional context. In addition, quality of the professional role also determines members' standards (EC, 2013). Research by Swennen, Jones and Volman (2010) found that TEs have multiple professional identities as: classroom teachers, teachers in higher education (HE), researchers or teachers of teachers. It is also important to look at the individual personal and social manifestations of a particular professional identity.

Research has mainly focussed on TEs within mainstream education[1] (Bullough, 2005) where they are considered to be a "poorly understood occupational group" (Davison, Murray, & John, 2005, p.113) and their role is considered to be "ill-defined" (Menter et al., 2010, p.124) perhaps due to the limited amount of research and defining them proves problematic. On the other hand, vocational teacher educators (VTEs)[2] who are even less visible are underrepresented in research and policy (Noel, 2006), More research needs to be conducted on VTE roles as this has the potential to enhance the quality of vocational students' education. Unless there is a clear understanding of the VTE role identities, policies or quality frameworks for them cannot be set.

[1] In this study, mainstream education refers to general/academic education as opposed to vocational education.

[2] TEs working in a VET context, i.e. teaching vocational student teachers (VSTs) to become vocational teachers. These individuals may have two identities: a professional education and training identity and their other/prior professional identity.

Having a shared understanding of the role identities of VTEs and the competences they require, would be beneficial in terms of the ways support is offered to them and how educational programmes are designed. Failure to understand their roles and identities, means VET related policies will be based on flawed assumptions and partial evidence, which may then have unknown consequences for the VSTs. To date, policymakers do not emphasise the importance of TEs in general (Swennen & van der Klink, 2009). In fact, they are often referred to as hidden professionals (Livingston, 2014).

This doctoral thesis takes a novel perspective and puts the spotlight on the TEs working in the VET context. The Republic of Malta, an EU member state, serves as a useful case study to start building a broader understanding of TEs' role identities in the VET context.

Currently, according to Cedefop (2018), the EU is facing the challenge of mitigating skill shortages and skill mismatches which are a critical concern for policymakers. Feedback loops between VET and the labour market are required to develop national competitiveness and foster economic growth. Existing literature on this matter is sparse, and there is very little connection between VTEs and the labour market. Bolli et al. (2018) argue that the quality of interactions between the actors within the education and the employment system, has an impact on the effectiveness of VET, in relation to the skills supply and demand; yet literature has still not considered this area, especially in the case of Malta (Triganza Scott & Cassar, 2005), despite the fact that the VET system prepares students to enter a particular occupation (Staff, 2004).

Developing a better understanding of the role identities of VTEs in Malta is essential for shaping education and training policies, especially when the global labour market is undergoing dynamic transformation due to demographic change and changes in technology. A clear understanding of what the labour market expects from VET can help improve teaching practices. For example, learning outcomes which are oriented around work-based learning helps to offset skills mismatch, resulting in work-ready graduates. Thus, a more supportive coherent approach could be achieved by understanding the roles of VTEs responsible for future vocational teachers.

This study aims to address this wide literature gap and examines what it means to be a VTE within a Maltese VET context. VTEs are the crucial players for sustaining a high-quality VET teaching workforce and have a significant influence on the quality of vocational teaching and learning in schools. Neglecting them in policymaking jeopardises the VET profession and its professional development. Moreover, not recognising their importance may result in poor teaching behaviours. Unfortunately, the recent report by Cedefop about VET in Malta (2017) does not make any reference to the role of the TE.

This study also seeks to analyse the identity changes of VTEs during an ITE programme in Malta and to examine whether time affects their role identity formation. In addition, it also investigates how employers view the role identities of VTEs and considers whether their perceptions differ from those of VTEs. According to Sultana (1997), the labour market should have a vested interest in influencing educational policymaking and should naturally be concerned by what is learnt in schools.

Findings from this research on the professional role identities of VTEs within the Maltese context will contribute to a field with a limited research base. There is no ‘one size fits all’ solution for each country but it may help policymakers in small states to be wary of uncritically taking on board concepts related to the roles of VTEs originating from much larger countries and from the mainstream education contexts.

1.3 The Maltese Context

Given that this study presents empirical evidence taking Malta as a case study, it would be useful to provide a background of this research context. Thus, the socio-economic background, the provision and political context of VET in Malta are presented.

1.3.1 Socio-economic Context

Malta is an island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, 93 km south of Sicily (Italy) and the smallest country in the EU. The Maltese archipelago is made up of the islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino. The estimated total population of Malta and Gozo at the end of 2017 stood at 475,701 (NSO, 2018) spread over 316 km^2. Malta, whose main religion is Roman Catholicism, achieved its formal independence from Britain in 1964 and became a republic in 1974. The British military bases closed in 1979 and it later joined the EU in 2004.

Malta has always had to be versatile in adapting to dynamic global realities considering that it has no natural resources (Cedefop, 2017). It has seen high GDP growth, strong employment growth and a budget surplus in

recent years (EC, 2019). Malta is seeing fast increasing employment in the following sectors: art, entertainment and recreation; public administration; education; professional, scientific, technical, administration and support service activities. In addition, there is employment growth in the following sectors: financial and insurance; real estate accommodation and food services; wholesale and retail trade; transportation and storage; information and communication; and the gambling and betting industry. Employment in more traditional industries, such as manufacturing, agriculture, and the fishing industry, is shrinking (Cedefop, 2017).

1.3.2 The Provision of Vocational Education and Training in Malta

VET in Malta originated in the 14th century, where the most common trades at the time were in building and construction, carpentry and silver work (Sultana, 1995). A school of navigation was eventually set up by the order of the Knights of St John as a result of investing in training for ship building and repair between the 16th and 18th centuries. Due to Malta's strategic position, the British developed their Mediterranean fleet and by 1807, the dockyard school was established as the main technical education provider in the 19th and 20th centuries (Cedefop, 2017).

After the Second World War, technical education was strengthened. Between the 1950s and 1960s, the Maltese government used the British model as a blueprint and several secondary technical schools collectively referred to as 'the polytechnic', were established. The polytechnic kept on running until 1977, and, due to lagging investment and inadequate progress in

the way schools were managed, trade schools began to receive less attention when compared with mainstream education, during the late 1980s and 1990s. This resulted in their phasing out, which left Malta without any VET (Cedefop, 2017).

1.3.3 The Economic and Political Context of Vocational Education and Training in Malta and the EU in the 21st Century

Economic hardship within the EU member states has been a catalyst for change in VET. VET system reforms have sped up due to an increase in youth unemployment. These reforms have focussed on expanding apprenticeships and introducing work-based learning to ease the transitions from education to the workplace (Cedefop, 2017).

When Malta was in the process of joining the EU, the education minister at the time, felt the need to enhance the local workforce by formally upgrading skills. Indeed, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), formerly known as the polytechnic, was intended to meet this need and, therefore, act as the best investment to ensure the growth of human capital. Like all governments, Maltese governments always assume that a highly and skilled work force develops the economy (Sultana, 1994). MCAST, established in 2001, promised more value would be added to VET, and it now offers full-time and part-time vocational courses, ranging from level 1 to level 7 on the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) (certificates to master's degrees). The MQF

> assists in making the Maltese qualifications system easier to understand and review, and more transparent at a national and

> international level. It is also a referencing tool that helps to describe and compare both national and foreign qualifications to promote quality, transparency and mobility of qualifications in all types of education. It is mainly referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as well as to other non-European qualifications frameworks. (NCFHE, 2019)

MCAST is regulated by the 1988 Education Act (and subsequent amendments) (Cap.327) and has become an increasingly popular option for learners after compulsory education; participation in VET programmes has tripled since 2000 (Cedefop, 2017). As the progress is visible and encouraging, more work is needed to ensure that Maltese citizens have adequate skills for themselves and their country. In turn, setting up policies for TEs is likely to positively affect their respective and ergo, the Maltese workforce.

According to the main report by Cedefop (2016), VET institutions in Malta need to conduct training of their teaching staff in-house as there are no formal initial vocational education teacher training courses. The 1988 Education Act (Cap.327) is the only legislation that regulates VET teachers, and their qualifications are only regulated indirectly, through the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education in Malta. However, the University of Malta (UoM) has launched a new Level 7 (MQF) qualification, the Master in Teaching & Learning (MTL) specialising in VET subjects (UoM, 2017). The TEs of this new programme have participated in this study.

1.4 Vocational Education and General Education Contexts

1.4.1 Introduction

Having previously described the Maltese VET context, this section discusses the differences between the vocational education and general education systems, and ways of becoming a teacher in Malta.

Many authors, such as Thompson (1973), are concerned about the inconsistencies and difficulties in defining “vocational education” (Moodie, 2008). Vocational education is often compared with general education. However, the two “can mean different things in different countries, depending on the traditions that have formed in the education system” (Lachenmann, 1988, p.26).

The lack of a clear definition of vocational education is a weakness (Moodie, 2008). Moodie (2002, 2008) argues that the best approach is to recognise it from its epistemological, teleological, hierarchical and pragmatic aspect: VET is based on a particular way of knowing or learning; has a distinctive purpose, such as that of preparing learning for a specific vocation; is categorised by occupational, educational or cognitive levels; and positioned as either residual (not elsewhere included) or as “what happens to be the arrangement in a particular place at a particular time” (Moodie, 2008, p.39). Moodie argues that a definition is needed which combines all four general characteristics. He states that “we may deem vocational education to be the development and application of knowledge and skills for middle-level occupations needed by society from time to time” (p.42); and maintains that

this definition also refers to applied knowledge and occupational level, which affects the occupational hierarchy and economic structure.

According to Billet (2011), vocational education revolves around the needs of societies and communities and addresses a range of distinct educational purposes and, therefore, varies within different educational sectors and engages all types of learners within varied programmes, institutions and experiences. Considering the diversity in VET, the role identities of the TEs within the VET context are likely to be continuously changing and adapting to the demands of a rapidly evolving labour market.

Apprenticeships are one of the key markers of VET. A set of interlocking institutional supports make up the apprenticeship systems. These may range from coordination of employment relations and training, guaranteeing consistency in the training content and standards, to the legal regulation of apprentices, training and related wages.

The nature of VET is that it relates to specific occupations where technical facilities, such as workshops, are used in teaching and on-the-job training (Moodie, 2008). Avis (2014) emphasises the link between VET and the workplace and stresses the need for recognising the “articulation between practice-based and employer interest in vocational education and training” (p.45). According to Moodie (2008), the development of a distinctive way of knowing is the most fundamental foundation for the identity of vocational education.

One criticism of VET is that although it may ease bridging the gap between education and the labour market, and reduce unemployment rates,

by developing specific job-related skills to prepare students to work in specific occupations, these skills may become obsolete at a faster rate. Students who choose general education are better equipped with broad knowledge and basic skills in mathematics and communication, as they have a better foundation for further learning and training at work (Hanushek et al., 2017). However, this is not the case for VET in Malta. Apart from the vocational units, MCAST gives the opportunity to its students to enhance their key skills in English and Maths through vocational content within each full-time programme. These key skills subjects are embedded into each vocational area which promotes the practical aspect of these subjects (MCAST, 2019).

1.4.2 Teacher Education Programmes – ways of becoming a teacher in Malta

The purpose of this section is to discuss the different ways one can become a teacher in Malta. The Faculty of Education (FoE) at the UoM, which was established in 1978, was the main provider of pre-service teacher education provision in Malta (Buhagiar & Attard Tonna, 2015) until 2015. It is still responsible for ITE programmes that lead to MQF level 6 and 7. Its main areas are early childhood education and care, primary and secondary, and from 2017, vocational education (FoE, 2019).

Student teachers who successfully complete an ITE programme, can apply for a teacher's warrant. The FoE's ITE programme offers key skills and competences in teaching and learning, and links theory and practice by providing teaching practicum, with a focus on reflective practice (Buhagiar & Attard Tonna, 2015).

As from April 2015, another Maltese institution which started offering ITE programmes was established (IfE, 2019). Its aim is to provide various modes of ITE and CPD to educators. However, courses within this institution are limited when compared to the FoE, UoM, which has been running for more than forty years.

1.5 Research Motivation

It is my own personal background, habitus, educational and work experience that has triggered me to investigate what it means to be a VTE, and identity formation within a VET context. What follows is a personal reflection of my own positionality which gave impetus to this study.

I am a telecommunications engineer by profession, having spent some years working in industry after graduating from the UoM. During my time in industry, an opportunity came up to teach, on a part-time basis, several modules related to computer networking, leading to a National Diploma in Information Technology, in a private licensed HE institution in Malta. I never thought that teaching could be so fulfilling and rewarding, so I decided to shift my career sector and chose to work on a full-time basis within the VET sector at MCAST, when the opportunity arose.

Lecturers at MCAST whose degrees are not in education, but in other disciplines are encouraged to complete its MQF level 6 graduate teaching certificate programme in VET. As my first and second degree are not in education, I had to undertake this teacher training course when I joined the college. This programme is designed to train lecturers teaching in VET institutions to meet the educational, life-long learning needs to face the

challenges of employment and employability in a fast-changing labour market (Cedefop, 2017). Lecturers who are unsuccessful in this programme cannot progress from one lecturing grade to another. This was the only programme that provided vocational teacher training in Malta until the FoE at the UoM launched further programmes to target vocational teacher education in 2017. It was this experience that triggered my interest and motivation to research about TEs within a VET context.

VTEs influence the teacher training programmes they deliver by the ways they make sense of their teacher-learning experiences (EC, 2013). Therefore, role identities greatly influence how VTEs teach VSTs, which then reflects vocational teaching in general in schools or vocational colleges in Malta. This thesis also explores whether VTEs' role identities differ from mainstream teacher educators (MTEs).[3]

This research is based on the premises that:

1. the role identities of VTEs are similar to those of vocational teachers, due to the nature of the subject discipline;
2. the role identities of VTEs are also similar to those of MTEs, bearing in mind the nature of teacher training programmes.

Therefore, research on vocational teacher and MTE identities is relevant to and can help inform research on VTE identities.

[3] Mainstream TEs: TEs within the higher education context.

In preparation for this study, a review of the literature revealed very little on TE identities, especially within a VET context. However, as stated above, research in the broader area of teaching may well be relevant.

According to Danielewicz (2001), a focus on professional identities is important, because being a teacher, requires “engagement with identity” […and] “teaching is a state of being, not merely ways of acting or behaving” (p.3). This assumption has also been accepted by other scholars where the interpretation, judgement, behaviour and performance of individuals in their professional roles are influenced by their view on their professional identities (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Stryker,1980; Burke & Reitzes, 1981). Thus, investigating the role identities of VTEs, can result in identifying effective ways to support them in their practice, and inspire and inform policymakers in this endeavour, leading to higher quality teaching.

In addition, TEs who work within a VET context are less visible, yet still impacted heavily by the new demands on teacher training (Cort, Harkonen, & Volmari, 2004). This thesis argues that the professionalism of the VET workforce has been under-researched, particularly in the context of VTEs. It presents a foundation for establishing the professional role profiles of VTEs, to foster understanding among policymakers and to support policy learning, through recommendations. However, the main contribution of this thesis is to open up a space for a more informed consideration of whether there is a significant difference between the role identities of VTEs and MTEs, through the lens of identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009).

1.6 Research Objectives and Questions

To advance research on TEs, specifically within a VET context, the overall aim of this qualitative study is to understand what it means to be a VTE within a Maltese context, using identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) as a theoretical framework. The specific objectives of this study are to understand how VTEs and MTEs in Malta describe their role identities; how they synthesize the meanings they assign to them; how the role identities of VTEs in Malta have changed during an ITE programme; and how employers – who represent the Maltese labour market – view the role identities of VTEs.

To fulfil these objectives, this study investigates the following research questions:

RQ 1. How do VTEs differ from MTEs in how they describe their role identities in the Maltese context?

RQ 2. How do VTEs differ from MTEs in how they assign meaning associated with their role identities in the Maltese context?

RQ 3. During the ITE programme, how do the role identities of VTEs change in the Maltese context?

RQ 4. How do the perceptions of employers in Malta differ from VTEs and how do they perceive the role identities of VTEs?

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 presents a review on three main sections which include: a discussion on identity; a review on TEs from both mainstream and vocational

education contexts; and the labour market perspective on education. An overview of the theoretical lens that underpins this study is also provided. Chapter 3 provides the overall methodology adopted in this research. In this chapter, the data collection methods and data analyses are discussed. Moreover, the participants of this study are described in detail with respect to their personal and professional backgrounds. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study, in relation to the four research questions, whilst Chapter 5, the final chapter, discusses the main findings and presents the new knowledge that is gained from this study. The limitations are also discussed, and the chapter closes with the main contributions, recommendations and consideration for future research.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the context and the research rationale. It has highlighted how the role identities of TEs working within a VET context are ill-defined, poorly understood and under-represented in the literature. Moreover, VET has been described as bridging the gap between mainstream education and employment. Therefore, gaining a deeper understanding of the role identities of TEs is of utmost importance as they are the backbone of ITE as are the VTEs in the VET context. In addition, investigating the perceptions of the Maltese labour market on the role identities of VTEs is also important to investigate whether their perceptions match.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse relevant literature from previous studies to establish what has already been done and to identify the gap for this doctoral research. The literature is primarily taken from studies within a European context, particularly because Malta is a member state, however, supporting literature is drawn from international studies.

A systematic review was conducted and confined only to studies within the last twenty years and to articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals in English. The search indicated that existing literature on TEs within the VET context is limited to a small number of empirical studies. In fact, according to Grollman (2008), many international studies do not make any reference to the teaching workforce in VET. In addition, there are many terms used to refer to the VET context which were used to search for articles. For example, England provides vocational and work-based education within the post-compulsory education (PCE) and training, further education (FE) sector (Orr and Simmons, 2010). Other terms used are the 'lifelong learning sector' (LLS) (Atkins, 2011) or the 'learning and skills sector' (LSS) (Noel, 2006).

This chapter is organised thematically where three main sections are presented and include: defining identity; a review on TEs from both mainstream and vocational educational contexts; and the labour market perspective on education, considering its role within VET, as illustrated in the previous chapter.

2.2 Defining Identity

This section discusses the theoretical lens used in this thesis and its application, professional identity, and outlines the use of metaphors to understand it.

The concept of identity has been studied across several disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, psychology and education, which are all relevant for studying educators' and TEs' professional identity (Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018). One of the first scholars who explored the concepts of self and identity was William James (1890). He is known as the father of American psychology, especially for the development of a theory of self. In James's (1890) theory, there is a distinction between the "me" self and the "I" self. The former refers to the material, social and spiritual self, whereas the latter refers to "pure ego" (p.342). James (1890) argued that people have as many different selves as there are others who recognise them. Another scholar that studied the concept of identity is Charles Horton Cooley (1902) who studied and theorised the importance of the relationship an individual has with others. He came up with the notion of a "looking-glass self" (p.152), where people see and define themselves in relation to others' reactions. A further contribution by George Herbert Mead (1934) had an impact on the basic principles of identity theory, and gave rise to the theoretical development of symbolic interactionism (SI).

Other examples of theoretical perspectives that explain identity and identity formation are social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), identity theory (Stryker, 1980) and personal identity theory (Hitlin,

2003). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argue that it is difficult to define identity. In fact, they conceptualise it as a sum of components that individuals choose to define themselves which varies, from a personal set of traits, values, social roles, interests, and physical characteristics to history and past experiences. Gross and Hochberg (2016) define the term 'identity' as how people perceive themselves and how society perceives them. Moreover, according to Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004), identity is multi-faceted and emerges from continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of how one considers oneself to be or would like to become.

2.2.1 Identity Theory in Symbolic Interactionist Thought

Burke and Stets's (2009) identity theory was chosen as a research tool to understand role identities of both MTEs and VTEs. Choosing identity theory from the SI perspective as an analytical lens, enables the researcher to focus on *meaning* - "what it means to be who one is" (Stryker, 1980). Specifically, the identity model within this theory will be used together with the concepts 'identity prominence' and 'identity salience' to investigate how the participants view and rank their meanings of identity (Burke & Stets, 2009). This theoretical perspective shows that individuals develop a shared meaning of identity through symbolic interactions. Choosing SI as the main theoretical lens throughout this study offers deep understanding of TEs' identity at a more granular level. This enables the researcher to explore the dynamic nature of TEs in the narration of their own identity and how they posit themselves.

The term SI was coined by Herbert Blumer (1962) who developed Mead's (1934) ideas into a cohesive theory. Blumer (1962) emphasised the

need for sociologists to examine society from the “bottom up” (i.e., starting at the micro-level and moving up toward the macro-level). SI, which takes a micro and social level orientation, looks at how people interact with, and make sense of their world to create meaning. SI promotes a system of symbols to negotiate meaning, where intentions and expected responses to others are communicated to maintain social harmony. In shifting the focus from the macro- to the micro-level of analysis, Blumer’s SI provided sociologists with a theoretical perspective that departed from over-socialised descriptions of human actors, towards “an understanding of individuals as agentic, autonomous, and integral in creating their social world” (Carter & Montes Alvarado, 2019, p.3).

Opting to use Burke and Stets’s (2009) identity theory helps in extending current understanding and past research on the identities of TEs, and takes on a different perspective by delving deeper into the individual level rather than seeking merely to consider the institutional or national level. Identity theory builds on existing knowledge on the professionalisation of VTEs, but will also contribute something unique to a better understanding of what it means to be a VTE in a Maltese context. Additionally, it helps in strengthening the ability of this doctoral study to identify truths and assess assumptions.

McCall and Simmons (1978) maintain that individuals typically claim more than one role identity and organise them into a *prominence hierarchy* which shows their primary concerns, such as being a good teacher or a good parent. This organisation reflects a person’s “ideal self” (McCall & Simmons, 1978, p.74). The prominence of an identity depends upon three factors: (1)

receiving support from others for an identity, (2) commitment to the identity, and (3) receiving extrinsic and intrinsic rewards from the role identity. The more prominent the role identity is, the more likely it will be activated and performed in a situation. Moreover, enacting a role identity is always done in relation to a corresponding counter-identity within interaction, for example, teacher to student, or parent to child. However, this is not the only determinant of behaviour, since less prominent identities will appear in situations due to norms or pressures from others. This leads to the second hierarchy of identities – the salience hierarchy (Stryker, 1980).

Stryker (1980) suggests a view of identities that is somewhat similar to that of McCall and Simmons (1978), although developed independently. According to him, the many role identities that a person may have are organised in a *salience hierarchy* – where the individual responds to the expectations or requirements of the situation rather than its ideals or what is valued. This means that while the prominence hierarchy of McCall and Simmons (1978) addresses what an individual values, the salience hierarchy (Stryker, 1980) focusses on how an individual is likely to behave in a situation. Several factors, such as prominence, support, rewards and the perceived opportunity structure influence the salience of an identity in a specific situation. Thus, what one values may or may not be related to how one behaves in a situation even though there is a significant relationship between the two (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). These two forms of hierarchy (prominence and salience) will be used in this study to explore the role identities of both MTEs and VTEs.

To understand the identity formation process, Stets and Burke (2003) combined “sociological identity theory” with “social identity theory” and came up with three different categories. These are: (1) the roles one takes; (2) the membership within a group; and (3) the personal perspective. With regards to the first and second categories, role and group identities are structural, and individuals are aware of certain factors that exist and respond according to social settings. The latter refers to personal identity when individuals voluntarily and willingly make their own decisions (Heise & MacKinnon, 2010).

Role identity connects with personal identity through equivalent sets of meanings (Stets & Burke, 2000; Stets & Serpe, 2013). For example, a reliable TE (role identity) can also be a reliable person (personal identity). Nonetheless, one’s role identity can also contradict one’s personal identity. For instance, a person can be diligent whilst on the job, but very careless when at home. Moreover, since an individual brings together all three dimensions of identity (role, group and personal), the way they interact determines the person’s identity. For example, individuals can play different roles in different groups, and can perform their roles differently depending on the personal identity standard put into those specific roles. For example, an individual who has the personal role identity of a student attends a particular school and is a member of that group (Stets & Serpe, 2013). Burke and Stets (2009) claimed that a personal identity is like a master identity as it is constantly being activated and is generally very high in salience in the hierarchy of identities; the meanings within one’s personal identity influence the meanings within one’s role and group identities. However, this happens based on the assumption that individuals can choose what roles to take and

groups they form part of, but if an individual has little opportunity for choice, such a situation will affect their personal identity. Certain situations cannot be changed, and personal identity can still be influenced by roles and groups. The extent of choice can also be influenced by the relative openness of the particular society or context. For example, TEs in general cannot change the student teachers that register on an ITE programme. Moreover, Burke and Stets (2009) argue that through the control of active and potential resources and the manipulation of meaning, using signs and symbols in a particular situation, the process of verifying any type of identity is accomplished. The same perceptual control and verification processes could be used for all role, group and personal identities and how they operate.

Identity theorists have dedicated much of their attention to individual role identities and have not examined integrating all three (role, group and personal). Although this study focusses on the role identities of VTEs due to their relevance to professional identities, the influence of personal identities will also be examined. The following section explains the theoretical model that underpins this research. Ultimately, to understand a role identity well, it needs to be seen as a process.

2.2.1.1 Identity Model

Identity theory stems from two sets of ideas: SI as explained before, and perceptual control theory (Powers, 1973). The latter was primarily developed by William T. Powers (1973) and is based on control systems in the field of cybernetics. Cybernetics was developed as a field of study by Norbert Weiner (1948) and comprises the study of self-regulating systems in

closed feedback loops in which the output of a system can be controlled by negative feedback. However, Powers (1973) noted that the control of perception or input to the system is what matters for individuals, and not simply the control of output or behaviour (Burke & Stets, 2009). When humans are faced with disturbances, they still tend to maintain a steady and stable environment, although others' interactions may disturb an individual's attempt to maintain consistency between situational meanings and identity meanings each time an identity is activated. The individual's identity is "verified" when meanings are maintained through this process without any disturbance (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Four main components make up the identity model each time an identity is activated: input, the identity standard, comparator and output. Each component is a process linked together in a cyclic arrangement of processes about meanings within the environment and the self, as show in Figure 2.1.

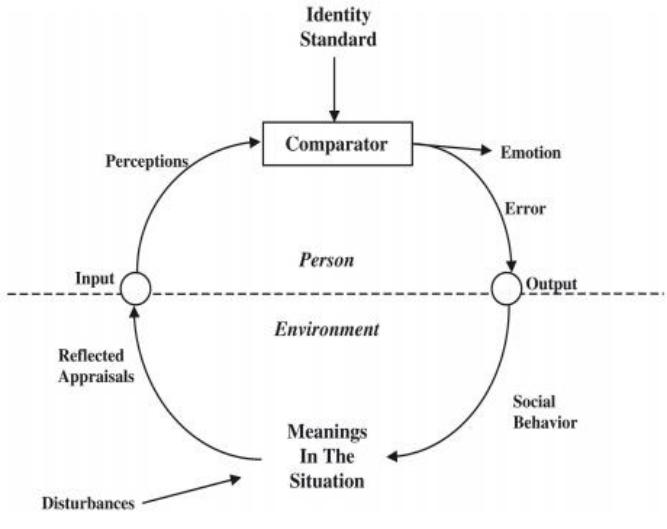

Figure 2.1. Basic Identity Model (Reprinted from Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 62)

The individual's own reflected observation of their own self in the situation are the inputs to the system. Perceptions are meanings relevant to an identity in a particular situation. The identity standard is a set of several meanings that make up an identity and may be viewed as defining the character. The comparator compares the inputs to the identity standard. An "error signal" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.29) is produced when there is a difference between the input and the identity standard and this might cause stress and negative emotions. The person's behaviour, which is based on the error signal from the previous process, is the output of the model. If an error signal was experienced in the previous process, this might cause the person to modify their behaviour to reduce the discrepancy, which is the ultimate aim of this model. The cyclic process keeps on going until the perceptions match the identity standard within the comparator, and the identity is verified, which leads to positive emotions. People become distressed when they are not able to verify their own identity (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Using the identity model from Burke and Stets's (2009) identity theory will help to understand how the role identities of TEs in a Maltese context operate, and how an identity is activated in a situation, since it is understood as a process. Moreover, how an identity is verified and the outcome when an identity is not verified will also be investigated. Role identity guides the perceptions, expectations and behaviours of people by providing structure and meaning to their lives and situations (Burke & Stets, 2009). Thus, when there are certain goals or aims relating to a role, an expectation is set. However, the way to achieve a goal is not specified (Burke & Stets, 2009),

and, therefore, the level of achievement could affect the perspectives of individuals in terms of their own role identity.

2.2.1.2 Applications of Identity Theory

The purpose of this section is to describe the various ways that Burke and Stets's (2009) identity theory has been applied. This will help inform the knowledge that is required to use as a theoretical lens for this study. Identity theory has been developed over the past 25 years and applied to areas such as crime and law, education, race/ethnicity, gender, the family and the environment (Stets & Burke, 2014). Previous studies have used the survey approach to study the identity process of newly married couples (Burke & Cast, 1997; Stets & Burke, 1996); the under-representation of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines (Lee, 1998; 2002; 2005); students' academic identity (Burke & Hoelter, 1988); and "moral identity" (Stets, Carter, & Fletcher, 2008). However, studying the identity process using a survey approach does not capture the context in which it is emerging. Thus, further experimental research was conducted in a laboratory where a specific context was established (Stets, 2003; 2004; 2005; Stets & Ascenio, 2008; Stets, Carter, & Fletcher, 2008; Stets & Osborn, 2008).

This doctoral thesis will take a different empirical approach and will use a qualitative study to investigate the identity process of TEs (VTEs and MTEs) in Malta within the context in which the identity emerges. Thus, TEs' role identities will be explored in conjunction with their surroundings, and in-depth knowledge about the participants' profiles.

2.2.2 Occupations, Professions, Professionalisation and Professionalism

This section discusses the concept and substance of occupations, professions, professionalisation and professionalism of TEs. It is crucial to make sense of their role identity upon which that professionalism draws, as their professionalism may influence their behaviours and teaching practice.

2.2.2.1 The Concepts of Occupation, Profession, Professionalisation and Professionalism

Different types of occupations are fundamental to people's well-being. However, not all of them are essential to keeping us alive. There are others which contribute to well-being in a broader sense and others which satisfy both.

