

Student Teachers' Understandings of Poverty: Insights for Initial Teacher Education

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Abstract

This study aims to understand how student teachers think about poverty in the context of rising rates of child poverty as they begin their initial teacher education (ITE). Globally, increasing numbers of school age children living in poverty is a pressing concern for teachers. Previous research has suggested that student teachers may hold negative stereotypical attitudes towards children and families living in poverty, which may influence their future professional practice. However, given the importance of ITE as a site for teacher preparation there is a need for further research into student teachers' views of poverty in the context of increasing levels of child poverty. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a survey questionnaire comprising closed response and open-ended questions, and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques and thematic analysis, respectively. Our findings suggest that, on entry to their ITE, the student teachers in this study largely held 'multidimensional' understandings of poverty. The student teachers also recognise poverty as a real issue affecting children and young people. These findings offer insights for initial teacher preparation in view of the challenges emerging from increased rates of child poverty.

Key words: Initial Teacher Education, Poverty, Student Teachers, Children, Young People

Introduction

Increasing numbers of school aged children living in poverty is a worldwide concern for teachers. Poverty is detrimental to children's education as evidenced by rising disparities in learning outcomes between those living in poverty and their more affluent peers (OECD, 2016; UNESCO, 2015). Although the experience of poverty may differ, many countries are linked by a rights-based policy framework for inclusive education to help mediate the effects of societal challenges such as child poverty (UNESCO 2018). While the relationship

between poverty and educational outcomes is complex, not all children living in poverty fail at school. Nevertheless, mitigating the effects of poverty requires teachers to have a better understanding of poverty and its potential impact on future educational outcomes for children and young people (Gorski 2012; Haberman 2012).

Poverty has become a major topic in the UK and Scotland following the period of austerity as pursued by the successive UK Governments in the past decade. As a result of changes to the welfare support many people are experiencing financial hardship. In Scotland, for example, over two hundred thousand emergency food parcels were provided to families in 2019 by foodbanks run by charitable organisations (Trussell Trust, 2020). Additionally, 65% of children living in poverty in Scotland are in households where someone works (Scottish Government, 2019) and one in four children is identified as living in poverty (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2019). Poverty is also recognised as being at the root of the so-called attainment gap in Scotland's schools (Scottish Government, 2020). Data from the cost of the school day indicate that children living in poverty can be excluded from full participation in what schools have to offer (Child Action Poverty Group Scotland, 2015). Moreover, Scottish educational policy initiatives such Getting it Right for Every Child (Scottish Government, 2017a), a national approach to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of children and young people, alongside an on-going commitment to teacher education make an important contribution to the poverty crisis and its impact on education. As such, Scotland provides an interesting context to explore poverty as a concern for teachers against a backdrop of increasing child poverty.

It is important for teacher educators to understand how student teachers think about poverty in the current context of rising rates of child poverty. Previous research indicates that student

teachers can hold negative stereotypical attitudes towards children and families living in poverty, which may influence their future professional practice. For example, Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) suggest that a large proportion of preservice teachers hold deficit views of learner diversity, society, and the associated role of schools. However, not all student teachers enter ITE holding such deficit views and views on poverty may change over time. Therefore, further research that focuses on the views of student teachers is necessary to better understand how to support new teachers to mitigate the effects of poverty on school experiences and learning outcomes for children and young people.

This study aims to explore student teachers' views of poverty and its potential effects on children and young people, at the commencement of their ITE at a Scottish university. The study offers insights for teacher education for the preparation of student teachers in the context of rising numbers of children and young people living in poverty.

Conceptual Background

While there is no universally acceptable definition of poverty, Townsend's (1979) definition remains useful for thinking about poverty in so-called affluent societies. Townsend points to the income threshold below which a person is likely to be experiencing hardship in their everyday lives and recognises that low income is a barrier to social participation for children and families. This definition contrasts with more technical, quantitative, approaches to defining poverty in wealthy societies that centre, for example, on relative poverty lines (Child Poverty Action Group 2016). Townsend's (*ibid*) conceptualisation perhaps sheds insight on why official definitions of poverty do not resonate well with the public in wealthy countries. In a study into public attitudes (Scottish Government 2015a), the term 'poverty' was considered more applicable to describing conditions in low income, materially poor countries and accordingly was viewed as overstating the issue of poverty as it pertains to Scotland. As

an alternative way of engaging with the problem of poverty, respondents preferred terminology such as ‘ability to meet basic needs’ and ‘access to material and social resources’ (Scottish Government, *ibid.*, 4). Similarly, the category of in-work poverty challenges stereotypical thinking on poverty but is not well understood by wider society (Eisenstadt 2016). Yet, more recent figures suggest that 70% of children living in relative poverty (AHC) live in households with at least one person in employment (Scottish Government 2017b).