Winch (2002) distinguishes occupations between "basic" and "civic" necessities, based on David Carr's criteria: "the professions' essential role in promoting human flourishing; their contestability; their direct concern for the well-being of clients; their provision of a high degree of autonomy for practitioners" (p.261). The former type often relate to life and death matters, such as the need for food and housing, together with medical care and proper legal representation. The latter are important to human well-being. For example, teaching falls within the category of a "civic necessity". However, Winch argues that despite teaching not being directly considered a "basic necessity", how good doctors will be established without good teaching is not clear. "Without the services of doctors and nurses we would die much sooner than we would without their care. We would not die immediately for lack of

teachers but without them our lives would be greatly impoverished" (p.266) and by extension, we would also be "greatly impoverished" by a lack of TEs.

Within the EU context, the characteristics that make up an occupation are based on a structure concerning training, qualification, promotion, and practical and theoretical knowledge (Winch, 2003). Winch (2010) considers three questions for occupational expertise where different responses to these portray its role in broader conceptions of individual and social well-being. These are: (1) the degree of the practitioner's autonomy with regards to planning, controlling, co-ordinating and evaluating occupational work; (2) the permeability of occupational careers; and (3) the role of occupation and its associate subject knowledge (Winch, 2010).

There have been many attempts to provide some definition of the term 'profession'. Berg (1989, p.58), referred to those "who possess specific knowledge and who act independently to offer certain clients a specific service". Moreover, from an economics-oriented perspective, Savage (1994, p.131), defined it as "a network of strategic alliances across ownership boundaries among practitioners who share a core competence". Evetts (2003, p.937) states that professions are characterised as "the knowledge-based category of occupations which usually follow a period of tertiary education and vocational training and experience". This is professional knowledge (Winch, 2004), the practical component of which "can only be acquired through a combination of simulation and controlled practice during and after the tertiary phase" (p.181). Moreover, the applied theoretical knowledge which makes up the practical component is called "technical knowledge" (Winch, 2004). Additionally, according to Howsam et al. (1976), professions are associated

with the need to provide a service to individuals and society, based on knowledge and a “repertoire of behaviours and skills” (p.6).

Professional codes of ethics and conduct make up the professional organisations through which professions are organised. In addition, professions hold autonomy when compared with other occupations (Horn, 2016). In professional practice, autonomy means that practitioners “should be sufficiently free from bureaucratic and political constraints to act on judgements made in the best interests (as they seem them) of the clients” (Hoyle & John, 1995, p.77). This would mean that professionals, who work with others to decide on their *modus operandi* and on a suitable definition of their aims (Winch, 2002), should be responsible for this autonomy.

Winch (2002) claims that one can distinguish a profession from other occupations by “an essential concern with ethics” (p.270); and if an occupation meets the specific criteria mentioned above, the process by which it becomes a profession is termed “professionalisation” (Horn, 2016). Professionalisation takes on a different form in this new understanding of professions, in which attention is directed to the development of professionality. This thesis adopts Evetts’ (2003) perception. Traditions of professions and ways of speaking about them, have been different in Anglo-American and the continental European contexts (Horn, 2016). Evetts (2012, p.1) states that “in continental models the state was the main actor while in the Anglo-Saxon model self-employed practitioners had freedom to control work conditions”. There have been attempts to avoid such distinction in the processes of internationalisation and these differences are somewhat obsolete except in historical accounts (Evetts, 2012). Development in the new

understanding of professions is removing the differences between these two traditions of defining professions. Evetts (2003) states that:

> a different way of categorizing… is to see professions as the structural, occupational and institutional arrangements for dealing with work associated with the uncertainties of modern lives in risk societies. Professionals are extensively engaged in dealing with risk, with risk assessment and, through the use of expert knowledge, enabling customers and clients to deal with uncertainty. (p.397)

Hargreaves (2000) and, Hoyle and John (1995), argue that professionals share standards of practice. Moreover, they are autonomous when taking decisions related to their practice, and work ethically to provide skilled services to their clients in return for a stipulated fee. In simple terms, Nittel (2011, p.44 as cited in Horn, 2016) describes professionalisation as a term that represents *both* a process of collective (becoming a profession) *and* individual (becoming a professional development.

The notion of the qualities and modes of conduct of a profession, make up “professionalism” (Evans, 2008) which impacts professional role identity. According to Winch (2004), there is a combination of occupational traits to describe necessary and sufficient conditions for classifying an occupation as a profession. Additionally, Furlong et al. (2000) state that professionalism is made up of knowledge, autonomy and responsibility.

Finally, legal status is accorded to a profession, and an organisation is formed that links members together, where their interests are protected and

activities among non-members who seek their service are regulated (Langford, 1978).

To summarise, a profession refers to structural aspects of an occupation; professionalisation is the process of becoming a professional by developing professionality; and professionality is related to practice representing a particular quality of occupational action. The following paragraphs discuss the concept of professionalism and relate it to education in further detail.

Freidson (1994, p.169) states that “much of the debate about professionalism is clouded by unstated assumptions and inconsistent and incomplete usages”. Likewise, Hargreaves and Goodson (1996, p.4) argue that there is a lack of consensus relating to the meaning of professionalism, whilst Fox (1992, p.2) claims that it “means different things to different people”.

Hoyle (1975) explained professionalism as “those strategies and rhetorics employed by members of an occupation in seeking to improve status, salary and conditions” (p.315). Moreover, Ozga (1995, p.35) interprets professionalism as “best understood in context, and particularly in policy context. Critical analyses of professionalism do not stress the qualities inherent in an occupation but explore the value of the service offered by the members of that occupation to those in power”. Similarly, Troman (1996, p. 476) perceives professionalism, not as an ideal, but “as a socially constructed, contextually variable and contested concept … defined by management and expressed in its expectations of workers and the stipulation of tasks they will perform”.

There are diverse and contested definitions of the concept of "professionalism in education" (Hammersley, 2005). Helsby (1999, p.93) states that "there is nothing simple or static about the concept of teacher professionalism in England: it is constantly changing and constantly being redefined in different ways and at different times to serve different interests". This mirrors the view that identity is not a fixed attribute of an individual, but develops and changes in a given context (Gee, 2000; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Moreover, Helsby's (1999) claim implies that teacher professionalism differs from other types. Winch (2004) provides three reasons why this is so, and why teachers do not fit comfortably into conventional definitions of professions. These are: (1) there is no distinctive theoretical pedagogic knowledge, (2) distinct ethical elements to the work of teachers are not present, and (3) developed forms of occupational closure and defence of its interests is weak for teaching. He argues that schools are not the optimal place for teachers to acquire theory, but specialist teachers are needed to teach it. Although he does not make any specific reference to TEs it is assumed they are the specialist teachers who contribute to applied theory. If student teachers do not acquire this theory in the first place, they can never become good practitioners. Winch (2004) argues that the academic element of teacher education programmes should be more rigorous, and emphasises the need for partnership between university and school in ensuring proper theoretical elements and classroom practice, where each key actor contributes to the assessment for the initial capability of student teachers. In a recent study (2015), Orchard and Winch argue that new entrants to the teaching profession should have a good command of the subjects they will

teach, gained through an undergraduate degree; and teacher education programmes should integrate conceptual understanding, empirical research and ethical deliberation, where values that underpin the practice of education and the school curriculum are explored and reflected upon. Unfortunately, they only take into consideration mainstream education, and leave VET out of the picture. This focus on the general education context might result in flawed assumptions when it comes to decision making in VET teacher training programmes.

TEs' practices are articulated through professional knowledge, attitudes and values, which are what define professionalism (Troman, 1996). Bourdieu (1987) argues that individuals or "collectivities" of TEs may contest the legitimacy of the different versions of professionalism.

Many TEs have to acquire new skills when taking on this role, whether they come from a school teaching or academic background (Murray & Male, 2005; Smith, 2011; Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013). Research into what constitutes specific professional expertise, what makes TEs different from other professional actors, what professional knowledge they possess, and how this knowledge is enacted in their professional practices has to be established (Kelchtermans, Smith & Vanderlinde, 2018). This impacts upon their professional role identity and how they are distinguished from other professional actors.

TEs in mainstream education are conceptualised as advancing from being "first-order practitioners" – that is schoolteachers – to being "second-order practitioners" within HE (Murray, 2002). They are both teachers of

teachers and subject teachers, teaching how to teach their subject discipline (Murray, 2002). Hence, a fundamental shift in expertise, practices, as well as changes in role identity are experienced when a teacher moves from teaching to teacher education (Berry, 2007). Moreover, some TEs in mainstream education also become researchers when taking up their new role, thus adding another identity (see e.g. Lunenberg, Dengerink, & Korthagen, 2014; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014). Current literature argues that changes from policy, research and practice, and changes in identity, knowledge, research and professional learning, mean that teacher education should be recognised as an autonomous profession (Kelchtermans, Smith & Vanderlinde, 2018; Murray, 2014; Meeus, Cools & Placklé, 2018; Tack et al., 2018). Understanding TEs professional role identity is crucial, considering their importance in teacher education.

The EC defines the term 'TE' as "all those who actively facilitate the (formal) learning of student teachers and teachers" (2013, p.8). This acknowledges that TEs are becoming increasingly diverse as an occupational group which makes it more difficult to build a common understanding of their role identities. TEs are recognised as a group of professionals who are significantly different from one another in terms of qualification level (type of degree), subject discipline, and work experience, although the EC does not make a distinction between TEs from different educational sectors when defining the term. This may be because there is not yet enough understanding about their specific role identities.

Literature based on the general education context identifies institution-based TEs and school-based TEs, but, their roles are very different from one

another. The former are involved in tertiary pre-service teacher education programmes and are mainly responsible for future teachers, whereas the latter hold roles as ‘mentors’ for student teachers on teaching practice and new teachers. A clear definition of the latter is still absent in literature and there can be tensions in their professional role identity as teachers, and their TE role as mentors. This may also lead them to experience tensions between the two contexts they form part of, due to the continuous change in roles.

As the majority of the literature is focussing on the HE sector (Springbett, 2018), the role of TEs in the VET context is even more obscured. One of the reasons for this could be due to significant variations in ways of describing key terminology in the field of VET, and hence the difficulty when conducting comparative studies between countries (Winch, 2012). For example, Winch (2012) argues that British people find it hard when translating terms such as ‘Ausbildung’ (German) and ‘formation professionelle’ (French), and thus choose ‘training’ because it is the most commonly used word in English for vocational education. On these conceptual tensions, he states:

> A related and parallel tendency continues to be an unease with the vocabulary of vocational education as opposed to training, which is a term which most policymakers and not a few researchers feel more comfortable with. Indeed, it can be argued that the distinction between the two is quite difficult to grasp with[in] the British context. (Winch, 2012, p.61)

Although the professional role identities of TEs in the general education context might still be similar to those working in the VET context, due to the

similar nature of ITE programmes, what distinguishes them the most is the link they should have towards industry or the workplace in general. Moreover, VTEs may have a professional identity in their previous occupation, such as that of an engineer, and then shift towards the education context. This makes them holders of a dual professional role identity (Fejes & Kopsen, 2014). Having such a diverse workforce makes it more difficult to provide support in their professional development. This is the reason why it is crucial to open up and specifically establish a shared understanding of the professional role identity of VTEs.

2.2.2.2 Professionalisation of the Vocational Education and Training Teaching Workforce

This section aims to identify the literature that focusses on the professionalisation of the VET teaching workforce, especially that of VTEs. High quality teaching in VET is enhanced by having vocational teachers who have prior occupational experience (Fejes & Kopsen, 2014). As previously mentioned, VET should bridge the gap between educational and occupational practice (Cedefop, 2014). Thus, the vocational teacher is responsible for integrating the socio-culture of the workplace together with that of the school practice (Fejes & Kopsen, 2014). Furthermore, Roger et al. (1995) argue that students and apprentices learn more when they are engaged in real life scenarios.

Similarly, Avis and Orr (2014) noted the significance of practice-based workplace learning (performing an occupational role appropriately arising in professional settings) of vocational teachers within the current models of

professional learning. These pedagogical changes put pressure on the vocational teachers and the TEs within ITE programmes, as it is vital for them to keep up with the essential competences in this fast-changing world. These changes require a transformation in their practice which affects their identity formation together with the scope of their learning (Avis & Orr, 2014).

There is a significant difference between teaching a vocational subject as opposed to a theoretical one (Fejes & Kopsen, 2014). The former considers both knowledge and occupational skills that the vocational teacher has acquired during their occupational experience. By contrast, the latter is based on knowledge which is gained in academia (Fejes & Kopsen, 2014). Problems and challenges related to working at the intersection of occupational and educational practices are being revealed through a limited, yet growing area of research on vocational teachers' professionalism.

A recent study that provides an outline of the VET teacher training system and discusses the issues of its teachers' profession, was conducted by Misra (2011). He argues that VET teachers lack professional recognition and high status. Robson (1998) has also reported on the crises in the FE sector with regard to how vulnerable the FE teaching profession is, due to its low status. She argues that since there are many cultures within the FE workplace due to the different occupations and roles that FE teachers have, combined with the lack of formal requirements for teacher training, the emergence of a clear professional identity may be hindered (Robson, 1998). Despite the clear need for research on the professionalisation of VET teachers, it is under-developed.

Moreover, another weakness which is highlighted in Misra's (2011) study, is the fact that each country works differently due to its traditions. There is no uniformity in the policies of CPD which impacts on the role identities of teachers and TEs in the VET workforce. A report from Cedefop (2009, p 26) observes that: "although it is by means of CPD that most gains in quality and responsiveness of VET can be realised, CPD of VET teachers and trainers in Europe is mostly self-regulated and self-motivated". This lack of a common understanding or common policies might have an effect on teaching quality but also the professional role identities of vocational teachers and VTEs as, among other issues, it would be difficult to profile such a diverse occupational group. As a consequence, there is a need to professionalise the role of VET teachers and of VTEs so that, among other things, CPD can be tailored to their diverse needs to maintain quality and effectiveness.

2.2.2.3 Teacher Educators' Professional Roles and Identities in a General Education Context

Professional identity in teaching has become the prime focus of research in education (Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018). It is also directly related to perceiving professional belonging (Davey, 2013). Lasky (2005) argues that it is based on the individual's experiences, personal background and others' expectations, all of which guide their behaviour (Lasky, 2005). Previous studies recognise that identities and roles are not fixed, but are malleable and influenced by interaction, and identity can be viewed as an answer to the recurring question: "Who am I at this moment?" (Gee, 2000; Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004).

Literature on TEs that is also relevant to VTEs (Noel, 2006; Simmons & Thompson, 2007; Willemse & Boei, 2013; Crawley, 2013; Lunenberg, Dengerink, & Korthagen, 2014; Kopsen, 2014; Meeus, Cools & Placklé, 2018, Springbett, 2018) does not investigate the development of professional role identity; the emotion TEs invest in this; the professional intentions that shape this; and the outcomes for TEs' working practice.

Moreover, not all researchers have specifically mentioned their alignment with a particular theoretical framework when investigating TEs' identities, although this review of the literature indicates that the most common theoretical approaches were framed by sociocultural theories, SI, communities of practice and social learning theory.

The professional identity of TEs is complex, considering their different educational contexts and background. For example, TEs working in the general education context engage in teaching, research and teaching practice for student teachers (Willemse & Boei, 2013). Although they are distant from schools, their professional identity is constantly shifting from their role as researchers to their role as TEs (Willemse & Boei, 2013). Identifying professional roles can form a basis for developing the TE professional identity. Lunenberg, Dengerink, & Korthagen (2014) who reviewed the profession of TEs working in the general education context identified six professional roles: 'teacher of teachers', 'researcher', 'coach', 'curriculum developer', 'gatekeeper' and 'intermediary'. They conceptualise a professional role as a personal interpretation of a position.

Moreover, several researchers (Dinkelman, 2003; Loughran, 2014; Zeichner, 2005) argue that focussing on conducting research about one's own practice as a teacher of teachers (practitioner research) should be done throughout a TE's career to promote scholarship as a basis for TEs, which functions with different roles (Lunenberg, Dengerink & Korthagen, 2014). It is acknowledged that these roles are not all fulfilled at one moment in the TE's career, nor do they belong to a particular point in time throughout their career (Kelchtermans, Smith, & Vanderlinde, 2018). These roles depend on the education context they work in and on the different relationships they form throughout their career (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2013). The professional roles of TEs identified by Lunenberg, Dengerink, and Korthagen (2014) could be the same or similar to those of the participants of this study, even though it is a case study focussing mainly on VTEs based in a Maltese context.

2.2.2.4 Professional Identity in Studies of the Vocational Education and Training Teaching Workforce

There has been little examination on the professional identity of the VET teaching workforce. Literature from this section informs the importance of exploring the differences in the professional role identities of TEs from both mainstream and vocational education contexts.

Avis, Kendal and Parsons (2003) conducted a study where the narrative experiences of new lecturers in HE and FE are compared. Although their sample does not include TEs, findings from this study can illuminate ways in which professional role identity in general is understood. One of the main characteristics that was found, was the fact that the amount of

administration staff had, distracted them from their main job of teaching and research. Specifically, “they worked within institutions that pursued efficiency gains lodged within hierarchical and managerialist organisations that placed a limit on the development of professional collegiality” (p. 186). This lack of collegiality might hamper professionals’ sense of identity.

Similarly, another study conducted by Avis et al. (2011) on VTEs in Scotland and England, found that college-based educators placed importance upon the particular needs of their learners, whilst university-based TEs put more focus on research. This was also the case in Avis, Kendal and Parsons’ study (2003) of university and FE lecturers. In another study conducted by Bathmaker and Avis (2005), the way teaching is seen in an FE context is centred around assisting students, where the role of lecturer is depicted as a facilitator. All these findings could also relate to the way VTEs and MTEs in a Maltese context describe their professional role identities.

2.2.3 Use of Metaphors to Understand Identity

Since SI was chosen as the theoretical perspective for this study and metaphors depict these symbols, research on their use to understand identity was reviewed to target mainly the second research question of this study. Through the metaphors that TEs in a Maltese context choose to represent their roles, a deeper understanding of the range an entirety of their professional role identities is likely to be achieved.

Symbols, such as the three forms – language, play and the game - allow effective interaction (Mead, 1934). Language or conversation is achieved through words, gestures and signs, all of which carry meaning; they

form the first set of symbols we use as babies to understand our world and create our social self (Mead, 1934). Some argue that the absence of language would mean that the 'self' and differentiating others as individuals would also cease to exist (Mead, 1934). People use language in the form of metaphors to illustrate, among other things, the "complexity of identity" (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011, p.764), and in this study, metaphors can help teachers talk about their teaching experiences in a rich and stimulating way.

2.2.3.1 Defining Metaphors

> If a picture is worth 1,000 words, a metaphor is worth 1,000 pictures! For a picture provides only a static image while a metaphor provides a conceptual framework for thinking about something. (Shuell, 1990, p.102)

Holman (1980, p.264) defines metaphor as "an implied analogy which imaginatively identifies one object with another". Other researchers such as Massengill, Shaw and Mahlios (2008) explain metaphors as "analogic devices that lie beneath the service [sic] of a person's awareness and serve as a cognitive device…as a means for framing and defining experience in order to achieve meaning about one's life" (p.35). Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal study explores the use of metaphor by individuals to understand their experiences better. They argue that when individuals use metaphors their lives can be more meaningful. In fact, they state that "a large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate metaphors that make sense of our lives" (p.233). Therefore, we also conceive of ourselves through metaphor.

The above quote depicts Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) "cognitive theory of metaphor". Metaphors are ways that structure our perceptions, thoughts, and actions. In this study, a metaphor is employed when TEs understand their world by linking complex phenomena such as their professional role identity (the abstract), to something that they have already experienced (the concrete). Thus, in this study, a metaphor can take the form of just one word, phrase, or figure of speech, which acts as a lens for the participants through which their professional role identity is reviewed and interpreted.

2.2.3.2 Metaphors about Teachers or Student Teachers

Many studies have examined the use of metaphors to understand teacher or student teacher identity and identity formation (see for example: Alsup, 2006; Saban, Kocbeker, & Saban, 2007; Briscoe, 1991; Bullough & Stokes, 1994; Farrell, 2006; Gillis & Johnson, 2002; Goldstein, 2005; Hunt, 2006; Knowles, 1994; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). However, the educational contexts of these studies have focussed on teachers within primary and secondary education. These researchers found that teachers use metaphors to conceptualise and reconceptualise their teaching roles, beliefs, and identities (Munby, 1986; Tobin, 1990). Metaphors strongly influence their teaching practice and who they are as teachers (Briscoe, 1991). Guerrero and Villamil (2000) argue that metaphors make teachers aware of implicit assumptions they may have, and thus, give impetus to change educational beliefs and practices. Moreover, Clandinin (1986), suggests metaphors can also guide how teachers interact with their students in the classroom. The preceding studies have informed this research and

encouraged the study of ascribed multiple meanings participants use, to describe the role identities of TEs in a Maltese context.

2.3 Building an Understanding of Teacher Educators

The purpose of this section is to build an understanding of what is known about TEs from both the general education and the VET contexts. This section assumes that everybody involved in education, whether general or VET, wants a teaching workforce that is highly able, knowledgeable and committed, and thus TEs are important in achieving this goal.

2.3.1 What is a Teacher Educator?

The common aforementioned definition that the EC (2013) adopted to describe TEs is “all those who actively facilitate the (formal) learning of student teachers and teachers” (p.8). This implies that the definition is not limited to professionals in a particular educational context, but also applies to all who are responsible for future teachers in their preparation and in their professional developmental needs (EC, 2013).

It is a broad definition that does not attempt to differentiate between different educational contexts. Particular attention needs to be placed on the VET context which is currently being overshadowed by the general education context (Misra, 2011; Springbett, 2018). In fact, Misra (2011, p.27) states that “VET teachers are often overshadowed by their counterparts in general education as societies place greater emphasis on academic education and credentials”. In the same way, Billet argues that VET is seen as “low status” despite all the interest in it (Billet, 2011, p.2). Moreover, the vocational teaching workforce and its learners suffer from this problem as they are

constantly being under-rated and under-valued, and the professional, governmental and public discourse does not seek to change this perception (Billet, 2011).

ITE and the CPD of teachers differs from one country to another; thus, the professional teaching workforce that is involved in these programmes is diverse, with different training and academic backgrounds (Townsend, 2011; Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012). As mentioned before, new and experienced teachers who want to be effective in the classroom, whether in a mainstream or VET context, need TEs who will help them develop their knowledge, skills and values (Shagrir, 2015). TEs are not only responsible for ITE of new teachers, but they also support them in their CPD to raise student attainment and meet learning outcomes within curricula (EC, 2013). For example, a TE may be a professor or a lecturer at a university; an experienced teacher that has an additional role of a mentor teacher during teaching practice, supervisors of practice in schools linked to ITE institutions; HE academic staff, who teach education and/or teach school subjects; and education researchers (EC, 2013). Therefore, the phrase 'TE' is an umbrella term covering diverse professionals and varied practices.

2.3.2 What is known about Teacher Educators in general?

In recent years, a growing interest has been developed in studies of TEs, believed to be central to high quality teacher education. Studies look into who they are, their challenges during induction, the support they receive and what helps them transition from schoolteachers to TEs (Izadinia, 2014). This focus may be seen in studies on the emerging new concept of TE identity in

general education contexts, generally defined as a “socially and culturally constructed ‘self’ formed through a life’s experiences and through communication about these experiences” (McKeon & Harrison, 2010, p.27). Social relations and processes during the lifelong learning experience shape identity (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Swennen, Jones & Volman (2010) point out that TEs’ professional identity formation occurs when they are at work and interacting with colleagues, student teachers and others that are all involved in teacher education. However, identity itself is not simply formed, as it takes time and is dependent on the context and work practices (Dinkelman, 2011). Yet, little research has taken place on how the identities of TEs vary according to the work context. Developing a professional identity is a crucial part of the process of becoming a TE, as there is a close connection between identity and practice (Timmerman, 2009). Ben-Peretz et al. (2010) argue that a TE’s practice and their professional identity development are directly proportional to each other, meaning, a TE’s practice is likely to influence the professional role identity, and differ according to the context. Thus, VTEs’ role identities might differ from those of TEs working in a general education context.

Since the emergence of the notion of TE identity, researchers have investigated various factors that influence its formation (Izadinia, 2014). Existing literature has explored the importance of communities of practice (McGregor et al., 2010; Murray, 2008; Poyas & Smith, 2007); reflective activities (Dinkelman, 2011; Haamer, Lepp, & Reva, 2012; Kim & Greene, 2011); and various professional experiences in forming the identity of TEs (Hockings et al., 2009). However, one criticism of much of the existing

literature is that researchers have argued that the profession of TEs is not well defined (Khan, 2011; Lunenberg & Hamilton, 2008; Tryggvason, 2012) and is under-researched (Murray, 2005; Murray & Male, 2005; Swennen, Volman, & van Essen, 2008).

Amongst existing literature on TEs' identity, it was found that the process of becoming a TE is influenced by three factors: personal and professional biography; institutional contexts; and a personal pedagogy of teacher education (Williams, Ritter, & Bullock, 2012). Similarly, Murray (2014) argues that TEs' professionalism may be influenced by their personal life, institutional setting, and national requirements for teacher education. Likewise, a review by Livingston (2014) on TEs aimed to gain a better understanding of the concept of TE identities and their roles. Implications for teacher education and TEs were reviewed, together with the diversity of their identities and roles. However, research still needs to clarify and address who these 'TEs' are and how they are supported. This is particularly important for those TEs working in a VET context because of the diversity within it. In fact, Cochran-Smith (2003) argues that one has to define the identity of TEs first before taking into consideration their professional development.

A growing number of self-study research projects, all adopting a qualitative methodology approach, has emerged in the field of TE identity. Lunenberg et al. (2011) presented the results of a self-study concerned with the development of TEs' professional identities in a HE context. They argue that identity development involves emotional development, leads to better self-understanding, and takes place through relationships with others. It is also a dynamic process of interpretation and re-interpretation. Similarly,

findings from a self-study undertaken by Williams and Ritter (2010) indicate that one identity is not discarded in favour of another, but that this new identity is utilised in ways that will develop TEs, showing that identity is not fixed. Similar findings to these studies are likely to be reflected in this thesis. VTEs who had a previous professional role identity might not discard it when in their new role as TEs.

Empirical studies (Bullough, 2005; Dinkelman, 2011; Loughran, 2011; Trent, 2013; White, 2014), all adopting a qualitative methodology, discussed the identities of beginning TEs and their dual role of teacher and TE. Such an approach helps the researchers to find out how meanings are shaped through and in culture (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), resulting in a better understanding of different people's voices. These studies revealed insights into their experiences of becoming TEs, including the impact of the process and how it affected the way they constructed their identities. The participants of these studies were TEs who worked in university contexts who found their professional lives split between their teaching role and research.

These studies show that the working context impacts upon identity formation and working practice. However, these previous studies focus on the development of identity formation and consider different actors than this thesis, that is, those TEs working in a VET context. Therefore, the following section sheds light on studies that focus on teacher education within the VET context.

2.3.3 What is known about Teacher Educators in a Vocational Education and Training Context?

Learning is vital to economic competitiveness, social stability and active citizenship (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005). The success and well-being of individuals, communities, industry and the nation depend on providing access to all forms of learning, education and training (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005). Policymakers are intervening in defining what learning should involve and how it should be achieved. Furthermore, they are trying to understand and define what it means to be a teacher or lecturer across all sectors of the education and training system because their identities may be helpful to the nature of the teaching and learning process (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005). Although the EU is focussing on VET, and politicians are expecting changes within this educational area to solve a number of social problems and problems related to the labour market, studies related to VET are still minimal (Cedefop, 2009; Cedefop, 2015; Fejes & Kopsen, 2014; Burchert et al., 2014; Maurice-Takerei, 2016).

Improvements in the pedagogy and didactics of VET have been suggested as an avenue to reduce drop-out rates amongst VET students (Louw, 2013). Moreover, although it might be challenging due to students coming from varied backgrounds (Duch & Andreasen, 2015), having teachers adopting a student-centred approach (Gibbs, 1995) and engaging in authentic learning - where learning is applied to a realistic context in VET - also helps in effective learning (O'Neill & McMahon, 2005; de Bruijn & Leeman, 2011; Placklé et al., 2014; Misbah et al., 2015; Said, 2018). In the same way, Avis and Orr (2014, p.1108) stated that "vocational teachers encounter an

increasing emphasis on teamwork and models of teaching and learning that centre [on] the learner rather than the teacher". Teachers in vocational colleges, who traditionally have been employed for their vocational skills rather than for their teaching skills, are expected to follow a programme on vocational pedagogy and education (Blackstone, 2000).

The little knowledge about TEs in general is mainly focussed on school TEs (Noel, 2006) and current literature on TEs within a VET context is sparse (Springbett, 2018). In particular, the latter are rarely studied (Powell, 2020) and their lives have been described as 'secret' (Noel, 2006). Noel (2006), Crawley (2013) and Springbett (2018) inform this thesis as they are the three publications that have specifically focussed on TEs working in a VET context.

Large-scale investigations of the professional situation of TEs in the lifelong learning sector (LLS) were conducted by both Noel (2006) and Crawley (2013). Although Noel's (2006) study provided the most comprehensive demographic profile of the TE profession in the PCE sector to date, she does not explore the meaning of a TE identity within the LLS. The aim of Crawley's (2013) research was to enhance the professional well-being of TEs within the PCE sector by shedding light on various ways of supporting them. However, to provide effective support for TEs, their professional role identities should be well understood. However, the findings do provide an insight into the values, experiences and working context of TEs within this sector.

The professional situation that the respondents of Crawley's (2013) research found challenging was to balance the possible multiple professional

identities, such as management and teaching roles, within their TE role. These findings also echoed Noel's (2006) study. In addition, most of the respondents in Crawley's (2013) study were working on a part-time basis in the LLS, whilst working full-time in other roles, which was very common in this sector. In fact, employing teaching staff on a part-time basis has been the preferred option to cut down costs, as they are offered lower wages, limited benefits and limited working facilities (Berry, 2005; Rajagopal, 2000). Due to this, part-time faculty may feel inferior as members of the institution, and disconnected (White, 2012). However, others may not feel that their job security and financial situation are impacted if they have permanent full-time positions in other places (Adiningrum et al., 2019). Although Crawley (2013) highlights the essential characteristics that TEs should have, his attempt to provide a clearer and broader picture of their professional situation in the PCE sector and issues of their professional identity or attempts to define it were neglected.

These two studies (Noel, 2006; Crawley, 2013) contribute information about TEs, in general, by considering age, ethnicity and gender. However, there seems to be no in-depth understanding of what their professional identity consists of. Further research carried out by Springbett (2018), who explored the professional identities of TEs in three FE colleges, contributes some depth to the subject. Springbett (2018) draws on a small-scale case study where she explores how the FE sector positions TE identity. Her qualitative study included eleven TEs. She argues that the vocational context is severely underrepresented in policy and research when compared with university contexts. Her findings demonstrate how various factors impact upon

the TEs within this vocational context. She claims that avoiding obscure links between professional concerns and policy landscapes is best done by understanding TEs as a heterogenous occupational group. Professional roles of VTEs are varied and not static, as portrayed in her study. This could also be found in the results of this thesis when trying to find a common understanding for the professional role identities of VTEs working in a Maltese context.

Although these three previous studies provided an overview of the TEs' demographic profile, together with how the FE sector positions TE identity, no attempt was made to define the meaning of a VTE professional role identity within this educational sector, or how TEs perceive their most prominent and salient role identities.

2.4 The Labour Market Perspective on Education

The purpose of this section is to highlight studies that have focussed on investigating the labour market perspective on education. Research that explores the labour market perspective on the link between VET systems and employment can add valuable insights. This is a critical dimension of this thesis as it addresses the lack of research on TEs and seeks to understand the perspective on their role. This thesis extends the work of previous studies by Triganza Scott & Cassar (2005) and Bolli et al., (2018), by delving deeper into the labour market perspective to help shed light on what is understood about the role identity of VTEs.

VET is responsible for preparing and helping graduates transition from the education system to the workforce in a given occupation or job (Staff,

2004; Kaiser, 2018). Specifically, VET is believed to hold the key to economic prosperity, irrespective of the effects that general education has (Winch, 2012). The qualified worker's usefulness is a focus for vocational training within an economic system that privileges the maximisation of profits. Successfully transitioning from school to the labour market is the measure of success of a VET system, according to individual governments and the EC (Kaiser, 2018). However, Avis (2018), who conducted a study rooted in critical policy analysis that explored the relationship between VET, the labour market and social justice, argues that such a direction may easily lead only to accommodating the needs of the employers. In fact, Winch (2013) draws attention to the conceptualisation of know-how in VET where the balance of power is shifted from educational institutions to labour markets for more responsiveness to accommodate their demands. Despite this, he still endorses Paul Hager's claims about the benefits of workplace learning to secure high-quality IVET and the possibilities it offers for further development, through CVET (Winch, 2013). Those who possess expertise in an occupation can help and guide others due to their breadth and depth of the practical knowledge gained within the profession or occupation (Winch, 2010).

Although employers use many different mechanisms to influence educational policy-making, because they have a vested interest in the outcome, they are more interested in promoting an appropriate work ethic which puts demands on school curricula to respond well to the perceived labour market needs (Sultana, 1997), and the TEs working in a VET context seem to be left out. Triganza Scott and Cassar (2005) investigated the link between education and industry in the Maltese context. They argue that the

need to foster stronger collaboration between industry and education is greater than ever before, due to the rapid changes in technology, globalisation and changes in the workforce. Particularly, they investigated perceived gaps of competence between what one domain (education) offers and what the other (industry) is expecting. Their findings indicate a discrepancy between how industry views competency domains and how students and instructors view them. While students and instructors consider that the technical competencies are a priority for industry, HR representatives think that soft skills are high on the manufacturing agenda. According to Matteson, Anderson and Boyden (2016), soft skills are “a collection of people management skills, important to many professions and job positions” (p. 71). However, they argue that authors use the phrase ‘soft skills’ extensively with little agreement on meaning. For example, Grugulis and Vincent (2009) list them as “communication, problem-solving, team-working, an ability to improve personal learning and performance, motivation, judgement, leader and initiative” (p.598, as cited in Matteson, Anderson & Boyden, 2016, p.75). Avis (2016) also draws attention to a range of wider skills such as teamwork, problem solving, entrepreneurialism and resilience that may be deemed appropriate by employers (Avis, 2016), which may also be present in this study when investigating the labour market perspective on education.

2.5 Summary

This chapter showed why it is important to understand the professional role identities of TEs. Although the EU is highlighting the importance of VET to solve a number of problems related to the labour market and high dropout rates amongst students, existing literature pays little attention to this sector.

Current literature regarding TEs and their identities focusses more on the HE context when compared with the VET context, and is mainly concerned with transitioning from teacher to TE; the influential factors that contribute to the development of their identity; and the challenges they face. However, little is known on what it means to be a VTE or how employers, which represent the labour market context, view the role identities of VTEs. Looking into the dynamics associated with the interaction of both parties is important in order to understand better the factors that influence the formation of VTE identity. Findings from the reviewed literature indicate that the working context plays an influential part on the identity formation of TEs. This thesis attempts to fill these gaps.

This study will be framed using identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) guided by structural SI. This will offer a unique contribution to the knowledge about professionalisation of the VET education workforce as the professional role identities of TEs will be studied in depth. The multiple meanings that TEs in Malta attribute to their identity will be examined together with the emotions that they describe and their resultant behaviour. Hence, the salience and prominence of VTEs' different meanings of identity will be studied. Identity theory provides a useful framework to discuss different professional roles in a structured way and this thesis will also contribute to the development of identity theory in this area. The following chapter describes the research approach that was taken to conduct this study.

Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design adopted in this study and the philosophical assumptions that underpin it. The research questions aim to explore how TEs in Malta describe their role identities and the labour market perspective on these roles. Due to the nature of the subject, this study was conducted using a qualitative methodology located within an interpretivist paradigm. To understand identity effectively within its natural context, a description of the research context and the participants' details are also provided.

3.2 An Overview of the Maltese Case-Study Under Consideration

The main participants of this study were TEs in the MTL programme offered at the FoE, UoM. An overview and description of the scope of this programme is given in the following sub-section.

3.2.1 The Master in Teaching and Learning Programme

The MTL programme (MQF level 7) at the UoM has been in operation since October 2016. It replaced two former pre-service teacher education programmes and is an entry-level qualification for teachers in early childhood education, primary education and secondary education. School-based mentoring is the central feature of the MTL programme and the FoE works in partnership with local secondary schools. This is a two-year full-time course where graduates will be eligible to apply for a warrant to join the teaching

profession at either Primary or Secondary education level. Moreover, those who join this MTL programme should have an undergraduate degree and, therefore, a good command of the subjects they will teach.

From October 2017, the FoE started offering MTL in VET, specialising in various vocational subjects as part of the government's 'My Journey: Achieving through different paths' education reform (UOM, 2017). This reform will "be implemented in lower secondary school in the school year 2019 – 2020 in order to move from a 'one size fits all' system to more inclusive and equity – oriented programmes catering to pupils' individual aptitudes" (Ministry for Education and Employment – Malta, 2016).

The aim of this reform was to promote inclusion and to respond to diversity by giving the opportunity to students to choose from several education routes which include general, vocational or applied subjects for their elective subjects beyond the core curriculum. The intention of this reform, apart from promoting inclusion, was to diminish the number of early school leavers by making education relevant to various students in response to a changing labour market. VSTs graduating from this MTL in VET programme, are then eligible to teach VET subjects in secondary schools. Currently, VSTs have their teaching practice at MCAST where they teach students who are following foundation certificate programmes that lead to MQF levels 1 to 3 (secondary education level). This reform included TEs specialised in VET, who are the participants within this study. Even though the main focus of this study is on the professional role identity of the VTE, MTEs are interviewed to see whether there are any differences between these

groups. This is also because the literature has focussed mainly on MTEs, as was shown in chapter two.

3.3 Qualitative Methodology

3.3.1 The Philosophical Position of the Researcher

The relationship between the research purpose of this study and the researcher is discussed in this section. The philosophical stance taken in this research comprises a subjectivist ontology and a constructivist epistemology. How the researcher understands the world and its relationships is depicted by these positions. Guba and Lincoln (1985) argue that such philosophical positions lay the ground for the researchers to choose between a qualitative and a quantitative perspective. Hence, these are not options, but a necessity when one carries out a study. Scholars such as Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Henning et al. (2004) suggest three principles to define a research paradigm: ontology, which tries to find out what exists; epistemology, which finds out ways to know what exists; and methodology, which relates to how to gain the knowledge.

Since the aim of this research is to understand what it means to be a VTE in Malta, a qualitative methodology located within an interpretivist paradigm was chosen as this approach concentrates on interpreting and understanding “human actions and cultural products” (Benton & Craib, 2001, p.182). Moreover, SI is an approach within the scope of interpretivism (Bloomer & James, 2003, p.252).

3.3.1.1 Ontology (the nature of reality)

According to Grix (2004), the methodology chosen by the researcher depends on their assumptions and understanding of reality. Ontology is about the nature of existence and tries to answer questions that begin with 'what'. It considers who we are rather than focussing on what we know and can do (Bryman, 2008). Bryman (2008) suggests that there are two standpoints in ontology: the objective, which is a reality external to social actors; and subjective, which is constructed by the perceptions and actions of social actors. In this study, the social actors are the TEs in Malta whose professional identities are unique within a Maltese context. Moreover, Guba and Lincoln (2005) argue that reality is a result of human experiences, and the tools of social life, such as language and culture, construct the reality. In other words, the interpretations individuals give about the world and their experiences construct reality. The purpose of social research is to make a study meaningful to those involved and to others (Preissle, 2006).

The ontological position taken in this study is based on relativism where reality depends entirely on human interpretation and knowledge; "a relativist ontology underpins some qualitative approaches, but it rarely informs quantitative research" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 27). In qualitative research, knowledge is viewed as socially influenced, and reflects a separate reality that is only partially accessed from the perspective of the viewer (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3.3.1.2 Epistemology (the relationship between the research and that being researched)

Crotty (1998, p.3) states that epistemology is “the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology”. The epistemology varies according to how one conducts research. Positivists believe that knowledge is received when facts are gathered and their aim is to test hypotheses and explain laws (Bryman, 2008). Their research purpose is to search for the external “truths” by observing objectively without investigating beliefs and values (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). They also consider scientific rigour as the most valuable aspect of research and do not find it necessary to interact with who or what they study (Merriam, 2009). However, when one is conducting research on human behaviour, taking a positivist approach is not adequate (Cohen et al., 2011) because the social realm cannot be studied with the scientific method of investigation applied to the natural world. An interpretivist approach would therefore be more ideal for this research.

The interpretivist tradition assumes that in a socially constructed world, multiple realities come forth from subjective meaning and value-laden research (Greenbank, 2003). Social science aims to see people’s interpretation of their own situations (Bloomer & James, 2003) so qualitative methods are preferred by researchers who favour the interpretivist approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.2). Most qualitative research is carried out in natural settings since multiple realities are recognised, making this methodology more suitable to understand learning and behaviour, as well as working in depth with relatively small numbers (Nisbet, 2005).

This study is intended to investigate participants in their environment. Therefore, qualitative methods are appropriate for such research where the aim is to learn from the research subjects as they make meaning of their experiences within their natural environment. Moreover, the epistemological stance is rooted in interpretivism and the belief that “human behaviors are fluid, dynamic, [and] changing over time and place” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p.35). Neuman (2011, p. 101) states that “meaningful social action, socially constructed meaning, and value relativism” is the focus of an interpretative stance. Such a viewpoint implies that the individuals’ understanding of their worlds is influenced by how they construct their own realities and perspectives. This means that the epistemological stance rooted in interpretivism that is adopted within this research is based on a constructivist paradigm that sees the truth as “relative” and “dependent on one’s perspective” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545).

3.3.1.3 Case Study Research

Case studies are excellent methodological approaches used to collect and analyse multiple levels of data, and common in educational research and the social sciences for understanding complex social phenomena (Yin, 2014). Case study research consists of systematically investigating a particular phenomenon with the intention of generalising the acquired knowledge to a wider application (Gerring, 2004). The complexities of a particular case are subject to thorough and intensive analysis (Bryman, 2008). When the focus of the research questions are “how” and “why” problems, case study research is useful (Yin, 2014). The case study method was adopted in this study to explore in depth the multiple perspectives of the TEs and labour market

representatives on the role identities of VTEs. Specifically, the resulting design adopted was an embedded single case study which involved more than one unit of analysis (Yin, 2009), where each unit represents a group of participants, those highlighted previously. The intent was to provide insight into the issue of professional identity of VTEs in a Maltese context.

3.3.2 Methodological Approach and Research Methods

This section provides a rationale for the chosen methods of data collection and a discussion of the adopted sampling approach. The semi-structured interview method was chosen as it was felt to be the most appropriate one to allow participants the freedom to add more information when required (Drever,1995; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Considering that the perceptions of TEs and employers needed to be investigated, semi-structured interviews help in gaining a deeper understanding. Moreover, they were felt to be more appropriate considering the small-case study within Malta. In addition, interviews “are well-suited for studies that use a symbolic interactionist framework” (Carter & Montes Alvarado, 2019, p.173).

Convenience and purposive sampling were adopted for selecting a small number of participants. A small sample size may be justified for qualitative researchers when studying people’s experiences in more depth. According to Ritchie et al., (2013), a moderate sample size in qualitative research would be around twenty people, making this study one with a moderate sized sample, as twenty-five people participated. Creswell and Miller (2002) argue that convenience sampling involves recruiting whoever is available and accessible, and where there is no guide for selecting

participants. The main criterion for the purposive sampling in this study was ideally to include all the VTEs teaching on the MTL in VET programme. Convenience sampling was undertaken for the other participants (MTEs and employers) who were willing to take part.

Data was collected over the two-year MTL programme between the academic years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 at two different stages. The first stage of data collection took place in the first semester of the first year of the programme (i.e. October 2017). This was needed to investigate whether the VTEs experienced changes in their professional role identities throughout the MTL programme. Therefore, their experiences at the beginning of the programme were collected to compare them with the experiences collected towards the end of the MTL programme. The second stage of data collection took place from the end of the first year of the MTL programme up to the first semester of the second year of the MTL programme, between July and October 2018.

The MTL programme within a VET context in the academic year 2017/2018 was offered in only two disciplines: Health and Social Care (HSC), and Media Literacy. Seven VTEs, took part in the first stage of this study. For the second stage of data collection, six out of seven (a return rate of 85.7%) VTEs took part. Moreover, seven MTEs from various subject disciplines agreed to take part in this data collection stage. In addition, seven employers from various industries agreed to be interviewed too. However, during one of the interview sessions with employers, another employer volunteered to be interviewed. A total of twenty-two participants had taken part by the end of the

data collection, giving a total of thirty-one interviews. The total number of interviews is presented in Table 3.1:

Time	Stage no.	Participants
October 2017	Stage 1	7 VTEs
		3 VSTs
July 2018 - Oct' 2018	Stage 2	6 VTEs
		7 MTEs
		8 Employers
Total		**31 interviews**

Table 3.1: Total number of interviews

The VSTs on the MTL in VET programme, were also invited for the first stage of data collection to understand better the format of the programme and as a way to verify what the VTEs were saying during their individual interviews and whether what was being implemented and followed was actually what was stated on the course structure of the university website. The timeline for all the data collection stages is presented in Figure 3.1:

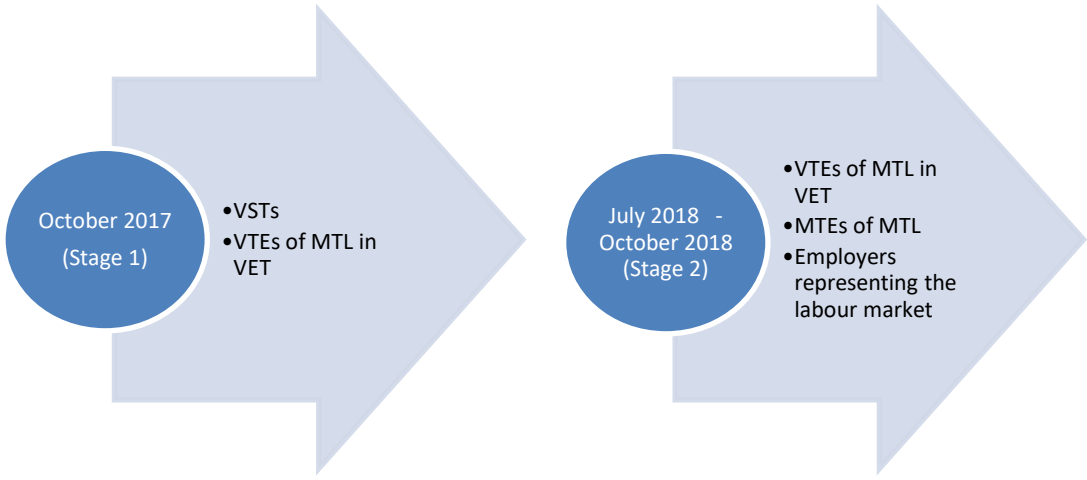

Figure 3.1: Timeline for data collection (semi-structured interviews)

3.3.2.1 Triangulation Methods

Triangulation strategies were used to enhance the credibility of the data collection which parallels the internal validity that is used in quantitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The strategies that are mentioned include

collecting data from different sources and times. As mentioned above, data was collected from four different sources at different stages. Interviews were carried out with VTEs, their students, MTEs and employers. Moreover, data collection happened in two stages in different time periods.

All participants were interviewed in their natural working habitat, i.e. their offices. Semi-structured interviews with the VSTs took place at the beginning of the data collection phase concurrently with the first round of interviews with their VTEs. Two stages of semi-structured interviews were undertaken with a one-year time span with VTEs to answer research questions one, two and three. Moreover, one round of semi-structured interviews with MTEs and employers was carried out to answer research questions one, two and four respectively. A summary of these triangulation methods is presented in Table 3.2:

Stage no. of data collection	Primary and secondary data	Targeted research question (RQ)
Stage 1 (Oct 2017 – the beginning of the programme)	VTEs (primary data)	RQs 1 and 2
	Student teachers on the MTL in VET programme; Maltese policy documents, and MTL programme structure (secondary data)	N/A
Stage 2 (July 2018 – Oct 2018)	VTEs (primary data)	RQs 2 and 3
	MTEs (primary data)	RQs 1 and 2
	Employers from the labour market (primary data)	RQs 4

Table 3.2: Summary of triangulation methods

Other research methods used for data collection, apart from the semi-structured interviews, were national policy documents, and any documents related to the MTL programme which were obtained from the UoM's website (UoM, 2017). The secondary data was used to supplement the primary data

obtained through the semi-structured interviews. A summary of the research design approach is found in table A.1 in appendix one.

3.3.2.2 Rejected Research Methods

Although participant observation (Blevins, 2017) could have been applied to observe the role identities of VTEs and MTEs during the real-life practice, this would not have been feasible. It would have been impossible to follow fourteen TEs around and observe them continuously. Considering that this study was taken on a part-time basis due to full-time employment commitments, choosing critical moments in which and when to observe the participants, would have impacted the interpretation of observed practice. Furthermore, the physical presence of the observer at their real-life practice would have influenced their behaviour at that point in time.

A focus group session with each group of participants was also considered, as it would have been interesting to see whether participants during discussion might influence others' thoughts. However, from a logistics perspective, it would not have been possible to find a common time and date for all participants to attend.

3.3.3 Participants

Fourteen TEs (vocational and mainstream) participated in the interviews, together with eight employers representing the labour market. The following sub-sections describe the participants in detail, with their consent. All names representing these participants are pseudonyms to minimise the risk of identification.

3.3.3.1 Vocational Teacher Educators

The invited applicants were two VTEs teaching in the media literacy stream, four in the HSC stream, and one that lectures in generic vocational pedagogy for both streams. All seven VTEs teaching on the MTL programme accepted the invitation to take part in this study. Only one VTE was a full-time faculty member who had recently joined the UoM (i.e. a resident academic), the other six VTEs were visiting lecturers as explained below.

The following is biographical information about the background and purpose of teaching of the seven VTEs who are the focal participants of this study.

1. Tanya has been teaching for eighteen years. She initially taught an arts subject in secondary education for a number of years prior to joining the VET sector as a lecturer. Her role was to mentor and train students within industry to apply the theoretical perspectives which they would have gained through classroom learning to the context of the workplace. She is currently a full-time resident academic holding the position of an assistant lecturer at the UoM coordinating VET subject streams on the MTL programme.
2. Liam has been lecturing on a full-time basis at MCAST for the past nine years. His background is in media and he used to work in industry. He is currently a visiting lecturer at the UoM working on the Media vocational stream of the MTL programme as a TE.
3. Amy who graduated in psychology and in teaching it, has been lecturing on a full-time basis in HSC at MCAST for the past ten years.

Her roles, apart from lecturing, are coordinating new modules and supervising students during their dissertation. She is also currently a visiting lecturer of the MTL programme in VET at UoM.

4. Anne is also lecturing on a part-time basis on the MTL programme within HSC holding the position of a visiting lecturer. Her main background is in English, and at the beginning of her career, she taught English at secondary level. However, apart from teaching, she has spent almost nine years working in the HSC field.
5. Miguel is a social worker by profession. He worked as a social worker for five years before he started lecturing in HSC at MCAST. He also lectures on a part-time basis in the MTL-VET programme holding the position of a visiting lecturer at UoM.
6. Claire is a physiotherapist by profession and practiced for several years then switched to a teaching career within secondary education in the HSC stream. She is also currently a visiting lecturer on the MTL in VET programme at UOM due to her previous experience in training teachers for a number of years.
7. John comes from a science background and used to work in one of the pharmaceutical industries in Malta. After several years in industry, he decided to get into teaching and joined MCAST. He was a full-time lecturer for a number of years prior to changing his role again, to include coordinating new modules, verifying new syllabi, acting as an internal verifier and mentoring new lecturers. He was also asked to lecture on a part-time basis on the MTL in VET programme for the HSC

stream currently holding the position of a visiting lecturer. This is his first time as a TE.

Brief details about this group of participants are presented in Table A.2 in appendix one.

3.3.3.2 Students on the Master in Teaching and Learning in Vocational Education and Training Programme

All three student teachers who were completing the MTL programme on a full-time basis had completed their Bachelor's degree at the main vocational college of Malta, MCAST.

3.3.3.3 Mainstream Teacher Educators

Seven MTEs teaching on the MTL programme, who are all resident academics at FoE, UoM, accepted the invitation to participate in this study. They all teach different subject disciplines. Biographical information about them is given below.

1. Christopher is a teacher of physics by profession. Before joining the UoM he spent several years teaching physics at advanced level at sixth form. Whilst he was teaching there, he also started teaching on a part-time basis at the FoE, UoM. He completed his doctorate and then joined UoM on a full-time basis. He currently holds the position of senior lecturer.
2. Matthew who is a teacher of chemistry by profession started his teaching experience at secondary education teaching both chemistry and physics. He then moved on to sixth form to teach chemistry at

advanced level. He completed his doctorate and later joined the FoE, UoM. He currently holds the position of senior lecturer.

3. Richard is an artist, educator and curator. He is a teacher by profession, specialising in art and history of art. He spent some years teaching art in secondary schools prior joining UoM. He is currently an associate professor at the FoE.
4. Michael is a resident senior lecturer at the FoE majoring in Italian. He is a teacher by profession and started his first teaching years at a primary school. He later moved on to teach Italian in secondary schools. After several years, he began to teach Italian at advanced level in sixth form, and later moved to UoM.
5. Kevin is a philosopher and educator. After some teaching experience in several junior high schools, he started his long teaching career at the UoM where his current position is that of professor. Throughout his academic and philosophical career, he has published considerably and also established himself as a public figure of liberal views.
6. Marlon is a resident academic at the FoE in business education. Before joining the FoE, he taught business education for a number of years at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels. He currently holds the position of assistant lecturer at the FoE whilst working on his doctoral studies.
7. Annalise is a sociologist and holds the position of professor at UoM. Throughout her academic career, she has published considerably and was also a guest lecturer at other universities. Her main research interests are in sociology of education.

Brief details about this group of participants are presented in Table A.3 in appendix one.

3.3.3.4 Employers

Eight employers volunteered to participate in this study. They all come from various industries, and all the companies where they work have employees who have VET and also academic qualifications. Biographical information about them is given below.

1. Francis has over forty years' experience in the enterprise and business sector. He is the owner and managing director of a company specialising in the supply of textiles, industrial sewing machines and all related equipment. Besides the Maltese market, the group also exports and offers its services to companies outside Malta.
2. Ted has over forty years' experience in the financial and trading sector. He is currently a chairman and owner of a financial investment company. During the past thirty-five years, he held various appointments including directorships at large corporations in Malta.
3. Caroline has been in the audio-visual sector for more than twenty-six years. She currently holds the position of manager in the conference and events sector. Her role within the company is to bring unique vision to life with innovative audio-visual solutions in conferences and events.
4. Martin has been the owner and local distributor of a world-renowned manufacturer of heating, ventilation and air conditioning technologies for more than twenty-five years. He employs seventy full-time employees and around fifty part-timers who are subcontractors within

his company. His employees range from those with an academic background to a VET background.

5. Rachel is a quality assurance (QA) manager in a local pharmaceutical company. She is a pharmacist by profession. Her role is to manage the testing and release of certain products. Specifically, her role is to implement, maintain and improve the QA management system together with regulatory compliance. She needs to make sure that testing is carried out conforming with the relevant EU legislation. The employees within her department come from either a VET or academic background.
6. Sara is a psychologist, and is the Human Resources (HR) manager within a pharmaceutical company. The company employs over a hundred and fifty employees. Her role as a manager takes more of a psychological approach as she looks after the well-being and the training of all employees. She takes care of the overall development of the employees, not just professional but also personal development too.
7. David is a managing director within a pharmaceutical technology company. He has been involved within this sector for the past twenty years. He started in the sales position and grew from there. The company he manages employs around twenty people who are mostly Maltese and come from both an academic and VET background. They provide solutions to the scientific and health care industries.

8. Joseph is the chairman and owner of a group of several companies in the fire, security and theft industry, which employ over two hundred employees. The group is a global provider of total solutions.

Brief details about this group of participants are presented in Table A.4 in appendix one.

3.3.4 Rationale for Interview Questions

For the present study, four separate interview schedules were prepared: one for the VTEs during their first interview, one for the student teachers, another one for both VTEs and MTEs for the second stage of data collection, and the fourth one for the employers. All interviews were structured in a way to flow from uncomplicated questions about the participants' backgrounds to more specific questions regarding their practice. Such an approach aims to establish trust and helps to connect with participants.

1. *First interview with Vocational Teacher Educators:*

The objective for this first interview was to gather general information from VTEs about the MTL in VET programme, their experience as a TE at the beginning of the course, their relationships with different work groups, their questions about their role as TEs and any final remarks regarding the impact of the programme on their identity formation. The interview guide was based on Burke and Stets's (2009) identity model and it targeted mostly the 'Input' stage of the model. Moreover, questions regarding their role as TEs at the beginning of the programme, together with the metaphors they chose to represent their role identity as TEs, were used in comparison with the data in the second stage of data collection in order to target the third research

question. The reason is, to see whether VTEs experienced changes in their role identities throughout the MTL in VET programme. Table 3.3 below provides a brief rationale for the first interview schedule with the VTEs.

	Questions and Prompts	Focus and Rationale/Link to literature
1	**This first set of questions asks you about your background as a TE** Can you tell me about your background as a TE (teaching students to become teachers) and your purpose of teaching? • What vocational subject do you teach? • Why have you chosen to become a TE? • Is this your first time being a TE? • What do you consider are the main responsibilities as a TE towards yourself and your students? How would you describe yourself as a TE? Do you adapt your teaching style according to the students' backgrounds?	Participant's background (Input stage of the identity model where the individual's own perceptions are the inputs to the system. Moreover, the perceptions are meanings relevant to an identity in a situation (Burke & Stets, 2009) which make up the identity standard.)
2	**These questions ask you about your relationships with your work groups** Can you describe your relationship with the UoM? Can you describe your relationship with your colleagues of the department? Do you ever voice your opinion if the need arises? If yes, what is the outcome?	General opinions about the participants' identities shaped by formal groups
3	**These questions ask you about your role as a TE** Can you describe your role as a TE? From past experiences or this current academic year, were you ever influenced by your students with regards to their personal traits, or maybe by what their other university lecturers teach them? Did you experience any conflicts or tensions? If you did, how were these resolved (if resolved after all)? Can you come up with a metaphor to represent your role identity as a TE?	General opinions about the participants' role identities (The identity model shows there is an emotional cost when there is a mismatch between the identity standard and the reality on the ground. Moreover, since SI was chosen as the theoretical perspective for this study, metaphors were chosen to depict these symbols.)

4	**Final remarks of first round of interviews** How do you imagine your relationship with your students develop during this academic year? What are the main components of a good TE- student relationship? How much do you think your identity as a TE will be impacted by your students?	General conclusions

Table 3.3: First interview with VTEs

2. *Interview with student teachers of the Master in Teaching and Learning in Vocational Education and Training programme:*

As explained before, the interview with the student teachers of the MTL programme was used as a way to verify what the VTEs were explaining about the course, during their first interview. In fact, the interview guide for student teachers was prepared after the first interviews with VTEs had taken place and it was not based on any literature or theoretical framework.

3. *Second stage of data collection: interview with both Vocational Teacher Educators and Mainstream Teacher Educators:*

The same interview guide was used with both VTEs and MTEs for this stage of data collection. The purpose of this was to compare the answers between both groups to be able to answer research questions one and two.