Viewing poverty in terms of its relationship to wider society is a theme examined by Forbes and Sime (2016) who reject single category definitions of the poor that marginalise some children. They suggest, efforts to tackle child poverty and inequalities must consider the wider effects of different, and often cross-cutting, social structures located in children’s home lives, such as, race, ethnicity, religion, disability and gender. Similarly, thinking about poverty in multiple ways is also characteristic of the work of Barnes, Chanfreau and Tomaszewski (2010) who caution against viewing poverty as a single static concept, noting that a household’s capacity to meet basic needs may change over time, suggesting the need for a more dynamic understanding. Their research into exploring the duration of poverty found that some households experienced persistent poverty, whereas the experiences were much shorter (Barnes et al., *ibid*). In summary, the work of Forbes and Sime (*ibid*) and Barnes et al. (*ibid*) points to a view of poverty as dynamic and multidimensional.

Empirical research into teachers’ views of child poverty in the UK and USA has revealed negative stereotypical views of families living in poverty (Cox, Watts, and Horton 2012; Cummings et al. 2012). Similar findings are revealed in studies into student teachers’ views about child poverty and educational achievement in the UK (Ellis et al. 2016; Thompson, McNicholl, and Menter 2016; White and Murray 2016). Gorski (2016) argues that student teachers’ prior mind-sets concerning children/young people and poverty need to be both

identified and challenged if they, as new teachers, are to help children/young people out of poverty.

Gorski (*ibid*, 379) makes a distinction between ‘structural’ and ‘deficit’ ideologies of poverty. A structural view refers to ‘structural injustice and the unequal distribution of access and opportunity that underlies poverty’ (Gorski *ibid*, 379) whereas a deficit view apportions blame to people in poverty “as the agents of their own economic conditions ... believing that poverty itself is a symptom of ethical, dispositional, and even spiritual deficiencies in the individuals and communities experiencing poverty” (Gorski *ibid.*, 380). For Gorski, the problem of child poverty and poor educational outcomes constitutes an “access and opportunity gap” which new teachers should understand.

In the context of ITE and central to Gorski’s argument, is the premise that a new teacher’s capacity to imagine and select favourable actions to support children of low-income families is predicated upon their ideological views. Therefore, for new teachers to make a difference to the lives of children and young people in poverty, they should understand the distinction between structural and deficit views of poverty (Gorski, 2016). Student teachers should not only understand the relationships between structural inequalities and educational outcomes, but also recognise that individual circumstances can influence such relationships in different ways (Grudnoff et al, 2016). A structural perspective challenges views that blame individuals for their poverty and apportion blame to schools when they fail to improve educational outcomes for children in poverty (Thompson 2015; Forbes and Sime 2016).

There is a need for further empirical research to explore student teachers’ understandings of poverty against a background of increasing numbers of school age children worldwide living in poverty. However, any focus on student teacher views should be understood within the

wider socio-economic changes necessary to address the effects of child poverty (Cummings et al. 2012).

The Study

The Scottish Government has formally identified a relationship between attainment and socio-economic deprivation in Scottish schools, bringing the issue to the political forefront. Measures to overcome such inequalities have been coordinated through a National Improvement Framework (Scottish Government, 2020) and include, for example, the Scottish Attainment Challenge (Scottish Government, 2015b). In this context, all ITE programmes in Scotland are expected to prepare student teachers to enter the teaching profession with the appropriate attributes to address current societal needs. The study, reported here, aims to explore student teachers' views of poverty at the start of a 36-week Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programme at a Scottish University.

The study was guided by two research questions:

(RQ1) What are student teachers' views of poverty and its applicability in the Scottish context?

(RQ2) What are student teachers' views of children/young people living in poverty in Scotland?

Research Design

The study is based on qualitative and quantitative data collected using a survey questionnaire which comprised a mixture of closed and open-ended questions. Quantitative data were collected using a set of closed questions, including dichotomous questions and rating scales (including Likert), while the qualitative data were collected using open-response questions.

The questionnaire was administered electronically at the start of the PGDE programme prior to any formal course inputs using student email addresses. Prior to administration of the questionnaire, the purposes of the research and specifically the questionnaire, were outlined to the cohort in a face-to-face session to facilitate informed, voluntary consent. Since the project researchers were also programme tutors, it was reiterated that participation or non-participation would have no academic bearing. The Scottish Educational Research Association (2005) ethical guidelines were adhered to in the set of ethical protocols developed for the research, and all ethical permissions were obtained.