The second round of interviews with these groups consisted of more questions about their roles as TEs. They were also asked to come up with a metaphor that portrays their role identity as TEs considering that at this point they were towards the end of the programme. Specifically, this interview, which was also guided by Burke and Stets's (2009) identity theory, asked questions about the importance of identity, the identity standard (i.e. the ideal TE) and verification, their relationships with students, and institutional

contexts and influence. Table 3.4 provides a brief rationale for the interview schedule with these groups of participants.

	Questions and Prompts	Focus and Rationale/Link to literature
1	**These first set of questions ask you about your role identity as a TE** 1. In your experience as a TE on the MTL programme, what roles did you take on? • Prompt: example roles may include teacher, mentor, facilitator, and so on • Are the roles you mentioned different than the perceived role you had at the beginning of the MTL programme? • How did you acquire or change this perception during the process of this MTL programme? 2. How did you cope with the multiple roles you have mentioned? 3. Did you ever feel that certain roles might conflict with one another? If yes, how did you go about the situation? 4. What kinds of aims and principles do you have as a TE within this programme? 5. Can you come up with a metaphor that portrays your role identity as a TE?	The focus is on RQ1 and RQ2 Input stage of the identity model where the individual's own perceptions are the inputs to the system. Moreover, the perceptions are meanings relevant to an identity in a situation (Burke & Stets, 2009) which make up the identity standard. Participants were asked about the aims and principles they have as TEs to get to their identity standard. Moreover, the error signal within the identity model was investigated by asking the participants whether they had roles which conflict with one another, and so their emotions were recorded as well. As a result of this, they were asked how they went about the situation to investigate whether they modified their behaviour as per identity model. In addition, metaphors were also used in this stage to get a deeper understanding of their role identities.

2	**These questions probe about identity prominence and salience** 6. From the above roles you have mentioned, which role is given the most support? And which role is given the least support? (The support can be either from your colleagues, or the department you work in). Kindly, describe the type of support you received. 7. From the above roles you have mentioned, which role are you most committed to? 8. In which roles did you receive the most and least extrinsic rewards? 9. All that said what role or roles are most important to your identity as a TE? And which are those that are least important?	The focus is on RQ1 According to identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009), identity salience is the likelihood of an identity being invoked across situations. The salience hierarchy of identities is when one responds to the expectations of the situation rather than to the desires of oneself. In these sets of questions, identity meanings as per identity model, in terms of identity salience, prominence and commitment, were explored to understand why TEs in Malta choose certain role identities over others. Several factors like prominence, support, rewards and the perceived opportunity structure influence the salience of an identity in a situation. McCall and Simmons (1978) believe that the most significant factor is the degree of prominence of the role identity.
3	**These questions probe about the institutional context and influence** 10. In what ways are you engaged here at UoM? (Other than teaching, what do you do here? For example: correcting assessments, tutoring dissertation students etc.) 11. How have such activities shaped your role identity as a TE? 12. How often do you interact with your colleagues and other lecturers at UoM? 13. What influences do these factors have in shaping your identity? 14. What other factors have influenced your role identity as a TE?	The focus is on RQ1 and RQ3 The identity model is split in two parts. The upper part focusses on the person, whereas the bottom part focusses on the environment. These sets of questions focus on the bottom part of the identity model where the social behaviour of these TEs in Malta gives meanings to the situation. The disturbances such as conflicts or tensions are also investigated.

	15. How were the relationships with students? Were there any conflicts or tensions?	
4	**These questions probe the identity standard and identity verification** 16. In your opinion, how would you describe the ideal TE? (what has shaped this ideal and how close do you feel you fit this standard?) 17. Tell me about situations or times when you most felt positive and negative emotions as a TE?	The focus is on RQ1 Direct questions about the identity standard of a TE were asked as per the identity model. The answers to these questions will be used to verify whether the TEs modified their behaviour when they were not able to verify their identity (Burke & Stets, 2009).
5	**Conclusions** 18. What do you think are the most influential factors in shaping your identity as a TE? 19. What has obstructed your identity formation throughout the MTL programme? 20. What advice do you give to future TEs? 21. Anything else you would like to add?	Closing comments

Table 3.4: Interview guide with TEs (2nd stage of data collection)

4. *Interview with employers:*

The interview schedule with this group of participants was used to target the fourth research question. The interview questions did not follow the same structure as with the other two groups as, clearly, certain questions would have been irrelevant. However, each interview session followed the same procedure. A description of the context and the purpose of the study was discussed. The first part of the interview consisted of generic questions regarding their background in industry. Participants were then asked to introduce themselves and describe their roles within the company they work for. They were also asked to discuss their views on VET. The second part of the interview placed the focus on the TEs. Participants were asked questions

related to TEs' roles as well as for their opinion on which roles needed more support. The final part of the interview asked questions about what employers look for in potential employees and how the labour market can support the role of VTEs. During these interviews, participants were also asked to come up with a metaphor that portrays the role identity of a VTE. The reason for such a question was to compare the metaphors thematically that employers used with those of the other two groups of participants. The interview guide with this group of participants is presented in appendix two.

3.3.5 Data Analysis

The purpose of this section is to discuss the data analysis process that was adopted for this study. Semi-structured interviews were approximately an hour in length and audio-recorded. These interviews were all transcribed verbatim. Data analysis started in conjunction with the data collection (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Conducting two processes simultaneously, data collection and data analysis, is one of the essential attributes of qualitative research as compared with quantitative research (Merriam, 1998). Merriam warns that a recursive and dynamic data collection and analysis "is not to say that the analysis is finished when all the data have been collected. Quite the opposite. Analysis becomes more intensive as the study progresses, and once all the data are in" (1998, p.155). Qualitative methodologists advocate an emerging design; hence, the concurrent and interactive process in data collection and analysis. The timeline for data analysis is portrayed in Figure 3.2.

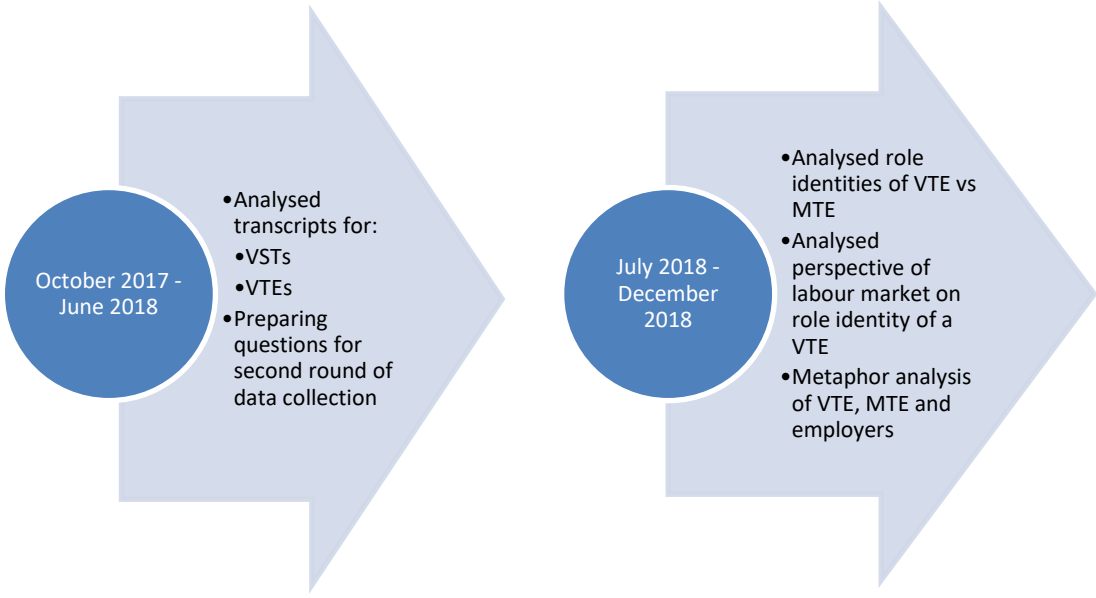

Figure 3.2: Timeline for data analysis

3.3.5.1 Procedures for Semi-Structured Interview Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was the method used to identify themes and patterns of meaning across the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Specifically, a mix of inductive and theoretical TA was used. Inductive TA "aims to generate an analysis from the bottom (the data) up; analysis is not shaped by existing theory (but analysis is always shaped to some extent by the researcher's standpoint, disciplinary knowledge and epistemology)" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.175). This type of inductive TA was mainly used for the participants' responses. On the other hand, theoretical TA was also used, as the interview questions were constructed on Burke and Stets's (2009) identity model, so the analysis was also guided by its theoretical concepts (Burke & Stets, 2009). According to Braun & Clarke, (2006, p.87), TA reveals "experiences, meanings and the reality of participants". Their guide to conducting TA was followed (2013, p.202). The stages of coding and analysis described are:

Stage 1: Transcription

Stage 2: Reading and familiarisation of the data

Stage 3: Generating initial codes across the dataset

Stage 4: Searching for themes within the codes

Stage 5: Reviewing themes and produce subthemes if necessary

Stage 6: Define and name themes

Stage 7: Produce the report

After following the first two stages of this process, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2013) above, coding of data was done by hand. Considering the small sample size, it was felt unnecessary to use one of the data analysis software programs to aid in the sorting and organisation of data. Moreover, although software programs may be helpful to organise and examine large amounts of data, they are still not capable of conceptualising the processes that are required to transform the data or make any kind of judgment when interpreting the findings (King, 2004; Thorne, 2000).

The initial production of codes from the data started after reading through the entire dataset at least once to become familiar with all aspects. This part of the coding helps to move from unstructured data to identifying the development of ideas that are in the transcripts (Morse & Richards, 2002). Important sections from the transcripts relating to a theme or issue, were identified and memos and labels were written next to them (King, 2004) to describe and to record interesting aspects in the data. These initial steps formed the basis of themes across the dataset. A reflective journal was used in the process of data coding to track the thoughts and ideas that evolved

throughout data analysis. Moreover, it helps the researcher to make sure that the data analysis process is consistent and does not vary.

The codes were then analysed to search for potential themes. According to Boyatzis (1998) a theme may be generated inductively from the raw data, theory and prior research. Broad higher order codes were initially developed from the main theoretical framework of this study, Burke and Stets's identity theory (2009). These deductive codes formed the main themes where some also matched an interview question. Thus, they acted as the parent nodes. Once the main themes were reviewed and refined, subthemes were created where necessary as the fifth stage suggests. An inductive data-driven approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013) was used for the generation of sub-themes without trying to fit them into a pre-existing coding frame. An example would be when participants described how they cope with multiple roles.

Defining and refining of data continued for further analysis, whilst the last step involved a final analysis where the produced themes were linked to the research questions and literature, and extracts were selected from the data to be embedded within the write-up.

The following paragraph provides an illustrated worked example to show how coding was done in the early stages. The coded data in table 3.5 shows how Liam's line was coded in different ways, each capturing different elements in the data that might be useful in the developing analysis. These codes and others provided the building blocks of analysis where the codes can either reflect the (data-derived) semantic content or theoretical interpretations of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Data Extract	Codes
What really helps is having experience in the field, meaning vocational teaching. Industrial experience helped me as well when I was creating certain projects for them. (Liam - VTE)	Important factors that support the role identity of TE. KSCs through industrial and teaching experience

Table 3.5: Coding in TA: a worked example of the early stages

The above codes in table 3.5 are researcher-derived ones which go beyond the explicit content of the data as they are "latent" and invoke the researcher's conceptual and theoretical framework to identify "implicit" meanings within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.207). By implicit meanings, the assumptions and frameworks that underpin what is said in the data, for example in table 3.5, the code 'KSCs through industrial and teaching experience' is a clear example of a researcher-derived code. The participant, Liam, never actually expressed that statement, but what he said relies on this particular understanding of what the aims and principles of TEs are like, which is one of the main themes. This main theme is derived from the theoretical and knowledge framework used in this study. The following tables show the main themes and sub-themes that were generated.

Aims and Principles of TEs	**Ideal TE (Identity Standard)**	**Role Identity**		
Time	TEs should be pragmatic and dynamic	**Roles**	**Prominence hierarchy of identities**	**Salience hierarchy of identities**
Self-reflection	TEs should have industrial experience	Coping with multiple roles	Support	
KSCs	TEs should maintain practical links with industry to keep informed	Conflicting roles	Commitment	

Help student teachers become good teachers	TEs should have teaching experience		Rewards
Help future teachers become reflective practitioners	TEs should be 'enthusiastic' about the subject discipline		
"Love" the subject discipline and then teach its pedagogies	TEs should keep abreast with the latest research		
Supproting student teachers	TEs should be approachable and understanding towards student teachers		

Table 3.6: Themes for TEs

Views on VET	Views on roles of VTEs	Support from industry
VET is essential	VTEs should have a hands-on approach	
Alternative ways to learning	Keep abreast with regulations and policies	
Bridges the gap between school and employment	Be supportive towards student teachers	
	Create awareness of what the labour market needs are	

Table 3.7: Themes for Employers

3.3.5.2 Metaphor Analysis

This section discusses the analysis that was conducted on the metaphors that were collected during the semi-structured interviews, which relate to the second and fourth research questions. As explained in the previous section, participants were specifically asked to come up with a metaphor that portrays the role identity of a TE. This question aimed to

determine the self-identities that are important to the participants which are in line with the concept of identity prominence within identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009). However, as the findings chapter reveals, participants used many other rich metaphors to describe their role identities throughout the interviews. Therefore, the metaphorical analysis did not only apply to the specific answer of the interview question (*Can you come up with a metaphor that portrays your role identity as a TE?*) but to all metaphors that participants used in their interviews. As described earlier, participants strive to verify their identity in the identity control feedback loop (Burke & Stets, 2009). The more important it is to them, the more prominent it is. Thus, analysing the metaphors participants use is a way to determine the identities that are more prominent to them. Moreover, Pajak (1986) and Clandinin (1986) argue that metaphors are significant in the practical knowledge of teachers as they shape their understanding of their role. Pajak (1986) continues to argue that metaphors act as a way for teachers to verbalise their "professional identity".

The procedure used to analyse the metaphors that were chosen by the participants was based on the data analysis processes of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) and Schmitt's (2005) guides.

Five stages were used during metaphor analysis. The first stage consisted of identifying the topic; i.e. the professional role identity of TEs. The second step was to identify the metaphors that participants used from the transcripts. In this study, a word, phrase or figures of speech, all count as a metaphor, together with the specific answer participants gave to the interview question (*Can you come up with a metaphor that portrays your role identity?*). For example, if a participant is comparing the process of mentoring to a "chain

control within a manufacturing company", that phrase is considered a metaphor. Thus, the language participants used throughout all the interviews was closely examined to see what metaphors emerged and how the connection between the metaphorical concept and the TEs' professional role identity was made through their discourse. The identified metaphors were typed into separate lists for each group of participants (VTEs, MTEs, and employers).

The third step was to synthesise the collected metaphors into metaphorical concepts. For example: the metaphors 'motivator' and 'facilitator' were grouped together under the metaphorical concept of *supporter*. The reason is that all the metaphors that belong to the same image source and description are grouped under the same heading. This is how the main metaphorical concepts were formed for the lists of metaphors. Moreover, the formulation of the metaphorical concepts was also influenced and informed by the studies of Alsup, (2006); Saban, Kocbeker, and Saban (2007); and Thomas and Beauchamp, (2011). In addition, an iterative approach was used to group the metaphors according to metaphorical concepts about the professional role identity that emerged. "In vivo codes", which are the same words that participants use, were used for labelling the categories (Creswell, 2013, p.268) during the first stage of open coding. The same process was repeated for all groups of participants to build reliability into the analysis. When all the data were coded, the transcripts were re-read, and the metaphorical concepts were re-examined.

The fourth step was to compare the metaphorical concepts with each other (MTEs with VTEs compared with employers) and check for similarities

and differences. Moreover, since VTEs were asked to come up with a metaphor during both stages of data collection (at the beginning and towards the end of the MTL programme), the metaphorical concepts from their metaphors were also compared with each other to check for evidence of change within their professional role identity.

The final step was to interpret the metaphors to generate knowledge on the subject matter. In fact, Schmitt (2005, p.374) states: “Knowledge in respect of metaphoric concepts only becomes of use if it makes interpretation possible (i.e., if a connection can be made between the concepts found and the events, thoughts, and actions that take place in the real world)”. Participants gave their reasons why they chose a particular metaphor. For example, the metaphor which fits in the metaphorical concept of *nurturer*, was *mother*. The participants that mentioned this were all female, and therefore, this implicitly suggested their counter role – the students, who are portrayed as their children. The metaphor ‘mother’ in this context, does not make a lot of sense in its literal meaning. However, the image that is portrayed is that of someone who cares for her children, implying that the VTEs who chose ‘mother’ as their chosen metaphor is that of someone who cares for her student teachers and wants the best for them. For obvious reasons, metaphors can be subjective, as they depend on various characteristics, such as gender, biographical and cultural contexts. For example, male participants of this study did not choose ‘mother’ as a metaphor, showing the gender influences in choice of metaphors. Moreover, the personal (individual) self and identity, together with the social (group) identity, leaves an impact on individuals on the metaphors they choose for their role identities. This shows

that personal identity may act like a master identity as it is constantly being activated and is generally very high in salience in the hierarchy of identities, as claimed by Burke and Stets (2009).

3.4 Validity of Study

Research trustworthiness is discussed extensively by various scholars for both quantitative and qualitative research designs (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Finlay, 2006). According to Swanborn (1996), validity and generalisability are the main criteria in judging the trustworthiness of quantitative research. The former criterion refers to the accuracy of the result, whereas the latter refers to external validity, how applicable the findings of that study are to others. However, different criteria are used for qualitative data. Dunne, et al. (2005) argue that the ultimate criterion for trustworthiness is how far one may tell a convincing story. More specifically, Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggest the following four criteria to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative data: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These criteria are addressed and discussed below for this study.

Credibility:

Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggest member checking is one of the most crucial techniques to establish credibility with the data. All participants were sent a copy of the transcript, to confirm whether the data represents what they had to say. All participants agreed with the transcripts and did not modify them. Moreover, triangulation methods, which were discussed in depth in section 3.3.2.1, are another way to enhance credibility (Cohen et al., 2011; Patton, 2002).

Transferability:

Positivists usually criticise qualitative researchers in the interpretation of the results, for being subjective and not generalisable (Balarabe Kura, 2012). Therefore, positivists would suggest that qualitative researchers have to pay attention to the criterion of transferability to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. However, Guba and Lincoln (1985) argue that the level of transferability is highly dependent on the context of the study. Moreover, Penders et al. (2019) argue that the humanities and interpretive sociological research are different from the sciences due to the objects of study and questions asked, which may not allow replication or even replicability. However, although each qualitative case is unique, the research context can still be used to link and match other findings to theirs, as the research context may be similar. To enhance the level of transferability, a thorough description of the research context, the structural influential contexts and the participants was provided (Bryman, 2008).

Dependability:

"Dependability refers to whether findings would be consistent should the study be replicated using the same or similar objects in the same or similar context" (Morse & Field, 1996, p.18). Bryman (2008) suggests that for a researcher to establish dependability, all phases of the research process have to be presented in an honest and clear manner. Moreover, Guba and Lincoln (1985) also argue that an audit can be used to establish the dependability of qualitative research. Throughout the study, an audit trail

detailing each step of the process taken was developed and all “decisions, choices and insights” (Morse & Field, 1996, p.119) were documented.

Confirmability:

“Confirmability means that the study is free from bias in the research procedure and results” (Morse & Field, 1996, p.118). Qualitative research recognises and makes explicit the researcher’s biases; this is discussed in section 3.6.

3.5 Ethics and Ethical Conduct

According to many scholars, ethical considerations are of utmost importance when one conducts research (e.g. see Creswell, 2013; Neuman, 2011). The ethical concerns pertaining to this study relate to the risk of identification for the participants. Ethical concerns must be applied in all stages of research (Creswell, 2013). There is a moral and professional obligation for the researcher to act ethically (Neuman, 2011).

This research has ethics approval from both Lancaster University, as well as from the FoE at the UoM. The companies involved also approved this research. All participants were given consent forms and information sheets prior to the start of data collection. These forms are found in appendix three. All participants were de-identified in any report of findings, and the data remained confidential during and after the research was completed. Pseudonyms were used in storing the transcripts and throughout this thesis. Furthermore, all participants that were invited were made aware that their participation was on a voluntary basis and they could terminate their participation should the need arise. Details about the participants provided in

section 3.3.3, consist of only key points relevant to the research questions that relate to their work experience and professional background. Personal details, such as age, were omitted to minimise the risk of identification. However, the name of the university and vocational college were not de-identified, to avoid the risk of decontextualisation, and hence adopt a reflexive strategy (Nespor, 2000).

3.6 Researcher's Bias

Although some of the TEs that took part in this study work on a full-time basis at MCAST where I work, I did not know them prior to this study as we work in different institutes. Therefore, I do not consider myself as an insider researcher. I only knew one VTE prior to this study due to the initial teacher training programme at MCAST. Thus, this reduced the risk of influencing the participants and ending up with biased information.

Inevitably, personal experience, beliefs and professional background have influenced this study. I also consider my own experiences similar to my research participants, having had prior familiarity with the studied phenomenon. As a warranted engineer who has worked in industry prior to my current lecturing role at MCAST, I was in a better position to understand what the employers who represent the labour market were saying. Furthermore, the fact that I was on an initial teacher training programme of VET, I was also in a better position to understand what the TEs were saying in the interviews. However, at the same time, every effort was made to retain objectivity. The fact that the subject disciplines of the VTEs were different than my own, and that none of the employers that I interviewed were engineers or

worked in the telecommunications industry meant that, although I may have brought my own subjectivity to this research, this reduced the risk of influencing the participants and ending up with biased information.

Chapter 4 Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of this research study in which the similarities and differences between VTEs and MTEs are explored. All findings are drawn from data emerging from semi-structured interviews with three groups of participants: VTEs, MTEs and employers. The chapter begins with a brief introduction and then presents the results in thematic form as per tables 3.6 and 3.7 of chapter 3, categorised by each participant group in separate sections. Findings from the metaphor analysis are presented thereafter.

4.2 Teacher Educators

This section outlines findings which emerged from the semi-structured interviews conducted with both MTEs and VTEs. The overarching themes: aims and principles; ideal TE; and role identity are presented below. Each one consists of several sub-themes. Each theme has a clear focus, scope and purpose, based on Burke and Stets's (2009) identity theory as discussed previously in sub-section 3.3.4. Together, they provide a rich, coherent and meaningful picture of what it means to be a TE in Malta. Specifically, this section explores how TEs construct their role identities and how emotions shape these identities, and the consequent outcomes for their practice.

4.2.1 Aims and Principles of Teacher Educators

An overarching theme is the 'aims and principles' or perceptions that TEs in Malta have about their role identities. These act as inputs to the

identity model (Burke & Stets, 2009) and the process of TE identity formation. VTEs viewed the ‘aims and principles’ in terms of: time; reflecting on their practice; and having the adequate KSCs to produce vocational teachers of high quality. On the other hand, MTEs viewed the ‘aims and principles’ as: helping student teachers become good teachers; helping future teachers become reflective practitioners; and “loving” the subject discipline and then teaching its pedagogies. In addition, both MTEs and VTEs shared a common aim and principle, that of having supporting student teachers. Each of these sub-themes is discussed in depth below. The first three will deal with how VTEs viewed the ‘aims and principles’, the following three will deal with how MTEs viewed them, and the last one will deal with the common one shared among both groups.

4.2.1.1 Time

Time is considered to be a fundamental element for VTEs. Time management was described as key when planning their lectures and how much time they spend on specific tasks. It was a concern among all VTEs as it enables them to be more efficient in their daily tasks. For example, Tanya says:

> I need to make sure that I am more structured in my… not only in my lectures, but I need to be more structured with deadlines, be more efficient with assignments. I need to have a plan at the beginning of the year with targets. (Tanya - VTE)

Considering that it was her first-year experience as a VTE, she is admitting that to make good use of the time, she must check her priorities,

whether it is in assignments or lectures. This extract demonstrates that it is crucial for educators within a VET context to manage their time wisely.

Another way of how VTEs portrayed time was through current affairs and context. For example, the influence of time and context is captured in the following comment from Anne:

> VSTs should be given a context where they can apply the theory and skill into practice. You need time management, be creative, be aware of the industrial skills. You have to keep abreast with today's society. (Anne - VTE)

Anne's comments provide examples where she explains how important it is that VTEs and student teachers remain aware of current affairs, in terms of technological changes and advancements. Thus, Anne and her students' role identities involve interaction with wider society, particularly industry and hands-on approach to apply theoretical concepts in practice. This kind of collaboration will be beneficial for VTEs when exploring, understanding and developing their own pedagogies. This can be done by undertaking collaborative research using practice architectures as a conceptual lens (Powell, 2020). Moreover, she also highlights how time management is also important in her role, in the same way as Tanya.

Miguel also refers to the notion of time, and claims that it is the responsibility of VTEs to remain up to date with what is happening within industry. He states:

> How can we understand the criticism that the media highlights, if we do not know our own context inside out? Therefore, apart from our own local context, it is within our responsibility to also tell them

> [student teachers] what is happening within the EU context. How can we know the reason why Malta took a certain direction, if we don't know what's happening in the EU? A vocational teacher at the end of the day needs to know what's happening within industry at a local and also at a broader context to remain up to date. (Miguel - VTE)

This extract demonstrates that it is crucial for educators within a VET context to keep abreast with what is happening around them and in the wider context, and communicate this to their student teachers. The previous two extracts concur with Winch's (2013) description of what a fully-formed occupational capacity looks like. He argues that apart from having the systematic knowledge, one should have the "ability to keep abreast of changes in the occupation and the environment in which it is practised…as well as the way in which these standards are understood in the wider society" (p. 296). Thus, VTEs are aware of their responsibility to pass these attributes to their student teachers. The meaning of their role identity is created through interaction with other parties beyond the VET context. This is linked to the next two sub-themes about self-reflection and KSCs.

4.2.1.2 Self-reflection

Self-reflection offers educators an opportunity to think about what works and what does not work in their professional practice. VTEs said that self-reflection made them think deeper and reflect on their practices and about why certain decisions were taken. They described how self-reflection results in effective teaching as they improved their practice thereafter. They also tried

to pass on their experiences to their student teachers. For example, John says:

> My main aim is to share experiences so that the student teachers can use those experiences, reflect on them in their own teaching. That is my ultimate aim. (John - VTE)

This also tells us that rather than telling students what to do, it may also indicate a TE's willingness to share positive and negative experiences to admit to making mistakes but also learning from them. Likewise, Miguel also emphasised the importance of self-reflection. He states:

> Another responsibility that we TEs have is to tell our student teachers that we must constantly evaluate and reflect on the vocational education system and the lessons. (Miguel - VTE)

This extract links with the previous sub-theme, of keeping up to date with what is happening in industry and reflecting and evaluating the current practices. VTEs need not only to reflect on their own teaching practices, but also know what is happening in the labour market, which is linked to the next sub-theme.

4.2.1.3 Knowledge, Skills and Competences

As highlighted in chapter 1, the EC is striving to invest in people to make sure that education and training systems support all learners in KSCs which are considered fundamental in today's society. Mulder, Weigel and Collins (2007, p.82) define competence as "the capability to perform and to use knowledge, skills and attitudes that are integrated in the professional repertoire of the individual". As discussed previously, it is within the VTEs' interests to remain abreast with what is happening in the labour market. This

leads the VTE to explore different approaches to the KSCs that are required within it. Learning for employability is considered essential by the VTEs. The word ‘industry’, which refers to the labour market, was constantly being mentioned by them. For example, Amy’s aim was to make sure that her student teachers were well prepared within the vocational stream and in the pedagogical aspect, which would lead to high quality vocational teaching. In fact, she said:

> [My] aim is to produce vocational teachers of high quality (Amy - VTE)

Anne concurred with this aspect:

> Vocational education is different. Apart from providing them the skills, you also have to pass on the competences. That is, there is the theory, there is the skill, then you should be capable of applying that theory and that skill to unfamiliar situations. (Anne - VTE)

Here, both Amy and Anne demonstrate the importance of being competent in the skill and not only being knowledgeable. In fact, Amy emphasises that it is within her responsibility to prepare students both in the vocational and pedagogical aspect, that is, teach them how to transfer that knowledge to others. Similarly, Anne explains the importance of linking theory to practice, even in unfamiliar contexts.

Miguel also mentions that it is within his responsibility as a VTE to tell student teachers where they can find opportunities which give them the space to experiment and to consider the actual learning process and different processes that are associated with different aspects of KSCs. He states:

> One of the main things that vocational teachers should have is to keep in touch with industry. We as VTEs have the responsibility to tell these

> student teachers where to look for such opportunities. Another thing, if they don't know, we have to tell them where to ask for such opportunities. (Miguel - VTE)

These extracts indicate that occupation-specific skills are not enough for VET students to adapt to new life situations and engage in further learning; key competences are also required. VTEs described why these are essential for employment, as Billet (2011) recognised. Moreover, these extracts also depict how the professional role identities of VTEs are not static as they gain experience and constantly need to adapt to the changing requirements of the labour market.

The next three sub-sections relate to how the MTEs view 'aims and principles'.

4.2.1.4 Help student teachers become good teachers

This sub-theme captures ways MTEs within the MTL programme in Malta help student teachers become good teachers. For example, Annalise says:

> I would like my student teachers to think of the learners as first. That is my main thing. What does it mean to learn? What type of teaching should I do for that learner? I, as a lecturer, would have failed. I don't want them to have the knowledge just to pass their exams. (Annalise - MTE)

Here, Annalise sees teaching as student focussed, both her own work and that of her future teachers; and teaching and learning should not be about passing exams but based on reflective practice and adapted to their learners.

Like Annalise, Richard described how his student teachers should always put the needs of their learners first. He says:

> Teachers should think about their students and not just about the content. They need to connect the needs of the subject to the needs of the students. You cannot emphasise the learning outcomes and forget about the realities you have in front of you. If that happens, learners start losing their focus. So, the challenge for the teacher is to be flexible and to adapt to the situation. (Richard - MTE)

Richard, like Annalise, is student focussed. Flexibility is key to adapting teaching content to the needs and abilities of students.

4.2.1.5 Help future teachers become reflective practitioners

This sub-theme explores how MTEs evoke their aims and principles with their student teachers. For example, Michael says:

> My aim as a TE is to help my student teachers become reflective practitioners. My desire is not to have teachers who go to class and teach their subject and that's it. I want them to be reflective practitioners, in the sense that whatever they do in class they need to reflect upon, prior to going in class and after going out of class. (Michael - MTE)

This extract demonstrates Michael's ambitious aim that he has as a TE. He suggests that to be a good teacher, reflection before and after teaching is necessary. He aims to engage his student teachers in reflective practice.

> This might seem a tall order, but I strongly believe that if student teachers and qualified teachers do not find the time to reflect on

> what they're doing, then they end up repeating the same mistakes all over again especially in class with their students. We all remember teachers we had who year in year out, repeated the same mistakes. I believe that a teacher should be a role model for his/her learners. (Michael - MTE)

Here, Michael reminds us of past teachers who did not appear to engage in reflective practice. He desires that all student teachers and those that are already qualified as teachers need to be role models for their learners.

Similar to Michael, Marlon says:

> When student teachers join initial teacher training, they get their own ideas based on their past experiences as learners. My aim is to help them be better teachers and caring. (Marlon – MTE)

These extracts illustrate reflective practice and how teachers influence their students.

4.2.1.6 "Love" the subject discipline and then teach its pedagogies

This sub-theme captures the underlying aims of MTEs regarding content knowledge. For example, Matthew says:

> There must be enthusiasm for the subject. You cannot be enthusiastic about teaching it if you don't love the subject! If you don't like the subject, it would be futile. (Matthew - MTE)

According to Matthew, a prerequisite of good teaching is to "love" the subject taught. Without this, a teacher cannot communicate any enthusiasm and teaching would be pointless.

Similarly, Christopher says:

> You cannot teach a subject when you're not sure about it. The subject has to be ingrained within you. It has to be in your blood; you have to know it really well. (Christopher - MTE)

This extract echoes Matthew's claims. Both of them highlight the importance of knowing the subject profoundly prior to teaching its pedagogies. According to Christopher, a teacher is not able to teach a subject if they understand it at a superficial level.

4.2.1.7 Supporting student teachers

This sub-theme explores how the aim of both VTEs and MTEs is to support student teachers. Amy (VTE) mentioned that she has to be fair and sympathetic with her student teachers. Being there to listen to their concerns and to support them was also the aim of the other participants. Moreover, as the other extracts portrayed, TEs described ways student teachers are their priority within their role. For example, Christopher (MTE) says:

> I try to accompany them and help them as much as I can. Right now, I have a student teacher who is finding it hard working on his dissertation. I'm really helping him because he won't get his degree if he won't submit a dissertation. (Christopher - MTE)

Here, he shows how support and building relationships is a key part of his work. As this is viewed as something positive, it may impact upon his identity formation as a TE.

Similarly, the way VTEs placed their learners as the focus of their work echoed the findings of Bathmaker and Avis's (2005) research with lecturers

within FE who would often be teaching vocational subjects. It is probably due to the nature of the TE role that both groups identify the need to support student teachers.

4.2.2 Ideal Teacher Educator (Identity Standard)

According to Burke and Stets's (2009) identity model, each identity contains a set of meanings that defines the character of that particular identity and makes up the identity standard. This theme, 'Ideal TE', portrays the set of meanings that TEs have which characterises an ideal of their role and serves as a point of reference in the identity process within the identity model.

VTEs viewed the ideal TE in three different ways, all of which were directly related to the VET context. According to the them, the ideal VTE should be pragmatic and dynamic; must have industrial and teaching experience; and should maintain practical links with the labour market to keep informed. For MTEs, the ideal MTE should be enthusiastic about the subject discipline; and keep abreast with the latest research. These sub-themes are discussed below, in addition to two common ones, having teaching experience, and showing a caring attitude towards student teachers.

4.2.2.1 Teacher educators should be pragmatic and dynamic

VTEs described ways how the ideal VTE should be pragmatic, dynamic and practical.

> The person needs to be very pragmatic and very dynamic; someone who's capable to bridge theory to practice and relate it in a very relevant mode. It cannot be something which remains theory on paper. (Tanya - VTE)

> The emphasis of vocational education is the hands-on. (Anne - VTE)

> Dynamic, explorative, and be willing to change. (Liam - VTE)

Here, Tanya and Anne emphasise that VTEs' teaching approach should be practical not only theoretical; and bridge the gap between the two. Tanya and Liam emphasise the need for teaching to be dynamic, and Anne and Liam say that student teachers should have an "exploratory" or "hands-on" approach in what they are learning.

Vocational teaching needs to be pragmatic, dynamic and practical in order to develop and maintain the highest standards in students' technical competences, pedagogical skills and transversal competences. The latter are those skills and attitudes, such as organisational skills, that are relevant to a broad range of occupations.

Considering that technological changes impact upon future job trends, Liam is suggesting that VTEs should be flexible in their practice and explore new ways that accommodate these changes. The implication is that their professional role identities are constantly changing, which is linked to the next sub-theme.

4.2.2.2 Teacher educators should have industrial experience

According to the VTEs, TEs working in a VET context should have industrial experience apart from teaching experience. For example, John says:

> They definitely need to have industrial experience and then teaching experience. So, you need to have both kinds of experience. (John - VTE)

Considering that the aim of VET is learning for employability, the ideal VTE should have industrial experience within the subject field and also

experience within pedagogy. This echoes the findings of Fejes and Kopsen's (2014) where they argue that vocational teachers have both a vocational identity and a teacher identity. Moreover, they argue that high quality teaching in VET is guaranteed by having teachers who have prior occupational experiences. This leads to the next sub-theme.

4.2.2.3 Teacher educators should maintain practical links with industry to keep informed

Across this sub-theme and the previous one, VTEs described the importance of links to the labour market. For example, Liam states that:

> TEs should make sure to remain up-to-date to know what is being done out there. (Liam - VTE)

One way of achieving this would be through industrial visits to help VTEs to remain abreast with the latest knowledge and give them the opportunity to discuss future skills trends in the labour market. In turn, this would be advantageous when VTEs are developing or updating the curriculum as some learning outcomes would be related to the labour market. In fact, this concurs with Winch's (2013) argument regarding a fully-formed occupational capacity as was discussed in sub-section 4.2.1.1. Moreover, having short sabbaticals in industry is another way of keeping abreast of changes within the occupation and the environment in which it is practised.

Liam's emphasis on remaining up to date may indicate uncertainty of their role identity if they do not keep abreast with the labour market. VTEs' role identities are not solely set by them as a professional group, but also by the expectations of the labour market. As a result, there may be tensions and

dissonances in verifying their professional role identities as their identity standard.

Thus, the interviews show clearly that identity is not only about how VTEs perceive themselves, but how the labour market and society perceive them. Moreover, it suggests that within a SI perspective, the focus in the case of VTEs is how identities are developed and ascribed in interactions with the labour market. This means that issues of identity make sense in a local context as part of daily, socially organised practices (Williams, 2000).

4.2.2.4 Teacher educators should have teaching experience

This sub-theme captures how teaching experience is considered to be important for both VTEs and MTEs. For example, Christopher says:

> A TE must be a person who has experienced different forms of pedagogy. I don't agree with TEs who have never taught in schools! You need to have at least ten years of teaching experience prior to becoming a TE. Student teachers will trust you more when you have the teaching experience yourself. (Christopher - MTE)

Christopher is adamant that student teachers will trust TEs who have first-hand teaching experience in schools. Similarly, Michael says:

> I'm lucky that I have thirty years of teaching experience. That gives me a cutting edge over my colleagues at the faculty who have never been teachers or have only taught in a specific sector of education or have only taught for a short period of time. I have covered the whole spectrum of teaching and I consider that as an asset. However, in the discussions we have at the faculty, others

> say that since we're a university, we have to give more importance to research. (Michael - MTE)

Michael also attaches considerable importance to his years of teaching experience. He sees this as an advantage he has over other colleagues. However, he indicates a possible tension between those who value practical experience like himself and those who value academic research.

This shows that within the same FoE, there are different opinions and views due to the different career trajectories TEs have had. These contrasting views among TEs might influence the identity standard for TEs which might lead to negative emotions. As a consequence, TEs themselves might not verify their role identity (Burke & Stets, 2009). Non-verification produces the "error signal" as the perceptions of TEs do not match with the identity standard (Burke & Stets, 2009). However, the TE may modify their behaviour or thinking in order to have their role identity verified, which eventually leads to positive emotions (Burke & Stets, 2009).

4.2.2.5 Teacher educators should be "enthusiastic" about the subject discipline

This sub-theme explores how MTEs talk about their role identities and how they reveal that being enthusiastic about the subject discipline is considered to be one of the characteristics of an ideal TE. For example, Richard says:

> You need to have big passion for what you do. You need to have enthusiasm even on the subject you teach. Those who do, leave the most impact on student teachers. (Richard - MTE)

Similar to Richard's passion, Christopher and Matthew also mentioned enthusiasm as an important quality for TEs to communicate to student teachers.

4.2.2.6 Teacher educators should keep abreast with the latest research

This sub-theme explores how MTEs expressed their views on research. As noted above, there are contrasting views on this. For example, Kevin states explicitly:

> The central mission of the FoE is always teacher education. But you cannot simply be a TE without being a researcher. (Kevin - MTE)

Like Kevin, Annalise says:

> Lecturing is knowledge based. So, I as a TE must give my student teachers up to date research evidence. (Annalise - MTE)

In order to fulfil her role identity as a TE, Annalise's teaching has to be based on recent research.

> Research is also important for me on a personal level. However, it depends on the level too. If you are supervising masters or doctoral students, then research is important in that aspect. (Richard – MTE)

Similarly, Richard also admits that research is important when supervising students on their dissertation. Thus, for Kevin, Annalise and Richard, an ideal TE needs to keep abreast with research. Furthermore, those TEs at professorial level are more likely to agree with Avis, Kendal and

Parsons (2003) that research and scholarship within HE underpins teaching. This suggests that TEs who do not conduct research are not reaching their full potential in their role identity. As can be seen in sub-section 4.2.2.4, other MTEs may view teaching experience as more important.

4.2.2.7 Teacher educators should be approachable and understanding towards student teachers

Both VTEs and MTEs have stressed the importance of keeping good TE – student teacher relationships. This is likely to help in the learning process of student teachers. For example, Amy says:

> We are there to help our student teachers grow. We should encourage them to ask questions as they are an important tool to learn more. Obviously, being approachable and understanding helps. (Amy - VTE)

By implication, TEs who are not approachable or understanding might jeopardise the learning process of student teachers.

Another way of supporting student teachers is by showing care. For example, Marlon says:

> A TE should empower his student teachers and listen to their concerns. He should also discuss issues with them and accompanies them in their journey throughout the ITE programme. (Marlon - MTE)

For Marlon, the educational process (the journey) is a joint one of collaboration and support, and is more democratic. For example, rather than being a leader he refers to accompanying the student teacher.

Similarly, Kevin says:

> People have different failures, weaknesses and strengths. You just have to be a good person. And what do I mean by a good person? It's all about the attitude. You can be a highly qualified person and be a rotten teacher. Same goes for TEs. So, we need someone who cares! (Kevin - MTE)

Kevin emphasises the importance of the personal quality of caring over academic ability of teachers or TEs. This was also seen in Amy's extract. This quality relates to 'person identities' in Burke and Stets's (2009) identity theory. Kevin suggests how the individual's personal identities guide the role identities.

Amy, Marlon and Kevin's comments, above, are related to the desired personal characteristics of TEs and evoke an idea that certain characteristic traits help in the role of TEs. A person is viewed as a unique entity, and their 'person identities' are "the qualities or characteristics individuals internalise as their own, such as being more (or less) controlling or more (or less) ethical" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.112). Apart from 'person identities', individuals can have social identities and the aforementioned role identities (Burke & Stets, 2009).

4.2.3 Role Identity

This theme explores the role identity of the TEs in this study in terms of three sub-themes: roles; prominence; and salience hierarchy of identities. It considers how TEs construct meanings for their different roles. According to identity theory, a role is "the set of expectations tied to a social position that guide people's attitudes and behaviour" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.114) and provides structure, organisation and meaning for TEs.

4.2.3.1 Roles

This sub-theme captures more than one characteristic that TEs used to describe what their role meant to them. Burke and Stets (2009, p.115) claim that role identities have different meanings for different people. Each role is described in depth below. It also explores how TEs cope with multiple roles and which they consider conflicting. Both VTEs and MTEs mentioned curriculum development, teaching/lecturing and examining student teachers as their multiple roles. In addition, VTEs mentioned supporting student teachers and MTEs mentioned administration, researching, and dissertation supervision. These roles and sub-themes are described and discussed below.

Curriculum development: TEs described how the role of curriculum development consisted of designing unit specifications. Specifically, considering that the MTL in VET was running for the first time, VTEs were required to design their own unit specifications. For example, Miguel states:

> I had to design the unit content of the HSC stream within the MTL in VET programme with other colleagues. (Miguel - VTE)

This extract demonstrates that the VTEs collaborated to develop the curriculum. This concurs with Winch's (2002) argument where he states that "professionals have to work with others to arrive at a satisfactory definition of their goals and their modus operandi" (p.270). Amy gives more detail on how the curriculum is developed:

> The difference is that vocational education is a hands-on approach. We cannot just teach theory, but we have to apply the theory in context. (Amy - VTE)

Amy attaches importance to including a hands-on approach, bearing in mind that the subject discipline is in VET. Likewise, Miguel stresses that:

> Vocational subjects should be taught the other way around. First, we experiment, and then we see how to elicit the theory from what we do. (Miguel - VTE)

Miguel is implying that non-vocational subjects, that is, academic subjects, are taught in a manner where teachers start with the theory and then move on from there. He describes explicitly that vocational subjects should be taught in the opposite manner, by first giving students a chance to experiment, and then eliciting the theory from those conducted experiments, recognising the inductive teaching approach.

Miguel's and Amy's views concur with Fejes and Kopsen (2014) who argued that there is a significant difference between teaching a vocational subject as opposed to a theoretical one. They argue that vocational subject disciplines are constructed by both knowledge and occupational skills, whereas theoretical subjects are only constructed on knowledge gained in academia. Moreover, Miguel and his colleagues prioritised their former professional identity, established when they used to work in industry, to develop the curriculum so that it had a hands-on approach. The emphasis on their former vocation, or 'dual professionalism', is likely to influence their perceptions of their roles as VTEs and how they relate to their teaching methods.

On the other hand, MTEs, who are all full-timers within the FoE, described the role of curriculum development as consisting not only of

designing units but also designing programmes within the FoE. For example, Christopher says:

> In the past two years, we have setup two new degrees. Currently, we're working on small physics interaction workshops with secondary school students. (Christopher - MTE)

This collaboration contrasts to what VTEs explained in sub-section 4.2.2.3, where they give priority to the labour market.

Both groups of participants, MTEs and VTEs, do not work in isolation within the FoE, but they do their best to innovate and link their practice to the outside world, in this case secondary schools and the labour market. Similarly, Annalise says:

> This year we're moving to a blended model for one course and we're filming and restructuring the course. (Annalise - MTE)

Annalise explains the different modes of learning the FoE offers, which is linked to the next role.

Teaching/Lecturing: VTEs have agreed that their teaching approach is student-centred. This means that the student is active in the learning and the emphasis is on that not on the teaching (O'Neill & McMahon, 2005). In addition, Gibbs (1995) describes the student-centred approach as that which emphasises process and competence and where the key decisions about learning are made by the student through negotiation with the teacher. These conclusions echo the findings of Avis and Orr (2014) where, despite having vocational teachers and not VTEs as their participants, models of teaching and learning centred upon the learner. For example, Tanya says:

> I'm very focussed about being a facilitator rather than being a teacher. I am more of a mentor; I guide them and treat them as adults. I focus a lot on sharing. I do not just pass on a reading list. That's very easy to do. I've created shared folders on the cloud with my students where I upload the necessary articles. Although I consider myself as a facilitator, I can push them, and expect them to read them. (Tanya - VTE)

Tanya's description of how she sees herself echoes the findings of Bathmaker and Avis (2005, p.56) where their participants, who are FE lecturers, "referred to the facilitating and counselling role". Tanya suggests that her method of teaching is student-centred where she guides her students on what they come up with. However, she is explicit that if students take an advantage of this situation and do not keep up to the standard, she takes more control and sets targets where necessary. Tanya positions herself as a strong authoritarian with her student teachers when the need arises, suggesting that she re-constructs her role identity as a TE as she sees fit and perhaps as she gains experience. Similarly, Claire says:

> I'm not a traditional teacher. I'm dynamic. I believe a lot in discussion and communication skills and believe that teachers should engage their students and let their students, in a way, do the lesson. Reverse teaching. I believe a lot in this method. You let students come up with ideas and the teacher will be the one to guide. So, not a one-way communication. So, I first let the student speak about what they know and then I take it from there. (Claire - VTE)

This extract captures the teaching method that Claire adopts. Like Tanya, Claire implies that she feels more like a facilitator rather than a teacher as she describes that she gives space and time for the students to come up

with their ideas and guides them accordingly. Moreover, Claire implies that she also adopts the Socratic method where she forms a dialogue with her students to stimulate critical thinking and draws out ideas and underlying presuppositions, rather than just transmitting and passing on information as a traditional teacher does. The Socratic approach is also suitable for students who might be able to give different levels of input depending upon their background or ability. Such a teaching approach is also highlighted in Duch and Andreasen's (2015) study, where it is argued that a common challenge that teachers in vocational colleges face is in adapting their pedagogy to the needs of students who come from varied backgrounds. However, VTEs stressed that boundaries must still be kept between themselves and student teachers. For example, Tanya says:

> As a professional coming from the field of HSC, I'm very conscious about boundaries. It does not mean that I do not mix with my students, far from it, I do that very well. But then I have to be very direct in for example making sure that they maintain the deadlines. There is a tendency for them [the students] to feel it's ok for them, not to submit their work on time and ask for extensions. (Tanya - VTE)

Here, Tanya is suggesting that students might take advantage by not keeping deadlines. However, she describes how, although her teaching approach gives them the required space and time to come up with their own ideas, boundaries must still be kept in the TE -student teacher relationship, and students must respect deadlines.

Other VTEs gave more examples of their teaching approach, considering that their subjects are vocational. Starting from the practical

aspect and moving to the theory was their adopted approach. In a similar way to Tanya and Claire, Anne mentioned she uses a bottom-up approach where she starts from what is known by the student teachers and moves upwards to the unknown, rather than starting from the theory and moving towards its applications. Claire described how important it is for her to teach student teachers the vocational pedagogy well:

> I do not want teachers to fall into the loophole and start teaching it the traditional way. (Claire - VTE)

She also gives an example where she describes how one can teach the cardiovascular system to HSC students:

> You can just teach facts and stop there, or you can give students physical activities in a way that they learn better. (Claire)

Here, Claire sees the traditional way of teaching is more content-driven in which the students are passive learners and the teachers lead the lessons without any real communication with their learners. She wants her students to be involved in the lessons through activities, and to engage themselves in the learning and to learn better. A student-centred and experientially focussed educational practice make up the vocational pedagogy where the VET curriculum seeks to address the learners' practical and vocational experiences (Avis, 2016). She continues:

> For example, placing hula hoops on the floor that represent various organs in the body (for example lungs and heart), and the students who represent the blood in our body will be made to run from one hoop to the other. In that way, students are visualising and experiencing the process of the cardiovascular system. That is the vocational way. You

> learn by doing and not just by looking at a diagram. That's one way. Other methods that can be included are role plays, discussions, etc. Therefore, as I said earlier on, it is within my responsibility as a VTE to put forward these pedagogical ideas to VSTs. (Claire - VTE)

This extract captures Claire's perspective on how a vocational teacher can teach something which is fairly abstract, such as the cardiovascular system. She argues that when students are engaged in the lessons through activities, they can visualise any process which might be considered as abstract, and hence learn better. Moreover, she describes that since she is a VTE, it is her main responsibility to pass on these methods of teaching to her student teachers, so that they would be able to engage their learners like she does in her lessons.

One of the aims and principles that Miguel mentioned in sub-section 4.2.1.1 is similar to Tanya's when she mentions that it is her responsibility to remain in touch with industry as well as the classroom context. She explained that since they are VTEs, they should remain up-to-date with the developments that are occurring, so as to pass them on to their student teachers:

> I would not be able to remain on the ball with the students. I have to keep the students active; I have to keep the learning very real. Remember that vocational education is not a subject which can be gained or achieved through a textbook. It is a very authentic mode of learning. Now for it to be authentic, it has to be real. It cannot be within a textbook. It also has to be within the real world. The real world for vocational education is industry. So, I have to make sure that student teachers are exposed to this as much as possible and to the requirements of learning for employability. (Tanya - VTE)

Learning through the application of knowledge in realistic contexts (de Bruijn & Leeman, 2011), is considered to be effective learning in VET. Tanya describes it as her responsibility as a VTE to ensure learning is connected to the workplace, and hence students would be learning for employability. This type of learning approach is also in line with the findings of Said (2018) where authentic learning was the preferred learning environment for higher vocational students following a vocational bachelor's degree programme. The difference between this current study and Said's (2018) study is that the participants were not student teachers in VET, but were higher vocational students following a vocational bachelor's degree programme. However, the comments of the VTEs of this study suggests they know exactly what type of learning approach vocational students prefer, and that is why authentic learning is emphasised to student teachers.

Liam also mentions that vocational teaching gives him the flexibility to be more multimodal in his approach. He states that:

> Vocational education asks for a multimodal approach rather than for a one size fits all approach. (Liam - VTE)

This comment suggests that teaching is not static, but dynamic and involves different modes to engage all learners.

How VTEs approach teaching relates to their vocational identity, where they understand their roles in relation to enacting VET goals (Kopsen, 2014). This kind of teaching method is in line with other studies (see for example, Placklé et al., 2014; Misbah et al., 2015; Said, 2018) where teachers adapt to their students' needs and connect learning to the workplace. The difference

between this current study and the other studies mentioned above is that this group of participants are VTEs responsible for passing on these teaching methods to future teachers.

On the other hand, some MTEs chose to use the word ‘lecturer’ to describe their role identity as a TE, whereas others preferred using the word ‘teacher’. For example, Christopher says:

> I tell my student teachers that I am a teacher. I am here to make them become good teachers. In fact, I hate titles. I expect my students to call me by my first name. With all due respect, no one is better than the other. However, they [student teachers] are shocked when they see me that way, because we are in an environment at UoM where titles matter. (Christopher - MTE)

This implies the UoM is elitist and Christopher behaves differently to other teachers or lecturers and that may have an impact on students. The title of ‘teacher’ might denote “a pejorative notion of teaching as child minding” (Wahlberg and Gleeson, 2003 cited in Avis & Orr, 2014, p.1101). Christopher and his student teachers may feel tensions and dissonances due to societal values and the cultural expectations of the institutional setting they are part of, but Christopher still follows his ideals and chooses not to be called ‘lecturer’. Rather than assuming the group identity, Christopher’s personal identity influences his professional role identity (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Christopher’s desire to be called a teacher is also reflected in the study of Swennen, Jones and Volman (2010), where they argue that TEs cherish their previous identity as schoolteachers. They discuss how, since TEs already know how to teach their subject discipline based on their experience,

they do not find it difficult when teaching student teachers. In addition, having such teaching experience encourages novice TEs to participate within the HE context (Murray & Male, 2005). Dinkelman et al. (2006), state that such teaching experience gives TEs credibility in their work with student teachers. Swennen, Jones and Volman (2010) conclude that it is understandable when TEs identify themselves with their former identities due to the knowledge and skills they would have developed throughout their previous careers as teachers. In fact, as discussed in sub-section 4.2.2.4, according to Christopher and other TEs, the ideal TE should have teaching experience.

Supporting student teachers: VTEs perceived that one of their roles is to support the student teacher. They described this role in several similar ways, e.g.: 'mentor/coach'; 'advocate' during teaching practice; 'counsellor' and 'enabler' to stimulate the learning process of student teachers. They said the need for student support was greater at the beginning of the ITE programme and during the beginning of the teaching practice. Tanya describes her role as advocate and Miguel describes his role as a counsellor:

> I had to sit with my student teachers to discuss their concerns, their teaching files, sometimes even step in and be an advocate for them within the school itself they were placed at during their teaching practice. For example, if they tell me that they lack certain resources or they're not finding the necessary support from the school they're working in, I had to step in and take action to make sure to intervene. (Tanya - VTE)

> I focus on listening to their experiences and what they have to tell me to elicit the salient points. (Miguel – VTE)

Both Tanya and Miguel show how support and building relationships is a key part of their work.

Moreover, Amy stressed the importance of being understanding towards her student teachers, as highlighted in sub-section 4.2.2.7. She says:

> I try to understand my student teachers and try to be an enabler.
>
> (Amy - VTE)

All three VTEs try to do their best in supporting their student teachers but if they had more in their cohort, they might not have been able to offer this kind of support.

The way the VTEs described how they support student teachers concurs with the findings of Shagrir (2015), where it is argued that the role of the TE is to “help and assist students to succeed in their studies” (p. 787), “to empower students and help them grow” (p.788) and to “serve as a mediator for students between teaching theories and practices” (p.790). However, the context of Shagrir’s (2015) study is within HE and not VET, and the way of supporting students by acting as a mediator between teaching theories and practices is referring to the academic content learned and the practice of teaching. Whilst VTEs do focus on the theory and practice of teaching, they do not focus only on academic knowledge, but put the emphasis on bridging the gap between the school context and the workplace context, which makes their professional role identity different from MTEs.

MTEs described how they support their student teachers by mentoring them, especially during their teaching practice. For example, Michael says:

> I always ask my student teachers to come here in my office; we prepare tougher lessons; we find the teaching material together. I consider this to be part and parcel of my job. I don't think it is fair to tell a student teacher, "Now you have to go to class, prepare a lesson and do it", without even guiding them. We must keep in mind that today, we have mixed-ability classes and mixed-nationality classes, so the challenge is much bigger than it used to be. You find behaviour problems, social problems, you name it and you have it in class. So, I try to give them as much as possible full support and coach them as much as possible. (Michael - MTE)

Here, Michael portrays today's reality within classrooms and the challenges teachers face to accommodate different students, thus highlighting the significance of mentoring within his role where he says:

> I consider this to be part and parcel of my job. (Michael - MTE)

The other MTEs have also highlighted that mentoring is part of their role identity as TEs, and not solely for teaching practice. In fact, Annalise says:

> We spend many hours discussing during supervision of dissertations. I let my students hand in four drafts to keep improving. They get a lot of feedback on their drafts. So, in a way that's quite similar to the mentor role. (Annalise - MTE)

Annalise, like Michael, shows how she supports her student teachers.

Examining: The UoM holds two examination sessions in an academic year. The first happens towards the end of January at the end of the first semester, whilst the second happens towards the end of June at the end of the second

semester. A third examination session happens at the beginning of September if there are students who need to re-sit a unit.

All VTEs and MTEs said that the examining role is ongoing throughout the year. They are expected to correct exam papers, assignments and assess student teachers on their teaching practice placement. In addition, they also provide formative assessment during the teaching practice. All of these are some forms of assessment. Lunenberg, Dengerink, and Korthagen (2014) have depicted the examiner's role as a "gatekeeper" (p. 21), where summative assessments are used which follow standards that provide a framework for such assessments. Although the naming convention that participants in this study use is different from the above one, both ultimately convey the same understanding because TEs are held responsible for student teachers. They are the ones who admit student teachers to the profession of teacher. For example, Amy says:

> During the second semester, I assessed them on two visits. After each visit, I sent them my feedback report, and this helped them for their next visit. (Amy - VTE)

This suggests that constructive feedback during teaching practice helps student teachers.

On the other hand, Kevin says:

> During the years, we get external examiners who evaluate our programmes and advise us how we can improve our course. They also act as reviewers on our marked papers. (Kevin)

Here, Kevin's reference to external examiners reviewing marked papers is describing how another role identity for a TE is to act as an internal

examiner. The way external examiners conduct constructive feedback on the TEs is similar to the way the TEs conduct constructive feedback with student teachers. Moreover, Marlon suggests that student teachers are also examined or assessed during their teaching practice:

> There's always going to be the role of assessing. However, during teaching practice, we're not only assessing student teachers but providing constructive feedback on how they can improve their practice. So, although it's summative, formative education is still happening. (Marlon)

Marlon, like Amy, emphasises the importance of constructive feedback TEs should give to their student teachers during their teaching practice.

Administration: While 'curriculum development', 'teaching/lecturing', 'supporting student teachers' and 'examining' were all common roles for VTEs, one major difference emerged specific to the current position of one of them. Tanya, who is the only resident academic as a VTE, mentions that:

> The role is multi-faceted. There is the nature of the programme, so I have taken the role of an administrator to ensure that the part-time lecturers are fully aware of the deadlines, room logistics, etc., collectively holding meetings to see that everyone is on track. I also had to take the role of a programme-designer to design the programme of study. (Tanya - VTE)

Here, Tanya explains that because she was the only full-timer, she has other "multi-faceted" administrative roles which the part-time VTEs did not have.

Similarly, MTEs also described having administrative duties within their role. Christopher says:

> The University expects from each one of us the following: 33% administration, 33% lecturing and 33% research. That is mainly how I spend my time here. I have a lot of lectures this year, new units, so I keep the research component towards summer. (Christopher - MTE)

This extract demonstrates that the UoM imposes three main duties on all lecturers and allocates equal amounts of time to each one. As noted before in sub-section 4.2.2.4, although Christopher gives more importance to teaching, he still conducts research.

Annalise further explained what this administrative role entails:

> I currently coordinate six courses. We have a lot of different lecturers for the courses, be it full-timers and part-timers, so this means that I have to write to them and coordinate everything. I set up tutorial groups, timetables, check room logistics, etc. (Annalise - MTE)

This extract suggests that the administrative role has nothing to do with them being TEs, but it is expected of them by the University. Annalise continues to say:

> My own work suffers the most. I'm not happy about it. I haven't had enough time for the intellectual work. My research is what suffered the most. (Annalise - MTE)

It is suggested that administrative duties interfere with the salient role identities of TEs, and coping with multiple roles could be difficult. This also suggests that Annalise is doing administrative work that could be done by an administrator. This is discussed in sub-section 4.2.3.1.1. below.

Researching: As discussed in sub-section 4.2.2.6, all MTEs must conduct research. Hence, their role identity as TEs has multiple meanings.

Dissertation supervision: This sub-theme explores how MTEs described the different ways they supervise student teachers for their dissertations, all of whom work on their dissertations during their second year. This means that all full-time TEs are expected to supervise these students for their dissertations. For example, Annalise says:

> I knew so much time would be dedicated on helping student teachers writing a dissertation. I even help them with sentence structures, researching for a topic, and redrafting. So, I'm not just supervising them. (Annalise - MTE)

This indicates Annalise's willingness as a TE to go out of her way during dissertation supervision.

The above findings concur with other researchers, suggesting that people can activate multiple meanings to their role identities (Burke & Stets, 2009). Both VTEs and MTEs have attributed multiple meanings to their professional role identity. Thus, the next sub-theme discusses how these TEs cope with the multiple roles they have described above.

4.2.3.1.1 Coping with multiple roles

Support from colleagues: VTEs talked extensively about the support they received from their colleagues within their role as VTEs. For example, Liam says:

> The support I received the most was from my colleagues who shared the unit with me. We shared our thoughts and supported each other whilst building this unit. (Liam - VTE)

This extract shows that support was not only given to the student teachers by the TEs, as was reported previously, in one of the multiple roles that TEs mentioned, but was also reciprocated among the TEs themselves. VTEs mentioned their involvement in teamwork which helps in their identity formation (Duch & Andreasen, 2015). All VTEs mentioned that it was challenging to design the units for the programme considering that it was the first time they had run, yet they were very supportive towards each other in this aspect. This finding aligns with Meeus, Cools and Placklé's (2018) study where it is mentioned that the role of 'curriculum development' is not performed alone, but in cooperation with fellow TEs. VTEs also mentioned that they were supportive towards each other when setting an exam paper as they discussed the criteria that had to be assessed and the type of questions to be included in the exam papers. For example, Claire says:

> We worked as a team and helped each other even when writing assessments. (Claire - VTE)

These extracts imply that VTEs, through the support they gave each other, helped in a way to verify between themselves that all elements from the unit specifications were covered by everyone. Amy said:

> We were in continuous contact with each other also with the department throughout. So, we were not left alone. (Amy - VTE)

This is in line with Dinkelman's (2011) study which found that the support received helped to reconcile persistent tensions. However, although Dinkelman's (2011) study reports support for TEs, his context was a research-intensive college of education which is very different from a VET context.

Moreover, Dinkelman's (2011) study is a self-study as he draws on his experience in forming a TE identity in the USA.

MTEs had contrasting views on how they cope with the multiple roles they mentioned. As mentioned before, Annalise claims that she does not cope with her multiple roles:

> This year we're moving to a blended model for one course and it has taken all my time this year. And if you ask me how I cope, I don't cope. There are many things I should have done earlier, and I didn't. Furthermore, since I have large groups, I also take a lot of time to mark papers. (Annalise - MTE)

Not coping impacts upon individuals in a negative way. Annalise admits that marking papers takes up significant time. This extract shows how she is finding it hard to verify her role identity, and that an "error signal" is being produced within her identity model. Not being able to fulfil one's duties causes distress when verifying one's identity (Burke & Stets, 2009).

On the other hand, the other MTEs did not comment about whether they were coping or not. This may or may not be due to verifying their professional role identities as TEs. The next sub-theme discusses how the roles MTEs mentioned might conflict with one another.

Relevant experiences: VTEs explained that it was not difficult to cope with multiple roles because prior experience had helped them. As mentioned earlier, most TEs would have accumulated experience prior to their new role (Harkin, Cuff, & Rees, 2008; Noel, 2006). Moreover, although these TEs work in a VET context, some of them maintain strong loyalties to their previous occupational identity (Kopsen, 2014; Robson 1998), and having prior

occupational experience helps VTEs in their professional role identities. For example, all the VTEs highlighted the fact that previous teaching or industrial experience had helped them cope with the various demanding roles of a VTE:

> What really helps is having experience in the field, meaning vocational teaching. Industrial experience helped me as well when I was creating certain projects for them. (Liam - VTE)

> I prepared the lectures based on the industrial experience since it's a vocational programme after all. (John - VTE)

Here, Liam and John describe how having industrial experience helped them prepare the lectures. Both referred to their former occupational identity to guide them in their role as a VTE. VTEs suggest that their former occupational identity was not replaced by their new role identity as a TE, but it has helped them to transition.

Self-reflection: As explained previously, self-reflection gives TEs an opportunity to reflect on their lessons and see how they can improve. Although the term 'self-reflection' was not directly spelt out by all participants, this seemed to be a coping mechanism developed to juggle multiple roles, based on what they were saying. John was the one who mentioned explicitly this aspect:

> The best way I found to cope with multiple roles was when I used to go home and reflect and prepare the necessary things. (John - VTE)

Here, John is implying that he did not only rely on his teaching and industrial experience, but reflected on his practices to see how he could improve himself as a TE. This indicates that John is forming and developing his identity as a VTE. Loughran (2011) also confirms that the role of reflection

helps with the identity formation of TEs. In addition, Beauchamp and Thomas's (2009) study, albeit in a different educational context, found the role of reflection shapes teacher identity.

Personal characteristics: One major way of coping with multiple roles depends on one's character. Not everyone acts the same way in a particular situation. Participants mentioned various ways they manage to cope with multiple roles. However, it was only Anne who delved deeper into the subject when she said:

> It was not difficult to cope with multiple roles. My motto is that the things you wish for yourself, do them to others. Therefore, I always give my best. Being honest and transparent is my way. (Anne - VTE)

Person identities are also recognised by identity theorists (Burke & Stets, 2009). They are based on the qualities and characteristics that define the person as a unique individual rather than as a role-holder (Stets & Burke, 1996; 2014). Thus, the person identity is seen to be operating across various roles and situations, and at times is likely to be activated more than the role identity. In certain situations individuals rely on their person identity which serves as the identity standard, and which eventually guides the identity-verification process (Burke & Stets, 2009). This suggests that the character of the individual plays an important part in every role identity that is taken. Moreover, person identity is like a master identity since the meanings within it influence the meanings within one's role identity (Burke & Stets, 2009), as Anne explained. The next sub-theme discusses how the roles TEs mentioned might conflict with one another.

4.2.3.1.2 Conflicting roles

Multiple role identities could be related to one another and are set to different levels, as was shown at the beginning of sub-section 4.2.3.1 This could result in identity conflicts where there is a role conflict. A discrepancy between these role identities can occur when they are activated at the same time. Identity theory suggests that levels of distress are felt because of these discrepancies (Burke & Stets, 2009). Hence, this sub-theme captures how TEs experienced conflicting roles.

All participants mentioned the examining role, as opposed to the teaching/mentoring role, which was seen to be conflicting. For example, Amy says:

> Honestly, at the beginning I was afraid that my roles do conflict with one another as I was first teaching them and then the time arrived when I had to assess them during their exams and their teaching practice visits. However, the fact that all student teachers were respectful helped me overcome this fear, especially when I gave them the feedback after the first teaching visit. (Amy - VTE)

However, it is suggested that when a TE manages conflicting roles successfully, such as the ones above, they can build a good relationship with student teachers, it not only helps student teachers in effective learning, but also impacts positively on the identity formation of the TE.

Moreover, MTEs describe how the mentoring role conflicts with the examining role. For example, Michael says:

> There's a very fine line when being a mentor and an examiner at the same time. I'm referring to the teaching practice here. But the fact that I keep

> constant communication with my student teachers, very often, they already know what my judgement will be. I discuss everything with them. After each visit, I discuss the report I give them and invite student teachers in my office to discuss it thoroughly. (Michael - MTE)

This extract also suggests the benefits of building a good TE-student teacher relationship and how the role identity of a TE is verified through open communication with both parties (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Kevin, like Michael, also feels that the examining and mentoring roles can conflict with each other:

> With regards to teaching practice, there's always a kind of relationship which is not easy to establish between you and your student teachers. On one hand, you're going to judge them, and on the other hand, you're giving them constructive feedback. I think you can manage both. From my point of view, my attitude has always been that my first concern is mentoring. The whole idea of teaching practice is to improve your practice. (Kevin - MTE)

Here, Kevin explains why he finds these two roles conflicting. The scope of the teaching practice is to improve their practice, and it is suggested that TEs should give priority to that rather than the grade they give. The fact that Kevin managed to prioritise the roles has helped him in verifying his role identity as a TE.

4.2.3.2 Prominence hierarchy of identities

This sub-theme within 'role identity' captures how important an identity is for TEs. Since the TEs have multiple role identities as was explained above, this sub-theme explores which role or roles are more prominent in the way VTEs and MTEs think about themselves. The higher the identity in the

prominence hierarchy, the more important it is (Burke & Stets, 2009). However, where an identity appears in the prominence hierarchy, depends upon three factors (Burke & Stets, 2009). One of the factors is how much individuals obtain support for the identity they are claiming. The more support they have, the higher that identity will be in the prominence hierarchy. Another factor that affects it is how committed individuals are to their role identity. The placement of an identity in the prominence hierarchy is also influenced by the rewards individuals get from that identity, both extrinsic and intrinsic (Burke & Stets, 2009). Intrinsic rewards are the gratifications that individuals experience internally for that particular role they perform, whilst extrinsic rewards are things such as money, prestige and favours. Therefore, this sub-theme is divided into three categories: support; commitment; and rewards, and each category explores which roles are prominent for TEs.

4.2.3.2.1 Support

VTEs described four main roles that were most supported. These were: (1) administrative, (2) curriculum development, (3) examining role during teaching practice, and (4) writing exam papers. The support was either from their colleagues or from the department they worked in. For example, Amy mentions:

> The most support that was given to me was during the teaching practice as the department of (the) university gave us a well-structured document to follow when assessing student teachers on their teaching practice. (Amy - VTE)

Amy shows how support at the workplace helps in her role identity formation as a VTE.

On the other hand, Tanya and Anne mention other areas of support:

> The administrative part, where you work in teams. (Tanya - VTE)

> I found the most support from my colleagues when we wrote assessments and unit specifications. We worked as a team and helped each other. (Anne)

Both Tanya and Anne show that teamwork also helps in their identity formation as VTEs. Moreover, Richard said:

> There's more structure and team effort when it comes to teaching practice. There are guidelines to follow when you're assessing. However, when it comes to teaching practice, I'm not the only assessor. So, to avoid bias, we are always two assessors assessing the student teacher. (Richard - MTE)

This extract demonstrates how role identity verification is achieved through support from colleagues.

The one and only role that was given the least support for VTEs was the teaching role. All VTEs said that they could not receive support on lecture preparation when compared to other roles. According to Tanya:

> You are considered as the expert, so nobody is coming to help you. (Tanya - VTE)

However, one MTE viewed support differently. For example, Annalise says:

> My lecturing role is given the most support as I have a good library and that's what I need. (Annalise - MTE)

Annalise refers to individual resources whereas others referred mainly to people or systems as forms of support.

From the above extracts, the main emotion that was captured is reassurance. TEs felt reassured when they received the necessary support. The more support they received from the department or from their colleagues, the higher that role identity is likely to be in the prominence hierarchy. However, support is not the only factor which impacts prominence hierarchy. Another factor which affects this is commitment.

4.2.3.2.2 Commitment

This sub-theme explores which roles TEs are most and least committed to. VTEs and MTEs have suggested that the role they were most committed to, was the teaching/lecturing role. Moreover, VTEs were also committed to the examining role during the teaching practice. For example, Amy states:

> I felt I was more careful during the observations of the student teachers' teaching practice. The fact that I had to assess my student teachers on their delivery of a lesson, and give them constructive feedback, I did not take that lightly. (Amy - VTE)

Here, Amy emphasised the importance of the examining/assessment role during teaching practice. Similarly, Anne remarks:

> There is no teaching without learning. My priority is to choose the best pedagogy for the teaching and learning method. Thus, my focus is on my lecture preparations. (Anne - VTE)

Anne attaches considerable importance to her lecturing. In addition, John also noted the importance of exam corrections even though he feels more committed to the lecturing role rather than the examining role. He says:

> I enjoy lecturing and sharing experiences. I do admit that the least I'm committed to is corrections. However, the result of the corrections is satisfying, especially when you see that student teachers did well in their exam. (John - VTE)

Here, John is looking beyond the displeasing task of making corrections, as he focussed more on the end result and the resulting positive emotions when student teachers do well in their exams. This helps in his role identity formation as a TE, and when the perceptions match the identity standard within the comparator, the identity is verified, which will lead to positive emotions (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Administration was the role that many MTEs found they were least committed to. Matthew states:

> Administration is boring, but you have to do it. (Matthew - MTE)

The administrative role does not appear to add any value to the role identity of a TE but it is still recognised as needing to be done. Similar findings were reported in Avis, Kendal and Parsons (2003), where paperwork and administrative duties are expected to be part of the job, which feels overwhelming sometimes.

However, commitment is not the only factor which impacts upon prominence hierarchy. The final factor which affects this, are rewards.

4.2.3.2.3 Rewards

This sub-theme explores which intrinsic and extrinsic rewards leave an impact on the prominence hierarchy of the role identities of TEs. The extrinsic

rewards that both VTEs and MTEs received were from the student teachers. For example, Tanya says:

> I feel very happy when students appreciate what you do with them. (Tanya - VTE)

It is suggested that appreciation motivates TEs in the role identity. Similarly, other MTEs also feel rewarded when student teachers thank them for the work they do. For example, Michael says:

> Sometimes I get ex-students who come up to me and tell me thank you or give me a gift as a form of appreciation. These give me the courage to go on. (Michael - MTE)

Michael admits that when student teachers appreciate his work, it motivates him and gives him an incentive to carry on. Moreover, such appreciation also acts as a verification for his own role identity as a TE and confirmation that he is on the right track.

In addition, MTEs received extrinsic rewards in the form of positive emotions when other researchers acknowledge their work. For example, Kevin says:

> When I write a book or a paper and people are reading it, possibly referring it in their own works…that is very rewarding. (Kevin - MTE)

Similarly, Annalise says:

> When I publish research and get recognised, especially from abroad. I've also been invited to sit on evaluation committees or to teach in a foreign university. That's very rewarding. (Annalise - MTE)

Annalise, like Kevin, feels that recognition motivates TEs in their role identity.

The intrinsic rewards were the positive feelings VTEs and MTEs felt when they overcame certain challenges, when a lecture turns out well and when student teachers follow their advice during teaching practice. For example, John says:

> I feel very satisfied that I was part of this MTL in VET programme. However, the most satisfying feeling was when I overcame the challenges I was faced with at the beginning. (John - VTE)

This suggests that commitment and perseverance help in identity verification. Both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards motivated TEs to keep on striving, which helped them in their professional role identity formation.

4.2.3.3 Salience hierarchy of identities

This sub-theme, within the broad theme of 'role identity', captures which role or roles TEs had to activate in a situation because of norms or pressures from others. According to identity theory, identity salience reflects the situational self rather than the ideal self. It is the likelihood of an identity being invoked across situations. The salience hierarchy of identities may be understood as when one responds to the expectations of the situation rather than to one's own desires. It is the identity that is perceived as most advantageous to adopt in a situation in terms of receiving support. Prominence, support, rewards and the perceived opportunity structure, are all factors that influence the salience of an identity in a situation. The most significant factor, according to McCall and Simmons (1978), is the degree of

prominence of the role identity. The priority of other factors that will influence the salience hierarchy depends on the person (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Both VTEs and MTEs emphasised that their teaching and mentoring roles were the most important which need to be activated across situations. Participants feel that their aim is to teach student teachers well and to support them in their own needs as was discussed in sub-section 4.2.3.1

The least important role for both VTEs and MTEs was the assessing role as discussed in sub-section 4.2.3.1.2. For example, TEs mentioned that their focus is on the learning process rather than the grade they give during the teaching practice. In addition, Tanya also mentioned the counselling role as the least important as it was not her priority as a VTE. In fact, she says:

> Sometimes I get students who open up about everything and start discussing other matters not related to their programme. I do listen to them, but I'm not a counsellor. My priorities are to discuss matters related to their academic outcomes and not on personal matters. (Tanya - VTE)

Here, Tanya explains how sometimes she sometimes finds herself in a counselling role but sees this as beyond her remit as a VTE. This concurs with, the findings of Avis, Kendal and Parsons (2003), where sometimes lecturers felt more like counsellors than teachers in FE. This extract shows what the salience hierarchy of identities is for Tanya. However, as a professional, she responded to the expectations of the situation, rather than, to her desires (Burke & Stets, 2009).

The findings for this section revealed that overall, the VTEs' perceptions of their professional role identity prioritised not just knowledge,

but also skills and competences, distinct from the pedagogic practice. It is possible that the identity standard which represents the professionalism of these VTEs may be influenced by their own biographies, including their former occupation identity and training, together with their educational and personal experiences, and person identity. Moreover, the manner in which VTEs viewed their understanding of their own professional role identity will frame notions of effective vocational teaching and ideas of what makes student teachers become ‘good’ teachers in the VET context.

The last two sub-themes show that the more prominent a role identity is for the VTEs, the more likely it will be invoked in a situation. Moreover, the more support and rewards VTEs receive for a particular role, the more that role is activated across other role identities. In these findings, VTEs remark that they are mostly committed to their teaching and examining roles, amongst other roles. VTEs experience positive emotions from having good relationships with their student teachers, and being responsible for bridging theory with practice and learning for employability. These may be associated with their identity standard.

On the other hand, the perceptions of MTEs on the role identity prioritised knowledge of the subject-matter and the research that underpins their teaching. In addition, they attributed multiple meanings to their roles, and not all of them managed to cope with their different role identities. The two role identities that were seen to be conflicting were the lecturing and examining roles; MTEs are mostly committed to the lecturing role. In addition, they find the administrative role least important as it is time consuming.

This section focussed on the data gathered from both VTEs and MTEs where three main themes (aims and principles of TEs; ideal TE; and role identity) were presented. The next section outlines findings that are related to the employers.

4.3 Employers

This section outlines findings which emerged from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the employers. Three main themes emerged from the data: views on VET; views on the roles of the VTEs; and support from industry.

4.3.1 Views on Vocational Education and Training

This overarching theme captures and explores the employers' views on VET. The sub-themes that emerged were: VET is essential; alternative ways to learning; and bridging the gap between school and employment. Each sub-theme is discussed below.

4.3.1.1 Vocational Education and Training is essential

All participants agreed that VET is essential in many ways. For example, Ted says:

> VET is very important which every country should have. Education should be broad after all. (Ted)

By implication, Ted values all forms of education, whether mainstream or vocational, as countries need both. Similarly, Caroline says:

> It is essential for the simple reason that our education system as it stands right now, lacks making students aware of the working world outside. (Caroline)

Here, Caroline presents a bleak view of mainstream education as lacking in a vocational focus. She suggests that mainstream education does not provide for students to be work-ready, thus VET is vital to cater for this gap.

4.3.1.2 Alternative ways to learning

Employers outlined their views on VET, all of which were positive. One way was that VET offers alternative ways to learning. For example, David says:

> VET is much needed as an alternative or a support to traditional education. My wife is into education, so I have been exposed to that and I have also been gifted with four children all with different abilities and different needs. I have seen at first-hand how the traditional rigid system reaches the high majority of students leaving out others. (David)

This extract demonstrates the harsh reality that David finds within the traditional education system of mainstream education. He suggests that mainstream education is rigid and does not offer all the learning opportunities for all types of learners and some are left out. He is suggesting that VET fills the gap and offers alternative ways of learning, catering for everyone. Similar to Ted, David implies that education should be broad.

4.3.1.3 Bridges the gap between school and employment

Employers have stressed that VET bridges the gap between school and employment, which they see as something positive. In fact, Sara says:

> We find that VET prospective employees are better. We find that they stay longer. In fact, their retention period is longer than those coming out from university. They also come with a different mindset, a work ready mindset which is a gold dust for an employee in today's world. (Sara)

Those with a VET background are at an advantage because of their work-readiness and have better retention rates than graduates. Likewise, Rachel concurs with Sara's views and says:

> VET students adapt more and are used to the working environment. (Rachel)

It seems that having work-based learning and apprenticeship schemes in VET colleges, helps students to adapt quicker to the working environment. Adapting quicker, helps in gaining more production output from that employee, which is beneficial for the company.

4.3.2 Views on the roles of Vocational Teacher Educators

This overarching theme captures the views of employers on the role identities of VTEs. Employers perceived the ability to deliver lectures as the overarching competence that is required; then industrial experience and knowledge of the pedagogy. Participants perceived that the subject area expertise required not only knowledge of the related labour market, but, preferably, also previous experience in that specific industry, as well as ongoing links with the labour market to help VTEs to keep up to date with changes. In fact, participants identified four requirements of VTEs, they should: have a hands-on approach; keep abreast with regulations and

policies; be supportive towards student teachers; and create awareness of what the labour market needs. Each of these sub-themes is discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Vocational teacher educators should have a hands-on approach

This sub-theme explores how employers believe that VTEs should have a hands-on approach in their teaching, similar to how VTEs view the ideal TE, as discussed in sub-section 4.2.2.1 before. For example, Ted says:

> [Those] training VSTs to become teachers in VET should have industrial experience themselves. They need to get their hands dirty a little bit. They would know exactly the difficulties you face on a day-to-day basis. In addition, I believe that part of the teaching practice should take place in industry, at least four weeks. (Ted)

This illustrates why VTEs should have industrial experience to be fully aware of industrial needs and what KSCs to transmit to students-teachers. Moreover, he believes in a hands-on approach, where student teachers are given the opportunity to spend some of their teaching practice in industry. This concurs with Winch's (2004) argument that practical knowledge is acquired through participation with the help of an experienced practitioner. Winch (2013) also draws attention to the benefits of workplace learning as it secures high-quality VET and the possibilities for further professional development of skilled labour across different societies. Similarly, Martin says:

> This person has to a bridge between school and work. It is very difficult and it's a huge challenge. (Martin)

This extract illustrates the bridging role of the VTE who should act as the contact link between education and employment. This is the aim of VET after all.

4.3.2.2 Keep abreast with regulations and policies

Employers perceived that for VTEs to fulfil their professional role identity, they should keep abreast with what is happening in industry, especially with regard to regulations and policies. This sub-theme concurs with how VTEs view the ideal TE, as discussed in sub-section 4.2.2.3 before. For example, Francis says:

> This person must have continuous knowledge of how things are evolving. Things are changing so fast, that if you're not abreast with what's happening, it's all for nothing. (Francis)

Here, Francis talks frankly about the crucial role of the VTE. If the VTE does not have the enthusiasm to keep up to date with how the labour market is evolving, it is a futile endeavour. The VET context requires learning for employability and such initiative should be part of the VTEs' responsibilities within their role identities. This is in accord with Miguel's views and Winch's (2013) argument regarding a fully-formed occupational capacity as discussed in sub-section 4.2.1.1.

4.3.2.3 Be supportive towards student teachers

All employers in the study perceived that VTEs should be perceptive of the needs of their student teachers. This will allow them to support them to achieve desired outcomes. For example, Joseph says VTEs should be:

> psychologically well prepared to understand their student teachers. That's very important. (Joseph)

According to Joseph, the mental well-being of VTEs is important to be able to help student teachers. Similarly, Francis says:

> TEs cannot be boring because students won't be attracted. He/she must be approachable and well-motivated. Communication skills are important. (Francis)

These qualities mentioned are likely to enhance student retention and maintain student teachers' positive attention. The importance of communication skills is discussed below.

4.3.2.4 Create awareness of what the labour market needs are

All employers perceived a need for good soft skills as well as technical skills. They said that most new graduates applying for a job, are lacking in soft skills, such as communication skills, time-management skills and work-ethic. Sara says:

> I think the crux of it is work ethic! We get a lot of young people without the work ethic. I think it's because everything is short term. Vocational students have a more long-term approach when compared to students who have an academic background. The problem is the culture across the board. Everything is short-term and it's no longer that a job is for life. It's almost that if people stay longer than two years within the same company, they feel that something is wrong. Rather than "Wow"! this person is committed. That mentality is being somehow filtered down to the employees and it's impacting the industry. (Sara)

Here, Sara insists that she finds employees lacking work-ethic at her place of work on a daily basis. Martin and Joseph lamented that they are

finding a lot of graduates who apply for a job, but, who do not even know what discipline or respect are. All the employers find soft skills and the right attitude as more important than formal qualifications or technical skills. Similar findings were reported in the study of Triganza Scott and Cassar (2005), where it is stated that human resources (HR) executives think that soft skills are competences which are high on the manufacturing agenda when compared with technical skills. The participants of the study (employers) suggest that having a highly technical person without the right attitude for work, is fruitless, and seem to prioritise soft skills over qualifications (Triganza Scott & Cassar, 2005). Based on these comments, VTEs need to make VSTs aware of this. It is within their responsibility to put the industry needs in the limelight and create more awareness. Avis (2016) also draws attention to the range of wider skills that employers may deem appropriate. Examples of these include teamwork, problem solving, entrepreneurialism and resilience.

4.3.3 Support from industry

The emerging findings related to the employers' views on how VTEs can be supported by industry may be understood in four ways: collaboration between education and employment; providing the space for teaching practice in an industry setting; sharing current updates with respect to policies and regulations with VTEs; and offering CPD programmes for VTEs. For example, David says:

> VTEs should know the system well, and also are aware of what laws are present within the authorities. They need to know all the policies. They also need to follow the legislation and not just the EU legislation but even outside the EU. We can offer our support, by sending the latest updates

> to VTEs so that they keep up to date and pass it on to their student teachers who will teach future VET students. (David)

Here, David expressed his views on how the workplace can support VTEs. As explained before, he believes that TEs in VET should keep abreast with the latest updates. Similarly, Joseph mentions:

> We could offer VTEs short CPD programmes on the latest equipment or projects we invest in. It's all about collaboration. If we invest in VTEs, this will be something positive for us when vocational students graduate and could become potential employees. (Joseph)

This extract demonstrates how the workplace can help vocational teacher training, which is mutually beneficial and helps in the professional role identity formation of VTEs, which is continuously verified (Burke & Stets, 2009) with the identity standard (the expectations) of the labour market.

This section highlighted the main three themes (views on VET; views on the roles of VTEs; and support from industry) that emerged from the data collected from the employers. The next section presents the metaphors that all participants used during their semi-structured interviews.

4.4 Metaphors

This section presents the various metaphors that participants identified that encapsulated what it means for them to be a TE. These metaphors reveal that their professional role identities are complex and multifaceted. Moreover, the variety of metaphors reflects multiple perspectives that TEs have of their professional role identities, showing that identity is dynamic and not fixed. This section is categorised into two main sub-sections: TEs and employers.

The first sub-section presents the metaphorical concepts that emerged from the metaphors that both VTEs and MTEs used during their interviews about their professional role identity. The second sub-section presents the metaphorical concepts that emerged from the metaphors used by employers to describe the professional role identities of VTEs.

4.4.1 Teacher Educators

Both VTEs and MTEs came up with various metaphors that portrayed what it means for them to be a TE. The common metaphorical concepts that emerged during the first stage of data collection with VTEs across the sample are discussed first.

4.4.1.1 First stage of data collection

This section describes the common metaphorical concepts across VTEs at the beginning of the ITE programme. Four main metaphorical concepts emerged from an analysis of the metaphors collected during the first interviews. These include *nurturer*; *supporter*; *provider of guidance and advice*; and *collaborator*. Only two metaphors did not fit into these specific concepts – 'change agent' and 'tool'. Table 4.1 presents a summary of how VTEs metaphorically conceptualised their professional role identity at the beginning of the ITE programme.

Metaphors	VTEs	Description VTEs gave	Metaphorical Concept
Mother	Amy	"I feel like a mother that has to protect them."	Nurturer
Motivator	Liam	"I feel like a motivator at this stage as student teachers are still finding their ground at the beginning."	Supporter

Critical Friend/Peer	Miguel, Tanya	"I'm more of a critical friend to help them find their way." (Miguel) "I hope to be more of a critical peer who is there to push, pull, to praise." (Tanya)	
Facilitator	Tanya	"I feel like a facilitator to help them and guide the way."	
Bridge/Stepping-stone	John	"I feel like a bridge or a stepping-stone between student teachers and the experience they require, same thing as VET after all."	Provider of guidance and advice
Waterfall	Claire	"I feel like a waterfall where my knowledge and experience are being passed from one person to the other."	
Cobweb	Claire	"My relationship with these different workgroups [other TEs, student teachers, and respective schools where teaching practice takes place] is like a cobweb. Everything is linked and together you get the full picture"	Collaborator
Chain	John, Anne	"I feel like a chain where everyone is connected to each other and working together." (John) "Sometimes, I feel like a chain and we are strong as our weakest link. I don't work in isolation. I would want to know what comes before me and what comes after." (Anne)	
Equilateral triangle	Miguel	"We are all working together like an equilateral triangle. There's the TE, the university and place of work as the sides of the triangle, and the student teacher is in the middle."	

Change agent	Anne	“I think I’m a change agent. I try to keep abreast with what is happening. I believe a lot in change. Change is inevitable part of life.”	Other metaphors
Tool	John	“I also feel like a tool for improvement.”	

Table 4.1: VTEs' Metaphors (stage 1)

4.4.1.1.1 Nurturer

This metaphorical concept captures the metaphors that VTEs used to describe their role identity within a nurturing role. It was only Amy, who said that she feels like a “mother”. The reasons she gave for her chosen metaphor were that since student teachers have just started the ITE programme, she feels that it is within her responsibility to take care of them as much as possible they do not feel discouraged. She admitted that being a mother herself, she sees her student teachers as her own children who need protection. Amy’s dual identity as both mother and TE helps to influence how she perceives her professional role identity. Moreover, her metaphor echoes one of the trainee FE lecturers in Bathmaker and Avis’s (2005, p.56) study, who refers to the lecturing role as “playing the role of a parent”. This concurs with Blumer’s (1969) argument where he claims that individuals enter into various types of interaction with established identities and different ways of dealing with other participants. This also implies that the identity standard is informed by the respondents’ past experiences.

4.4.1.1.2 Supporter

This metaphorical concept captures the metaphors that VTEs used to describe their role as being supportive. For example, Liam said that he feels like a “motivator”. Like Amy, he acknowledges the fact that student teachers

are at the beginning of the ITE programme, so he wants to make sure that he tries to motivate them as much as possible to remain on it. Similarly, Miguel said that he feels like a “critical friend”. He suggests that he wants to be trusted by his student teachers, to be able to support them as much as possible throughout the course. In addition, this portrays how Miguel wants to build a good relationship with his student teachers. Tanya also wants to be close to her student teachers as she feels like a “facilitator” and a “critical peer”. She wants to be present in the educational journey of her student teachers to help them and makes any action easier. Tanya’s metaphor of “facilitator” echoes that of the ten trainee FE lecturers in Bathmaker and Avis’s (2005, p.56).

4.4.1.1.3 Provider of guidance and advice

This metaphorical concept captures the metaphors that VTEs used for their role identities, to portray their way of providing guidance and advice to their student teachers. John sees himself as a “bridge/stepping-stone” between his student teachers and the experience they require. He suggests that it is within his responsibility, to offer his student teachers the KSCs, so that they will become effective vocational teachers. Similarly, Claire sees herself as a “waterfall”, where she passes KSCs to her student teachers.

4.4.1.1.4 Collaborator

This metaphorical concept captures the metaphors that VTEs used for their role identities in their working relationships. Three metaphors were used: “cobweb”, “chain” and “equilateral triangle”. VTEs chose these metaphors to depict that they do not work in isolation but collaborate with one another. For

example, Claire feels that her working relationship is like a “cobweb” where everything is linked. So, her role as a VTE is linked with the student teacher and the school where teaching practice takes place. Similarly, both John and Anne feel that they are part of a “chain” and described how everything is connected and that they do not work in isolation. Miguel’s metaphor, “equilateral triangle” portrays the TE, the university, and the place of work, with the student teacher at the centre, depicting that the main focus is always on the student teacher.

4.4.1.1.5 Other metaphors

The metaphors that Anne and John chose to use, “change agent” and “tool” respectively, did not fit with any of the above metaphorical concepts. Anne described herself in that way, as she sees herself as promoting different pedagogies and current changes related to VET to her student teachers. On the other hand, John described himself as a tool that is being used for improvement, though he did not specify whether this was for improvement in general or with regards to the ITE programme. The next section describes the metaphors that VTEs used in their second interview.

4.4.1.2 Second stage of data collection

This section describes the common metaphorical concepts across VTEs and MTEs towards the end of the ITE programme. The second stage of interviews found the VTEs to be more focussed on their role identities and most of the metaphors used portrayed a change when compared with the first stage. However, two of the emerging metaphorical concepts that were present in the first interview, *nurturer* and *supporter*, remained the same for the

second interview. In addition, only two metaphors could not fit within the emerging metaphorical concepts. The metaphors used by MTEs and VTEs, focus on one common metaphorical concept, supporting student teachers. In addition, two metaphors that MTEs used could not fit within this emerging metaphorical concept. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 present a summary of how VTEs and MTEs respectively, metaphorically conceptualised their professional role identity towards the end of the ITE programme.

Metaphors	**VTEs**	**Description VTEs gave**	**Metaphorical Concept**	**Individual change (Stage 1 vs Stage 2)**
Mother	Amy, Anne	"I still feel like a mother, even though they [student teachers] progressed throughout the year and did very well." (Amy) "I feel like a mother who wants the best for her children." (Anne)	Nurturer	Amy - No change Anne – from 'change agent' and 'chain' to 'mother' John – from 'bridge/stepping stone', 'chain' and 'tool' to 'farmer' and 'mentor' (see below)
Farmer	John	"I now feel like a farmer who has sowed seeds during the programme and am now reaping the harvest."		
Facilitator	Liam	"I feel like a facilitator now and not only a motivator."	Supporter	Liam – from 'motivator' to 'facilitator' however still in the *supporting* metaphorical concept. Tanya – no change for 'critical friend' however she now used
Critical Friend	Tanya	"A critical friend and not just a supporter."		
Advocate	Tanya	"I want to be like an advocate for them [student teachers]."		
Mentor	John	"I also feel like a mentor, as a lot of		

		mentoring is still going on similar to a chain control within a manufacturing company."		'advocate' rather than 'facilitator'. John – completely changed his metaphors. See above.
Curator	Liam	"Sometimes, I took the role of a curator due to certain projects which I had assigned to them [student teachers]."	Other metaphors	Liam – added another metaphor. See above. Miguel – from 'critical friend/peer' and 'equilateral triangle' to 'leader'
Leader	Miguel	"Definitely a leader. Because if it's not the TE that takes the lead and influence student teachers. He cannot be a follower."		

Table 4.2: VTEs' Metaphors (stage 2)

Metaphors	MTE	Description MTEs gave	Metaphorical Concept
Friend	Christopher	"I want to be their friend. So, I try to be positive and friendly with them. On the whole it works well."	Supporter
Critical Friend	Matthew, Marlon, Kevin	"I want to be more of and hope to be a critical friend, someone to help them through." (Matthew) "I feel like a critical friend who is empowering and who is there to hear their concerns and accompany them in their journey." (Marlon) "I feel like a critical friend. That's very important. I try to bring things in a way that they [student teachers] can understand them." (Kevin)	
Big brother	Michael	"I feel like a big brother in a positive sense."	

A bridge between the islands in the archipelago	Richard	“I feel like the bridge between the islands who represent my student teachers and the archipelago which represents the classroom. The idea is to create relationships. The person lives in a community.”	Other metaphors
Octopus	Annalise	“I’m like an octopus who has different arms. I have to do a bit of this, a bit of that and my arms are all over the place and I’m trying to get students and try to get them under my arms. I feel that I have to have eight different arms to manage my job.”	

Table 4.3: MTEs' Metaphors

4.4.1.2.1 Nurturer

This metaphorical concept captures the metaphors that VTEs used to describe their ongoing nurturing role identity, in the case of Amy who admitted she still felt like a “mother” to her student teachers, using the same reasoning she provided in her first interview; and Anne, who now also feels like a “mother” to her student teachers. She admits that like she does with her children, she wants the best for her student teachers and wants them to succeed. Likewise, John changed his metaphor for the second interview and he now feels like a “farmer” reaping the harvest of the seeds he had sown at the beginning of the ITE programme. He indicates that he feels satisfied with the performance of his student teachers, and thus, his professional role identity has been verified (Burke & Stets, 2009).

4.4.1.2.2 Supporter

This metaphorical concept captures the metaphors that VTEs and MTEs used during the second stage of data collection to describe their role as

being supportive. Even though they are towards the end of the ITE programme, the VTEs still see themselves as supporting their students albeit in a slightly different way to at the beginning of the course. For example, Liam now sees himself as a “facilitator”; he still wants to help student teachers when the need arises. Similarly, Tanya said that she now feels like a “critical friend” or an “advocate” and not just a “facilitator”. On the other hand, John feels like a “mentor”. He uses a workplace metaphor to describe his mentoring role as “similar to a chain control within a manufacturing company”. All these metaphors depict how VTEs are still putting student teachers at the centre even though they are nearing the end of the ITE programme.

Similarly, five MTEs out of seven also used other metaphors for support. For example, Christopher views himself as a “friend” as he finds that being their friend generally works. Similarly, Matthew, Marlon and Kevin all used “critical friend” as their metaphor. Being a critical friend may mean helping and empowering student teachers; listening to them; supporting them; and simplifying content. On the other hand, Michael used “big brother” as his metaphor. He indicates that he sees his student teachers as his siblings and wants to support them in any difficulty, they might face during the ITE programme.

4.4.1.2.3 Other metaphors

There were other metaphors that emerged during the data analysis stage which did not fit in the above metaphorical concepts. For example, the metaphor that Miguel (VTE) used was “leader”, which contradicts how he described the student-centred approach he uses in his lectures because

being a leader mimics traditional lecturing, rather than responding to the students' needs.

Liam's metaphor, "curator", who must supervise his student teachers in projects that are assigned to them, also did not fit in the above metaphorical concepts. Curators are usually responsible for gathering objects or collections and planning and organising exhibitions. This metaphor could be interpreted as Liam feeling that he needs to observe and manage his student teachers. However, it could also depict how VTEs together with their student teachers need to be very responsible on their teaching placement where certain equipment is being used.

MTEs, Richard and Annalise also chose metaphors which did not fit in the above metaphorical concepts. Richard portrays himself as being "a bridge between the islands in the archipelago". He is suggesting that he is the point of reference for his student teachers to help them build relationships in schools. Richard is specifically interested in the formation of his student teachers' professional identities as a means of exploring how the cultures they face during their teaching placements, and that of university, are developing and changing. Moreover, indirectly, he is referring to Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of apprenticeship into communities of practice, by helping his student teachers learn in a socially situated activity, where social and cultural processes shape learning. In this case, student teachers are faced with different social and cultural processes depending on the school they are placed in for their teaching practice.

Annalise's metaphor, "octopus", characterises the multiple challenges that come with her role as a TE, implying that her role identity has multiple meanings. In addition, she also refers to getting students "under my arms", which may have several different meanings. It could be protection or it could be a reference to trying to manage them.

4.4.2 Employers

The findings show that the metaphors used by employers to describe their perspectives of what VTEs should be, focus on three common metaphorical concepts: *nurturer, supporter* and *multiple roles*. In addition, one metaphor ("scout") could not fit within these emerging metaphorical concepts. Table 4.4 presents a summary of the employers' metaphors.

Metaphors	Participants	Description participants gave	Metaphorical Concept
Mother	Caroline	"TEs should care for their student teachers like their own children."	Nurturer
Mentor	Sara, Ted	"TEs are there to mentor student teachers to become good vocational teachers." (Sara) "TEs are there to help and guide student teachers. So, they have to act like a mentor." (Ted)	Supporter
Facilitator	David	"They should help them as much as possible."	
Trusted Friend	Martin	"TEs need to be trusted by their student teachers, so definitely a trusted friend."	
Five people in one	Rachel	"TEs in VET have many roles."	Multiple roles

An all-rounder	Francis	“They have to keep up with so many things.”	
A scout	Joseph	“They should teach student teachers how to behave in industry. TEs must teach discipline, respect, manners, and time-management which are all important when working in industry”	Other metaphors

Table 4.4: Employers' Metaphors

4.4.2.1 Nurturer

It was only Caroline who chose “mother” as her metaphor, as she believes that VTEs should care for their student teachers like their own children. The metaphorical concept, ‘nurturer’, concurs with what the TEs mentioned in section 4.4.1.

4.4.2.2 Supporter

Four participants out of eight, used a metaphor in this metaphorical concept. For example, Sara and Ted, used the same metaphor, “mentor”. According to them, VTEs should help, guide and mentor student teachers to become good VET teachers. Similarly, David used the word “facilitator”. On the other hand, Martin used “trusted friend” for student teachers to confide in. Interestingly, none of them chose metaphors that portray an industrial aspect.

4.4.2.3 Multiple roles

Rachel and Francis, both used metaphors that relate to VTEs’ multiple roles. Rachel imagines VTEs as “five people in one”. Francis referred to them

as “an all-rounder”. This could indicate that VTEs should not only focus on the lectures, but also keep in touch with industry in order to learn the latest updates that they can notify student teachers about, as well as other roles such as supporting and assessing student teachers within an ITE programme.

4.4.2.4 Other metaphors

The metaphor that Joseph used, provides a different perspective than the rest. He indicates that VTEs should act like “scouts” by teaching student teachers the soft skills that industry requires. Being a VTE, should not only be about the technical skills but also about the other personal skills that industry requires. His metaphor concurs with what was discussed in sub-section 4.3.2.4.

4.5 Vocational Teacher Educators and Mainstream Teacher Educators

This section focusses on comparing the perceptions of both VTEs and MTEs in how they describe their role identities in the Maltese context, which targets the first research question. Moreover, the metaphors that both groups use to portray their role identities are also compared in this section, which targets the second research question.

A number of the elements examined in this section, related to the identity standard, which represents the expectations of participants of what an ideal TE should be, their aims and principles and roles. Although, both groups perceived that their role was to support student teachers, there seemed to be differences in how the two different contexts impact upon TEs’ role identity.

For example, with respect to the identity standard, VTEs emphasised that a TE working in a VET context, should be pragmatic and dynamic, have both industrial and teaching experience, conduct industrial visits, and be understanding towards student teachers. On the other hand, MTEs emphasised that TEs should be enthusiastic about the subject discipline, keep themselves updated with the latest research and be caring towards student teachers.

With regard to their aims and principles, VTEs perceived time management as important; being informed about the latest changes within industry; being self-reflective; focussing on all KSCs; and having good relations with student teachers. Tensions were felt by VTEs in verifying their professional role identities as their identity standard if they do not keep abreast with what is going on in industry. There seems to be a 'mis-match' between VTEs' and MTEs' aims and principles. MTEs gave considerable importance to the subject-discipline and to content-driven teaching, whilst VTEs favoured a student-centred inductive teaching with a hands-on approach. MTEs stressed that student teachers should enter into the teaching profession because they "love" the subject so much that they want to teach it. There is sometimes a dissonance between the identity standards of MTEs and how they play out their role. This was encapsulated in Christopher's comment that titles matter and that lecturers within the FoE objected to being called 'teachers'. Thus, the institutional context might leave an impact on the MTEs' identity formation. However, the fact that all the VTEs, save one, were part-timers, and hence had less opportunity or need for greater engagement with full-time colleagues so were not impacted that much by the institutional

context. As they did not participate too much within that community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), they did not highlight anything about this matter in their interviews. What was common to both groups of respondents, was their recognition that they are responsible for supporting student teachers.

The multi-faceted roles that were mentioned by both groups of participants were similar to each other. However, more roles were mentioned by the full-time TEs, due to the fact that they were full-timers. In addition, apart from one full-time MTE (Annalise), both groups mentioned that they cope in their multiple roles when they receive support from their colleagues, have relevant experience and reflect on their practice. On the other hand, the roles that were seen to be conflicting were, those of examiner and teacher for VTEs, and examiner and mentor, during the teaching practice for MTEs. VTEs were committed to both the teaching and examining roles, whereas MTEs were mostly committed to lecturing.

The significance of both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards left a positive impact on TEs' their identity formation. For the extrinsic rewards, VTEs mentioned appreciation from student teachers, whilst MTEs mentioned publishing their research. On the other hand, intrinsic rewards were experienced as positive feelings and gratification for VTEs and MTEs respectively.

Metaphors were used by both VTEs and MTEs to ascribe the multiple meanings of their role identities. The metaphorical concepts that emerged from VTEs' and most MTEs' metaphors focussed mainly on their relationships with their student teachers. This shows that TEs' aim is to help them as much

as possible, which aligns with what they described elsewhere. Only one TE used a metaphor (“octopus”) that portrayed the multifaceted nature and complexity of her role identity. Moreover, Richard’s metaphor of “a bridge between the islands in an archipelago” portrays not only his role identity, but also the social practices and influences of the education context on a TE’s role identity.

4.6 Vocational Teacher Educators and Employers

The previous findings revealed that overall, the perceptions of employers regarding VET are that it is essential, since it forms an alternative way for learning, and bridges the gap between education and employment. Moreover, their views on the role identities of VTEs are that, ideally, they should have relevant experience in industry, therefore, a former professional or occupational identity; and ability to engage in a hands-on approach in their lectures. Their views are very similar to those of VTEs.

In addition, employers suggested closer collaboration in the form of industry-based teaching practice and CPD, and regular updates for VTEs from industry. This concurs with Winch (2002, p.270) that “professionals have to work with others to arrive at a satisfactory definition of their goals and their modus operandi”. This implies, that VTEs should work hand in hand with the labour market. Winch (2004) argues that professional and technical knowledge are also gained from the practical element which can only be acquired through a combination of simulation and controlled practice during the tertiary phase. Thus, VSTs may benefit more when having part of the teaching practicum component at the workplace as it may help them gain

professional and technical knowledge through participation alongside an experienced practitioner from the relevant industrial sector. Winch (2013) considers the workplace as a site of learning, as discussed in sub-section 4.3.2.1.

Furthermore, emerging findings revealed that soft skills are given priority over qualifications when it comes to recruiting potential candidates for a job. In fact, employers indicate that the right attitude is crucial in making the best staff appointments, thus TEs should be encouraged to pass on these skills to student teachers. According to Winch (2010), two main characteristics that make up occupational capacity, apart from competence which encompasses both theoretical and practical knowledge, are ‘autonomy’ and ‘responsibility’ (Winch 2010).

The employers’ perceptions of the professional knowledge, associated standards, regulations and policies required were underpinned by the field and the industry they came from. It is unsurprising that employers perceived a need for VTEs to not only have technical and relevant pedagogical skills to create a supportive learning environment, but also the knowledge of the required soft skills to pass on to student teachers as well. The metaphorical concepts that emerged from the employers also portrayed this.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the three groups of participants (VTEs, MTEs and employers) and explored their similarities and differences in perceptions, with a particular focus on the role identities of TEs and the metaphors they use. In this small sample of TEs and employers

interviewed, it is observed that VTEs construct their identity standard around the needs of industry, as employers have highlighted in sub-section 4.3, whereas MTEs construct it around knowledge. The institutional context and what others perceive of the role identities, appears to have an impact on the TEs' identity formation. The following chapter provides a general discussion and concludes with the original contribution from this research. It also provides recommendations for supporting VTEs' professionalisation, highlights the limitations of the research and discusses future research endeavours.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to provide insights into understanding what a VTE is in a specific micro island state context, Malta. Identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) from structural SI, was used as a theoretical lens, together with metaphor analysis, to understand what it means to be a VTE and how this compares with MTEs. Moreover, the perceptions of employers on the professional role identities of VTEs were also investigated. Policies and structures for ITE programmes will be based on flawed assumptions if the differences between both VTEs and MTEs are not understood. The ITE programme for VET subjects cannot be based on the model of the current ITE programme for mainstream subjects, if it is to be adequate for the vocational stream. Thus, clarification about what the professional identities of VTEs are and the professionalisation of VTEs, will be beneficial in the ways support is offered to VTEs and how VET teacher training programmes are designed. This, in turn should improve the quality of teaching and the student experience.

Moreover, having a clear idea of what the labour market perceives of the VTEs' professional role identities, will help improve vocational teaching practices.

This final chapter first provides a discussion on the similarities and differences between VTEs, MTEs and employers' perceptions. This chapter, then, presents conclusions from the research questions and discusses further research related to the professionalisation of VTEs. The contributions of this

research are also discussed and its limitations are highlighted, and the recommendations close this chapter.

5.2 Research Question One

RQ1: How do VTEs differ from MTEs in how they describe their role identities in the Maltese context?

For this research question, the experiences of a small group of TEs within the MTL programme were examined. It was observed that the educational contexts in which they teach differ not only in the subject disciplines, but in terms of their cultures. Findings show that both VTEs and MTEs played roles in interaction with their student teachers and their colleagues. The internalised meanings of the roles that participants apply to themselves help to construct their professional role identity as TEs. These varied slightly between and among both groups of participants. This is due to the fact that the meanings are derived from the individuals' distinctive interpretations of the role. VTEs put most emphasis on KSCs, bridging the gap between the theoretical and the practical components, and on industry outreach. On the other hand, the MTEs emphasised content knowledge and research, considered as a key characteristic for university TEs in Europe to develop a researcher identity (Swennen, Jones & Volman, 2010).

Employment status differences:

There was also a difference between full-timers and part-timers in the roles they described within the same group of participants. The only full-time VTE described an additional administrative role, when compared with the other roles that were described, as did the full-time MTEs. Respondents drew

on similar discourses when discussing that their priority is to care for student teachers.

Moreover, it was observed that the institutional context and previous experience left an impact on their identity standard. MTEs portrayed how professional titles (such as Dr or Prof) matter within their Faculty, reflecting how that community of practice influences their professional role identity. However, since all but one VTE were part-timers who spend less time on campus when compared with full-timers, their identities are not necessarily influenced by the UoM as an academic institution. VTEs are more influenced by the labour market and their full-time occupation which have an impact on their identity standard. In addition, employment status of VTEs as part-timers, did not have any influence on the underpinning of their teaching. Although VTEs saw research as important, they felt that it was not a necessity for them, due to the nature of VET. Lastly, although there were part-timers within the groups of participants; they did not feel inferior or insecure when compared with the full-timers, as reported in White (2012). The VTE participants in this study appeared to be fully satisfied with their full-time jobs and part-time positions within the MTL programme. This concurs with the findings of Adiningrum et al. (2019), where job security and financial situation were not affected by part-time positions.

Social Group Identity:

As the findings depict, the professional role identity of TEs contains a large set of meanings, showing that more than one characteristic was used to describe what their role means to them. However, the participants within the

VTEs' group appear to think alike and act alike, showing that there is uniformity of thoughts and actions, indicating their social group identity (Burke & Stets, 2009). As their perceptions and behaviour were similar, this shows that VTEs took on a clear group-based identity. Findings show that they acted in concert; they identified with and evaluated themselves positively in the group, all gave importance to the needs of industry and adopting a hands-on teaching approach.

It can be observed that the role identities are integrated with the group identities, which makes it difficult to disentangle them from each other as identity theory suggests (Burke & Stets, 2009). Findings show that VTEs, although having discussed and enacted their roles individually, share very similar ideas to one another on what it means to be a VTE. Moreover, this study echoes previous attempts to theorise ideas that vocational teachers should be conceptualised as 'dual professionals' (Orr & Simmons, 2010), bearing in mind that they hold the identity of a teacher, or in this case, a TE, as well as that of their former or other occupation (which is their vocational expertise). This shows that VTEs are more distinct when compared with the different role identities of MTEs, which are more related to content knowledge.

Identity Verification:

With regard to TEs verifying their identity, some participants felt unable to perform well in their role and experienced negative emotions, just as is predicted in the identity model (Burke & Stets, 2009). For example, TEs from both groups felt negative emotions when student teachers do not follow their advice. TEs felt that they needed to act on this and discuss issues with their

student teachers. Both groups experienced positive emotions when they felt that their work was being appreciated by their student teachers. This led TEs to continue behaving in the same way as their identity was being verified.

Identity Salience and Identity Prominence:

Both groups have ranked the meanings they attributed to their role identities differently. There were participants who gave their primary importance to teaching, showing that identity prominence was on that component. Then, there were others, who were mostly committed to the role as examiner during the teaching practice. They also described moments when identity salience had to be invoked in certain situations. For example, even though their least important role was that of a counsellor, there were moments when they had to activate and prioritise this role over their prominence identity to help student teachers in particular situations. These situations affirm the claim that whilst identity salience and identity prominence are correlated with each other, they are still different in the underlying concept (Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

5.3 Research Question Two

> *RQ2: How do VTEs differ from MTEs in how they assign meaning associated with their role identities in the Maltese context?*

This research question was approached by analysing ways in which VTEs and MTEs described their professional role identities through the metaphors they used. The findings for this research question provide a better understanding of the role identities of TEs. However, they are not enough to understand fully their roles, as metaphors only provide a glimpse into the

complex notion of identity (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). Thus, the findings of the first research question together with these findings broaden our understanding of what it means to be a TE.

Participants from both groups used varied metaphors which depict the complexity of being a TE. There was no key difference between both groups within these findings, as the metaphors they came up with reflected their aims in their roles as TEs. The most common aim amongst all TEs is to put student teachers as a priority and help them in their career trajectories as future teachers. This was shown through the emerging metaphorical concepts of *supporter and nurturer* when TEs chose metaphors such as “mentor”, “critical friend” and “mother”.

There was no single metaphor used that depicted the subject discipline for both an MTE and a VTE. In fact, the metaphors that TEs came up with, were similar to each other despite the differences in the subject areas. However, the main distinction that was noted is that four metaphorical concepts (*nurturer, supporter, provider of guidance and advice,* and *collaborator*) emerged for VTEs, whereas there was only one (*supporter*) that emerged for MTEs. The reason for this, is because VTEs had a small cohort when compared with the cohort size of MTEs. Thus, VTEs could build a strong relationship with their student teachers. Moreover, there is the tendency that showing care and building strong relationships is quite apparent in a VET context. In fact, Kopsen (2014) investigated how vocational teachers describe their vocational teacher identity, and it was found that they support their students, which is in accordance with the findings of this study.

An interesting outcome of this study is the evidence that similar conceptions of what being a TE means were portrayed, irrespective of the difference in the educational context (mainstream or vocational) where the aim of both groups is to produce good teachers. Moreover, the results of this study show that there is a trend towards a student-centred approach, which represents both the current teaching practice and the desired practice. This is also in line with what both groups of TEs discussed in the previous research question regarding their identity standard and continuing to aspire towards that ideal (Burke & Stets, 2009). However, as stated previously, the metaphors that VTEs produced in answer to the second research question, did not relate to industry. This shows that no single metaphor can be used to communicate all the complexities of the role identities of TEs. TEs face various complexities, as was described in the discussion of the first research question, but it is difficult to express the multiple facets of this professional role identity in a single metaphor.

5.4 Research Question Three

RQ3: During the ITE programme, how do the role identities of VTEs change in the Maltese context?

As previously mentioned, the role identities of VTEs were examined at the beginning and towards the end of the MTL programme. This section illustrates how they changed. According to identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009), identity meanings are always changing, showing that identity standards are not fixed and static.

The role identities that VTEs mentioned at the beginning of the programme, were teaching, curriculum development and supporting student teachers. Towards the end of the programme, participants mentioned that their roles were the same as those at the beginning of the programme, and an additional role was that of examining. The reason for this additional role, is the fact that teaching practice and final exams were also held during this semester. This change in the situation is one of the four sources of change in identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009). Therefore, this situational change disrupted the meanings of their identity standard at the beginning of the programme, which was mainly based on the teaching role, and participants had to change the meaning for the identity standard to match the situational meanings.

Another source of identity change is identity conflict which relates to the above-mentioned source (Burke & Stets, 2009). From the findings of the first research question and this research question, VTEs have multiple meanings attributed to their role identities. Participants explained that it was very difficult for them during the teaching practice phase. In response to the first research question, VTEs mentioned that the examining role when compared with the teaching role was felt to be conflicting. This conflict was felt during the first visit of teaching practice where there was a formative assessment going on. The TEs had to evaluate critically the student teachers' lessons; thus, multiple identities (teacher identity and examiner identity) were activated and related to one another at the same time.

To summarise, the VTEs experienced two sources of systematic identity change, as suggested by identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009). The

first factor that influenced this change, was the problems they were faced with verifying their teacher identity towards the end of the MTL programme. The second factor was that their multiple identities (teacher identity and examiner identity) were activated together whose verifications required opposing meanings during the formative assessment in the first visit of the teaching practice. During the teaching practice, TEs have to grade student teachers whilst still giving them constructive feedback. These are two opposing roles which causes tension when verifying both role identities at that point in time.

Another objective that this research question had was to understand how VTEs describe their role identities through the use of metaphor at the beginning and end of the MTL programme. These were compared and the changes noted provide insights into VTEs' identity formation and how they adapt to their professional role identities.

In terms of the patterns that were identified, the metaphorical concepts that emerged towards the end of the MTL programme were still very similar to those at the beginning. The nurturing and student-support role was still present. However, a significant change that can be noticed in the metaphors used towards the end of the programme is that of 'critical friend'. This metaphor reflects the challenges that the participants were encountering during the teaching practice phase, especially during the formative assessment stage, and confirms their previous responses. The variety of metaphors that have been used, reflects the broad range of perspectives that VTEs attribute to their professional role identities, and shows us that identities are dynamic and situation dependent, as suggested by identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009). Thus, the identity development of TEs was revealed through

their use of metaphors at two different stages, at the beginning and towards the end of the MTL. The use of rich metaphors clearly indicates that they are a good way to stimulate TEs in talking about their experiences, and the results show that identity development does not rely solely on length of experience, but on the varied situations that TEs are faced with. This finding is consistent with the findings of Thomas and Beauchamp (2011), who examined newly qualified teachers using metaphors.

Teacher education and in particular vocational teacher education remains a complex and demanding profession. Within this case study, TEs' role identity formation does not follow a linear trajectory but unfolds according to the needs at that time. Their professionalism depends on the choices that TEs make according to the expertise they acquire and according to the contextual needs.

5.5 Research Question Four

> *RQ4: How do the perceptions of employers in Malta differ from VTEs and how do they perceive the role identities of VTEs?*

This section focusses on comparing the perceptions of VTEs and the employers in how both describe VTEs' role identities in the Maltese context. Moreover, the metaphors they use are also compared in this section.

Both VTEs and employers were unanimous in their perspectives of what the main characteristics of VTEs should be. Both groups highlighted that they should adopt a hands-on approach in their pedagogy, keep abreast with the latest updates, be aware of the labour market needs and most of all, be supportive towards student teachers. The only apparent discrepancy was that

employers believe that VTEs should teach student teachers soft skills, which were most valued in industry, as well as the core subjects within the curricula. VTEs failed to mention the work ethic and other KSCs which are not directly related to the subject area.

These findings show that there is a difference in the perceptions between both parties. Such a discrepancy is also reflected in the metaphors used. Employers agreed that VTEs should be there to support the needs of student teachers, which echoes the perceptions of VTEs. However, the metaphors used by employers, focussed more, on what the industry expects from students when they enter employment, in terms of soft skills. Therefore, employers expect VTEs to pass on such skills to student teachers, and through them, to vocational students.

Employers have also voiced their opinion that it would be better for the teaching practice of VSTs to take place in industry rather than in a school setting, as it currently is. Working in actual workplaces such as laboratories for example, helps them more, when they become fully qualified VET teachers. This concurs with what Roger et al. (1995) report, where it is argued that students and apprentices learn more in real life scenarios. Similarly, it also concurs with Winch's (2013) argument where he draws attention to the potential richness of the workplace as a site of vocational learning. Claxton, Lucas and Webster (2010) also remark on the importance of practice-based knowledge in vocational and professional settings. Thus, it is suggested that the same would apply for VSTs, as it is an ideal place to bridge the gap between both worlds, industry and vocational teacher training. Employers suggested that VTEs could be required to hold teaching visits to companies,

and VTEs should also be required to know about regulations and policies of the particular company, where the teaching practice is being held. Moreover, specific subject-matter content related to communities of practice in the workplace, is within the scope of VET (Andersson, Hellgren & Kopsen, 2018).

These findings show that employers presented a different picture for VET than the VTEs perceived. The requirements and demands that employers are looking for, are more than just being knowledgeable and competent in the vocational area chosen by students. Work-oriented competences, such as time-management, are given priority and this is also confirmed by Triganza Scott & Cassar (2005) in the Maltese context. Moreover, Avis (2016) also reported on the range of wider skills that employers may deem to be appropriate, such as teamwork, problem solving, entrepreneurialism and resilience.

Although the VSTs that VTEs have within their cohort are already graduates with a Bachelor of Science related to their vocational discipline, VTEs still tend to focus on the skill training and its relevant pedagogy because it focusses on the KSCs of the subject discipline, and not on a broader level of education and training like the employers are expecting. The VTEs' perception of VET concurs with Winch's (2012) argument about the conceptual tensions VET has. He argues that there is a prevailing tendency of commentators to conceptualise practical knowledge as skill. He draws the attention to the British context where he claims that the distinction between the two terms is quite difficult to grasp and VET is often thought of as skill training, as did the VTEs within this study. He argues that VET is more than just skill training. In fact, he states

> a few commentators have emphasised the importance of vocational education and of training as an important but not exclusive component of vocational education (Entwistle, 1970; Pring, 1995), but in general, the discourse uses 'training' as the default term, even when translation is made from languages like French and German, in whose VET systems education has a well-established and respected place. (Winch, 2012, p.61).

Winch (2012) emphasises the need to address and understand these VET shortcomings, especially when it comes to comparative studies across different cultures in which the key terminology in the field of VET may have somewhat different meanings in different societies. However, Winch (2012) states that "VET, it should be remembered, like Education more broadly, because it is concerned with preparation for life within a particular society, has to be understood as a set of institutions within that society, inevitably deeply affected by the other institutions, concepts and practices of the wider society" (p. 58). Similarly, according to Wheelahan (2010 as cited in Avis, 2016), the scope of VET is to prepare students not only for a specific field of practice, but also to provide them with a good foundation for educational progression within their field to underpin occupational progression. Equipping the students with these two elements will also help them when participating in society's broader conversations (Avis, 2016). Although the VTEs and employers within this study share a common culture, there still seems to be different meanings in how VTE role identities are perceived. In addition, although VTEs emphasised a student-centred learning approach and having a hands-on approach in their

pedagogy oriented towards ‘real world’ scenarios, they still missed drawing attention to the wider range of skills and sensitivities that employers look for.

VTEs in this study tend to be more concerned on the relation of theory to practice, whereas the employers put more value on other kinds of ability that are required for successful work. This shows that there is a mismatch between both groups on the understanding of the kinds of practical knowledge required in the workplace. It is also worth noting that both types of practical knowledge are required. VTEs should not only be trainers but educators. Considering that their VSTs enter the ITE programme with an undergraduate degree on the subject discipline, VTEs should aim on a broader level of educational teaching, including soft skills and professional codes of ethics and conduct.

In addition, the professional role identities of VTEs have a much wider ethical significance with regards to their impact on the well-being of their student teachers and the future vocational students. According to Winch (2002), nearly all occupations have an ethical dimension and should be concerned with human flourishing and their well-being. In fact, he states that most occupations “have an impact on the public either qua client or through indirect effects” (p.270). The quality of the relationship between professionals and their clients is not only based on the technical abilities which the VTEs of this study emphasise. For example, there may be ‘technically’ good pharmaceutical technologists who fail to fulfil the broader professional ethical requirements of their profession. However, employers of this study prioritised the “work ethic” rather than the professional ethics over KSCs and mentioned

that VTEs should pass on certain soft skills to their student teachers which will in turn leave an impact on the vocational students they teach.

In particular, Winch (2002) distinguishes between ‘technical’ and ‘occupational’ virtues and claims that occupations should have both; the former are associated with practicing certain specific virtues, that include care, and attention to detail, when carrying out the technique. The latter are associated with the central client-relationship rather than the practice of the technique. He continues to argue that one of the principal aims of occupational formation is the achievement of technical virtue which involves a grasp of the aims of the activity, together with a practical understanding of how those aims could be achieved to the highest degree in the realisation of the product or service. A professional can acquire the necessary technique, applied knowledge and technical virtues, but may fail to practise the occupational virtues of the profession due to being unable or unwilling to do so.

Therefore, the VTEs should not only focus on the pedagogy of the ‘technical virtues’ as they seem to be doing, but also on the ‘occupational virtues’ that the employers emphasised. Moreover, the VSTs should have already gained the ‘technical virtues’ from their first degree prior to the ITE programme. However, they may enhance them through the links that VTEs will maintain with the labour market. In addition, it is quite unlikely that VTEs would be teaching students from all trades and occupational groups in Malta. In the current ITE MTL in VET programme, the VTEs that were employed all had a background in the two specific streams, HSC and Media. However, if the course continues and further vocational streams are included within the

MTL in VET, it may not be possible for the UoM to find a VTE that focusses specifically on the vocational discipline. Hence, that is just one reason why VTEs should aim for a broader level of education that also includes the 'occupational virtues' within the curriculum.

Considering that the perceptions of VTEs and employers are dissimilar on this, and on identity standards, how could this impact upon the VTEs' identity formation? How could VTEs verify their role identities? Ideally, the identity standards should match. VTEs did highlight that they should keep themselves up to date with the industry needs as that is the aim of VET. Nonetheless, are VTEs given enough time for this to take place in order to go on industry placements? Moreover, these constraints were also found in Fejes and Kopsen's (2014) small-scale study on VET teachers and it is argued that teachers find it difficult to maintain the occupational knowledge needed to pass it on to their vocational students for their future careers. The role identities of VET teachers and VTEs are likely to be similar.

VTEs are not only seen as holders of dual identities (the TE identity and the former occupation), but are better understood as holders of multi-dimensional identity. This term is also mentioned by Maurice-Takerei (2016) to describe vocational teachers. She says that a VET teacher is a skilled practitioner, a structured innovator and planner, and a "guardian, mentor and guide" (p.128) who bridges the gap between industry and education. From what VTEs described and what employers discussed, their professional role identities are broad, ranging from teaching student teachers to become teachers as well as staying informed on the latest updates and current labour market needs.

5.6 Conclusion

This study focusses on a small sample of TEs and employers on the island micro-state of Malta. All respondents were Maltese and all the TEs delivered courses within the MTL programme at one institution, the UoM. Half were delivering modules on the MTL in VET, whereas the rest, were working within mainstream education. The study particularly focussed on the professional role identities of VTEs and compared them with MTEs'. It also sought to analyse the identity changes of VTEs during the MTL programme with a one-year time frame. The perceptions of employers, representing the Maltese labour market, were also investigated, with regard to role identities of VTEs, given that the scope of VET is to bridge the gap between the education context and industry. Moreover, by applying metaphor analysis, this thesis has shed new light on how TEs refer to their identities, and how employers do so. Metaphors provided a powerful cognitive tool in gaining insight into the participants' thinking, by building linkages between the abstract (the professional role identity) and the metaphorical language they use.

This study contributes to the understanding of TE identity standards, by demonstrating, through analysis of interview data and metaphor use, the multiple-meanings TEs assign to their roles, how they cope with multiple roles, conflicting roles, identity prominence and salience; and how their identity developed throughout the ITE programme.

The first chapter of this thesis discussed the reasons why it is important to understand the professional role identities of this target group. They are the backbone of initial vocational teacher education, as key individuals who

deliver teacher training programmes and influence future vocational teachers. Hence, they are in a position to regulate the vocational teaching profession, the professional conduct of vocational teachers, and establish professional standards in VET.

This research has shown that there are differences between VTEs and MTEs, and also between VTEs and employers' perceptions about what underpins or should underpin their teaching. For VTEs, it is industrial experience and industries' needs, whereas for MTEs, it is knowledge based on research and teaching experience. These differences are influenced by the perceptions they have about their professional role identity, even though it was happening within the same institution. This means that Malta's vocational ITE programme should not be modelled on mainstream ITE programmes, as it currently is. The findings in this study show, not only, what their professional roles are, but also why VTEs perform such roles, some of which were a matter of choice. Roles were also affected by employment status, as full-time staff had additional administrative roles.

This thesis merits as unique by presenting the results of a qualitative study on VTEs' perceptions of their professional role identities. This professional group has been neglected in the research literature and policy, as discussed in chapter 2. This thesis also gives voice to the employers as representatives of the labour market. Through the exposition and conclusions derived, it demonstrates what actions and policies are suited to the characteristics of an island micro-state.

Through the qualitative findings of this study, it is concluded that the professional role identity of VTEs is diverse and dependent on multiple sources of identification: their former occupation/profession; the labour market; and VET. Thus, VTEs are better understood as having multi-dimensional identity. Moreover, employers expect that VTEs should not only pass on innovative teaching practices to provide student teachers with the required KSCs of the vocational area and relevant pedagogy, but also the skills needed to perform at work - the “occupational virtues” claimed by Winch (2002). Thus, VTEs are expected to focus on: pedagogical skills, vocational skills and work-related skills to improve the cooperation between the world of education and the world of work.

The professionalisation of VTEs:

The findings of this study show there is an urgent need for employers to work more closely with VTEs. However, when VTEs are made aware of employers’ requirements, they may experience tensions in verifying their identity standard (Burke & Stets, 2009). In an ideal scenario, the identity standards of both employers and VTEs should match. Policies concerning the professional role identities of VTEs can be successful only if a common understanding is guaranteed between both parties. Currently, VTEs develop their professional role identities independently. However, considering that the scope of VET is to build bridges between education and work, all respective parties should work in collaboration “with others to arrive at a satisfactory definition of their goals and their modus operandi” (Winch 2002, p. 270). Hence, this creates a space for a debate on the professionalisation of VTEs, considering the possible loss/lack of full autonomy if decisions are to be taken

with labour market representatives on aspects of vocational teacher training with the consequent impact on the VTEs professional identities. However, considering that all VTEs have demonstrated a shared understanding of their teaching aims and interests, which shows an understanding of the profession (Evetts, 2003), this means that they should be regarded as professionals, and not only as practising professionally.

5.7 Strengths and Limitations of this Research

Like in any other research study, there are strengths and limitations. The sample was limited in terms of size (seven VTEs, seven MTEs and eight employers) and institution type, as all TEs taught at the same University on the same MTL programme. Moreover, one case study cannot provide findings that are universally generalisable. However, this research has produced findings that are worthy of further research, as discussed in the final section of this chapter. Despite having a small sample size, this study is unique in including and investigating the perceptions of employers and MTEs, as well as all seven VTEs representing the whole group who taught on the MTL in VET programme. As presented in chapter 2, in comparison with research on teacher and TE identity, most studies did not include more than one target group. Also, a sample size of twenty-two participants is a relatively strong sample size (see e.g. Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Springbett, 2018).

The diversity of analytical approaches used, is a strength of this research. Despite adopting a qualitative methodology, three different types of analytical approaches were used. A thematic approach was used to analyse all interviews, metaphor analysis was used for the second, third and fourth

research questions, and a case study method was adopted for the investigation of the identity formation of VTEs in the third research question.

A clear and consistent definition of identity was used throughout this thesis to guide the analysis. Stryker's (1980) definition from the SI perspective to define identity as "what it means to be who one is" was used in this study. The strengths of having a common definition of identity, helped in linking all research questions together in a theoretical and consistent way. Moreover, analysing the professional role identities of VTEs from a SI perspective, offered the ability to go in depth and examine them at a granular level.

A limitation that it is important to highlight is that this study focussed on the role identities of TEs. Although social identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009), i.e. the group identity, was referred to in the discussion, and professional background details were given for all participants, the primary aim of this research related to role identity, as it depicts the professional identity and not the social or person identities. Moreover, it was not in the scope of this study to analyse the data according to age, gender, race or other forms of social status.

5.8 Contribution to Theory

This thesis advances identity theory with respect to the three methodological innovations adopted.

The first contribution:

Most researchers have examined the identity process using the survey approach (see for example, Burke & Cast, 1997; Cast, 2003; Cast, 2004;

Stets & Carter, 2011; Carter, 2013). It is very difficult for the researchers to capture the context within which the identity emerges using a survey approach. Thus, using a survey approach, results in learning about identities in isolation from their surroundings (Burke & Stets, 2009). This empirical study moves identity theory in a new direction, by examining the identity process of TEs, using a qualitative methodological approach and capturing the context within which their identities emerge, based on a case study.

The second contribution:

This study improves how identity concepts are measured. For example, role identity salience was not only measured using the narratives that participants gave, but also through symbolic meanings, through their use of metaphors. Sign meanings, along with emotion meanings, are part of the identity standard used to verify the TEs' roles. Therefore, such an additional measurement strategy, acted as a way to verify their narratives.

The third contribution:

This study examined the identity change of VTEs. Burke and Stets (2009) argue that identity change has been neglected due to the difficulty in obtaining longitudinal data and because such changes may occur slowly. The third research question of this study showed that at the beginning and end of a twelve-month period, the identity changes of VTEs were recorded in order to understand their roots. Identity salience, prominence and commitment were explored to understand why TEs in Malta choose certain role identities over others. Thus, the findings from this research have expanded identity theory.

5.9 Contribution to Practice

Taking a SI perspective and the application of metaphor analysis to examine the professional role identities of VTEs, and how employers view their roles, this thesis shows that both parties should work together to avoid discrepancies in their identity standards. Further detail is provided in section 5.11.

5.10 Contribution to Policy

Findings from this study indicate that policies need to be established to support the professional role identity of VTEs, and their professional development. Career development for VTEs, should be guaranteed with consistency and quality. This study paves the way for contributing to a shared understanding of what it means to be a VTE, and it also advanced the area of the professionalisation of the VTE workforce.

5.11 Further Research and Recommendations

The shortcomings of this research that future work should address, are to examine the effect of a discrepancy between how employers and VTEs view VTEs' role identities, and whether VTEs would verify their identities due to possible changes in their identity standards when made aware of the employers' perceptions on their role identities. Finally, future work could examine the interaction and the relationship of role identities to social and person identities, and how such an interaction could impact upon the behaviour of VTEs. Examining how multiple identities interact with each other, extends the study of the professional identities of VTEs. Based on the findings

of this study, it is possible to make several recommendations for policymakers and VET practitioners.

5.11.1 Recommendations for Policymakers

Considering that VTEs are better understood as holders of multi-dimensional identity and that they are under pressure from employers to diversify and expand their roles, policymakers should pay attention to limiting VTEs professional role identities. One suggestion is to have VTEs that are specialised in the teaching of general vocational pedagogy, and others who can specialise in collaborating with industry partners to enhance Winch's aforementioned technical virtues (the teaching of vocational knowledge) and occupational virtues. This will guarantee that the ethical and epistemic status of the vocational teaching profession has a far wider significance than it currently has, and future vocational students are better prepared for the workplace. This will have a positive impact on society and the economy. This would guarantee that all professional roles are performed irrespective of which VTE performs them. Moreover, it is also a guaranteed way that the labour market needs are well understood when there is close collaboration between education and industry. Additionally, having VTEs specialising on one area, will make it easier for them to develop their own skills in more depth, and in keeping abreast with the new developments in the areas they specialise in (whether it is new teaching methods, new technologies or business practices). With this recommendation, it would be possible to keep up with the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution. The aim of all this, is to have an effective vocational teacher training programme that will produce

exceptional vocational teachers who are well-equipped to help vocational students make the move from school to work.

The professional wellbeing of VTEs, is also enhanced when they specialise on one area as, at least in the past, there has been cause for concern regarding the professional wellbeing of vocational teachers (Cort, Harkonen & Volmari, 2004) and there is no reason to indicate the situation has changed. One of the suggestions they offer is to reduce the workload of teaching staff. Thus, this concurs with the suggestion that VTEs should specialise on one area, rather than being 'a jack of all trades'. However, for this to be realised, it is necessary to overcome the barriers of tradition and to look at ways of introducing permanent changes in the work culture of VTEs at the FoE, UoM. VET teachers in secondary schools were included in the government's 'My Journey: Achieving through different paths' education reform (UOM, 2017) as was discussed in sub-section 3.2.1. This led to the introduction of VET subjects at an early stage of the local education system, which resulted in the FoE offering the MTL in VET programme. In light of this, VTEs should no longer follow what MTEs do within the MTL programme at the UoM, as the way they underpin their teaching is influenced by their views on their professional role identities, which in some ways differ from MTEs'.

Having VTEs who specialise in their own areas will also be beneficial when they follow CPD programmes. They would be able to attend those that are specific to their needs, and not waste time on generic ones that are offered to the faculty. This also helps them take control of their professional needs and manage their own professional support as it is essential that VTEs become active agents in their own development and be more able to verify

their role identity and its prominence in their hierarchy of role identities. Last, but not least, financial resources on CPD programmes will be budgeted in a more effective way.

Policymakers should provide the proper foundation to help VTEs to participate in internships for on-the-job learning/work-based learning. Having VTEs focussing on their area of specialisation may possibly allow them to have more time, and thus enable them to keep up to date with new developments in technology, techniques and new regulations and policies. This strategy will also help in the lifelong learning of VTEs.

To mitigate the possible sense of disconnection of those who teach on a part-time basis, departments can invite them to training or other informal social events, as a gesture of inclusion and to create a sense of community. Fostering a stronger, inclusive community for part-timers, could positively influence the VTEs' professional role identities which may be beneficial for the institution and VTE effectiveness.

5.11.2 Recommendations for Vocational Education and Training Practitioners

As previously discussed, VTEs and employers must collaborate. From the interviews that took place with employers, they suggested that part of the teaching practice should be carried out within a company. This will be beneficial for both VTEs and their VSTs and will guarantee that vocational ITE integrates conceptual understanding and ethical deliberation with practical observation, experience and reflection. Currently, as discussed in sub-section 3.2.1, VSTs have their teaching practice at MCAST. While the importance of

on-the-job training in schools is well-understood, there is a real danger of losing sight of the critical and distinctive role that the VET context should play. Thus, having such a teaching practice within a real-life environment, would allow VSTs to adapt immediately and face challenges from the start, thus being more prepared when they complete the MTL in VET programme. Additionally, they will be in a better position to experiment with new teaching methods, materials and working procedures. Moreover, VTEs would be in a better position to educate on the relevant pedagogical content knowledge when workplaces are used as it would allow for the acquisition of the elements of knowledge and expertise that are necessary for the development of professional future VET teachers. VTEs will also be prepared when they attend internships within companies, as this experience will help them in their professional role identity. Moreover, the employers could act as mentors as they are the ones who are specialists within the area and can offer specific technical knowledge that will involve the application of rules to specific activities. Schools are not the best place for VSTs to acquire such technical knowledge. Having the labour market collaborating with VTEs and recognising that each have something to contribute will result in reaching the full potential that the vocational ITE can offer. In addition, employers also suggested that they could update VTEs with the latest standards and procedures so that VSTs are also kept up to date. However, this would not guarantee that they will also be kept up to date when they become VET teachers unless there is ongoing CPD that is linked to industry. In turn, employers can be updated with the latest pedagogical innovations that could possibly be used in their companies.

To conclude, this study has given a voice to a group that has too often been neglected in teacher education policy and research in Malta. Building an understanding on the professional role identities of VTEs is crucial and by exposition and recommendations, this research shows how this can be enhanced. This research will therefore influence policymakers in small states such as Malta to be cautious of uncritically taking on board concepts and policies from much larger geographical contexts which may not be suited to the characteristics of micro-states such as Malta and from mainstream education contexts.

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Appendix One

Research Question	Focus	Theoretical Frameworks	Data types	Analytical approach
RQ 1	The role identities of VTEs and MTEs	Identity theory model	Two rounds of semi-structured interviews with VTEs, and one round of semi-structured interviews with MTEs.	Thematic Analysis
RQ 2	Metaphors used by VTEs and MTEs to describe their role identities.	• Identity theory • Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal work (metaphors)	Two rounds of semi-structured interviews with VTEs, and one round of semi-structured interviews with MTEs.	Metaphor analysis
RQ 3	How the identity of VTEs has changed from the first round of data collection to the second round.	• Identity theory • Social identity theory	• Two rounds of semi-structured interviews with VTEs • MTL programme documents	• Case study • Metaphor analysis between first round and second round of interviews.
RQ 4	How employers view the role of VTEs and their mindset of pedagogy	• Identity Theory • Metaphors	One round of semi-structured interviews with employers representing the labour market	• Thematic Analysis • Metaphor analysis

Table A.1: The research design approach

Pseudonym	Gender M/F	Subject Discipline	Teaching b/ground	Lecturing Grade at UoM	Exper. in industry
Tanya	F	VET General Pedagogy	Yes	Asst. Lecturer	N/A
Liam	M	Media studies	Yes	Visiting Lecturer	Yes, as a media producer
Amy	F	Psychology	Yes	Visiting Lecturer	N/A
Anne	F	HSC	Yes	Visiting Lecturer	Yes, in HSC
Miguel	M	HSC	Yes	Visiting Lecturer	Yes, as a social worker
Claire	F	HSC	Yes	Visiting Lecturer	Yes, as a physio - therapist
John	M	HSC	Yes	Visiting Lecturer	Yes, as a scientist

Table A.2: VTEs

Pseudonym	Gender M/F	Subject Discipline	Teaching b/ground	Lecturing Grade at UoM
Christopher	M	Physics	Yes	Senior Lecturer
Matthew	M	Chemistry	Yes	Senior Lecturer
Richard	M	Art	Yes	Associate Professor
Michael	M	Italian	Yes	Senior Lecturer
Kevin	M	Philosophy of Education	Yes	Professor
Marlon	M	Business Education	Yes	Asst. Lecturer
Annalise	F	Sociology of Education	No	Professor

Table A.3: MTEs

Pseudonym	Gender M/F	Industrial Area	Current role
Francis	M	Enterprise	Businessman
Ted	M	Finance	Chairman
Caroline	F	Media	Manager
Martin	M	HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning)	Owner of the company
Rachel	F	Pharmaceutical	QA manager
Sara	F	Pharmaceutical	HR manager
David	M	Pharmaceutical Technology	Managing director
Joseph	M	Fire, Security and Theft	Chairman and owner of the group

Table A.4: Employers

Appendix Two

1. Before we start, can you please introduce yourself and describe your role within the company?
2. What are your views on Vocational Education?
    a. What are the differences between a VET context and the mainstream context?
3. Do you think that students who choose to study VET at MCAST or any other vocational institution, are better equipped to find a job when compared to students who choose to study at a university?
4. Have you or your company been approached to be involved in defining qualification standards?
5. Do you think that employers are involved in the final decisions on qualification standards?
6. Who decides what knowledge, skills and competencies are required within your industry sector?
7. Does the VET curriculum seek to prepare students for the firm-specific job in which they train, for an entire occupation or for having a career in general?
8. In your opinion, how important is the collaboration between actors of the education and employment systems?
9. Overall, how much power do employers which represent the labour market, have during the process of VET curriculum development? (Were you ever approached by the Ministry of Education about this?)
10. Have you or your colleagues who hold the same position been involved in defining the examination format?

11. If we turn our focus on the vocational teacher, what should the vocational teacher pass on to the vocational student?
12. How should this knowledge transfer be done?
13. Now if we move on further, and turn our focus on the person who is the teacher educator, who provides teacher training to vocational participants, what roles should such a person have?
14. From the roles you have just mentioned, which in your opinion is the most important role, and which is the one that needs most support?
15. Which role is the least important and needs less support?
16. Teacher training programmes consist of teaching practice which is usually done in schools. Do you think that a percentage of the teaching practice should be done in industry, considering that it is within a VET context? (similar to the apprenticeship programme and work-based learning)
    a. Do you think that there should be a collaboration between university and other entities such as the industry that offer vocational teacher training?
    b. If yes, how do you think assessment should be carried out? Should the employer be involved in this assessment?
    c. How can the industry support vocational teacher training programmes?
17. What characteristics should VTEs as opposed to the MTEs, have?
18. As an employer/manager, what do you look for in potential employees?
    a. Excellent communication skills
    b. Emotional intelligence

c. Teamwork skills
d. Work experience
e. Demonstrated leadership

19. How should the skills that you have just mentioned, be taught?
20. Can you come up with a metaphor that portrays the role identity of a VTE? You can start the sentence with: A VTE is like a …
21. How can the labour market support the role of the VTE?
22. What kind of extrinsic rewards should be given to VTEs apart from their salary?
23. What factors do you think leave an impact on the role identity of VTEs? (e.g: policies, CPD programmes, interactions with industry, etc.)
24. What kind of teaching-learning interactions should be present in a vocational teacher training programme?
25. Can you describe the ideal VTE?
    a. What made you portray this ideal?
26. In your opinion, what factors might obscure the role identity of VTEs?
27. Do you think that the current teacher training programme should be changed? (considering the impact that society leaves on students etc.)
28. If you were to lead such a teacher training programme, how would you construct it and why? (First explain what the current teacher training programme consists of; let us not forget the pedagogical element)
    a. So, what should be the way forward?
    b. Should we introduce policies that target vocational teachers/vocational teacher educators?
29. Thank you for your time. Would you like to add anything?

Appendix Three

Participant information sheet

Title of Research: VTEs' Identity: a symbiosis of roles and contexts

Dear TE,

My name is Alison Said and I am a postgraduate candidate in a PhD degree at Lancaster University and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about teacher educator identity.

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

I am conducting a research project that aims to understand what it means to be a TE. This research project is being supervised by Dr Gemma Derrick at Lancaster University.

Why have I been invited?

I am looking for willing participants to interview who are faculty members at the FoE teaching within Master Teaching and Learning within a VET context and the mainstream context. I am interested in learning about your TE identity and the challenges you face within this role.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you choose to take part in this research and your role is that of a TE, you will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview. The interview should not take more than an hour and will be audio recorded.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

Taking part in this study will allow you to share your experiences as a TE and your insights will contribute to my understanding of what it means to be a TE.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary.

If you decide not to take part in this study, this will not affect your position in the University and your relations with your employer.

What if I change my mind?

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. Participants are welcome to withdraw from the study at any time before or during the interview and up to two weeks following their interview.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part. Taking part will mean investing for example 30-60 minutes for an interview.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interview, only I, the researcher conducting this study will have access to the ideas you share with me.

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution. Once I transcribe the recording, I will immediately give a pseudonym to that transcription.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the information you have shared with me only in the following ways:
I will use it for research purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and other publications, for example journal articles. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. I will only use de-identified quotes (e.g. from my interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in our publications.

How my data will be stored?

Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself:

Student researcher: Alison Said
E-mail: a.said@lancaster.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about this project, please contact my supervisor, Dr Gemma Derrick, or the Head of the Educational Research Department, Professor Paul Ashwin:

Supervisor: Dr Gemma Derrick
Co-director
Centre for Higher Education Research and Evaluation
Lecturer (Higher Education)
Educational Research
Lancaster University
O: +44(0) 1524 595 016

E-mail: g.derrick@lancaster.ac.uk

Head of Department: Professor Paul Ashwin
E-mail: paul.ashwin@lancaster.ac.uk

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

Participant information sheet

Title of Research: VTEs' Identity: a symbiosis of roles and contexts

Dear Employer,

My name is Alison Said and I am a postgraduate candidate in a PhD degree at Lancaster University. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about TE identity.

Please take the time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

I am conducting a research project that aims to understand what it means to be a TE. This research project is being supervised by Dr Gemma Derrick at Lancaster University.

Why have I been invited?

I am looking for willing participants to interview who have at least ten years' experience within the industry. If your position within the industry is that of an employer or a manager. I am interested in learning about your labour market perspective on the roles of VTEs.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you choose to take part in this research and your role is that of an employer or manager, you will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview. The interview should not take more than an hour and will be audio recorded.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

Taking part in this study will allow you to share your industrial experiences and your insights will contribute to my understanding of how the labour market perceives the role of VTEs.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide. If you choose to participate, I will ask you to complete a consent form to confirm that you have agreed to take part. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and this will not affect you or your circumstances in any way.

What if I change my mind?

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. Participants are welcome to withdraw from the study at any time before or during the interview and up to two weeks following their interview.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part. Taking part will mean investing for example 30-60 minutes for an interview.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interview, only I, the researcher conducting this study will have access to the ideas you share with me.

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution. Once I transcribe the recording, I will immediately give a pseudonym to that transcription.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the information you have shared with me only in the following ways:
I will use it for research purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and other publications, for example journal articles. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. I will only use de-identified quotes (e.g. from my interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in our publications.

How my data will be stored?

Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself:

Student researcher: Alison Said
E-mail: a.said@lancaster.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about this project, please contact my supervisor, Dr Gemma Derrick, or the Head of the Educational Research Department, Professor Paul Ashwin:

Supervisor: Dr Gemma Derrick
Co-director
Centre for Higher Education Research and Evaluation
Lecturer (Higher Education)
Educational Research
Lancaster University
O: +44(0) 1524 595 016

E-mail: g.derrick@lancaster.ac.uk

Head of Department: Professor Paul Ashwin
E-mail: paul.ashwin@lancaster.ac.uk

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: VTEs' Identity: a symbiosis of roles and contexts

Name of Researcher: Alison Said

Email: a.said@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily	☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study and within 2 weeks after I took part in the study, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 2 weeks of taking part in the study my data will be removed.	☐
3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included and I will not be identifiable.	☐
4. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.	☐
5. I understand that any interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.	☐
6. I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.	☐
7. I agree to take part in the above study.	☐

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant Date Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____

Date _____ Day/month/year

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University