Research Participants

The PGDE student population for this study comprised 317 students in total, made up of 168 and 149 students aiming to become primary and secondary school teachers, respectively. Students enter the programme with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, and all have a graduate-level educational background. The response rate was 45% (n = 142), comprising (n = 81) PGDE primary students and (n = 61) PGDE secondary students. The respondent profile is presented in Table 1.

[**Table 1** near here]

The student teachers provided some background information about themselves. They also responded to a series of questions about poverty and children/young people.

Student teachers' socio-economic backgrounds

The student teachers (n=142) were first asked to describe their own socio-economic status at three different stages in their lives: (i) during their upbringing (0 - 17 years), (ii) from age 18 years to the start of their ITE programme, and (iii) their current status as an ITE student teacher. The responses surfaced a ratio of approximately 80:20 across ‘high/middle income’ and ‘low income’ categories, at both life stages (i) and (ii). However, the responses suggested a general transition towards lower socio-economic status for the student teachers by life stage (iii), where a response ratio of approximately 60:40 emerged across the categories ‘high/middle income’ and ‘low income’. While the figures presented in Table 2 relate to how the student teachers’ self-identified in terms of their socio-economic status the figures highlight lived experiences within the group of how socio-economic status can change over time.

[**Table 2** near here]

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using frequency-based descriptive techniques (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2014). Qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis using an iterative method of coding and thematising (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This process involved one author generating initial codes and an initial set of concepts and rudimentary themes, which the other authors then reviewed, together with the first author, in view of the data. During this iterative process, there were opportunities to recast, revise, and enhance the emerging analysis.

Findings

This paper seeks to understand what student teachers think about poverty in the context of rising rates of child poverty. Our findings in response to the first research question, ‘What

are student teachers' views of poverty and its applicability in the Scottish context?' are presented below.

Meanings attributed to poverty by the student teachers

Four key themes emerged from the data analysis to capture the student teachers' views of poverty: (i) Lack of basic needs, (ii) Effect in relation to norms of standards of living, (iii) Effect in relation to empowerment and (iv) a Political view.

Examples of illustrative statements suggesting a view of poverty as characterised by a lack of basic needs as underpinned by low income included:

It means not being able to afford the basic things one needs in life to be comfortable, fit and healthy such as food, clothing and shelter.

Poverty is when people struggle to suffice in their basic daily living needs, such as food, clothing, shelter and overall wellbeing due to lack of money

Related to viewing poverty in economic terms, many student teachers saw poverty in terms of its relationship to the norms of standards of living as illustrated by the following statements,

Poverty means having to live below an acceptable standard compared to the rest of society.

Poverty means going without what is considered 'normal' (TV, internet, holidays, food etc.).

Other student teachers took a slightly different tack and articulated a view of poverty in terms of its effect on the empowerment of individuals e.g. a lack of voice/power to influence their own choices, as illustrated by the following statements,

Struggling daily. Having to make choices - eat or heat. Kids v Adults eating. Poor housing. A sense of being trapped.

In a Scottish context it means not having enough to allow an individual to fulfil their full potential. A lack of food, poor housing, health issues all play a role in limiting someone's ability to flourish.

A few student teachers viewed poverty in political terms. Examples of statements advancing this view included,

A meaningless relativistic term used by politicians to get media coverage

Poverty means that you do not have all your rights as declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Meanings attributed to relative poverty by the student teachers

Five key themes emerged from the data analysis that capture the student teachers' views of relative poverty: (i) A subjective standard of living, (ii) Income inequality, (iii) A quantifiable income, (iv) Regional comparisons, and (v) Impact on participation in society.

Examples of statements suggesting a view of relative poverty as characterised by a subjective standard of living included:

A lifestyle that a person is accustomed to being made unavailable as a result of diminished resources.

Poverty is only considered in relation to some sort of standard.

However, some student teachers were more specific, comparing relative poverty to income inequalities. For example,

Poverty in relation to the 'average' household in the UK.

Poor financial income in comparison to the average income within the UK.

Similarly, some student teachers viewed relative poverty in quantifiable terms. Illustrative comments included,

I would interpret "relative poverty" as meaning deprived in terms of the national average cost of living.

Relative poverty compares your level of income with that of the rest of the country. If your income is below the median of 60% of the country, then you are described as being in relative poverty.

Some student teachers interpreted 'relative poverty' using regional comparisons. For example,

Compared to other countries such as India and Africa the UK as a whole is extremely wealthy. Therefore, those who live below the poverty line in the UK are still likely to be better off than people living in poverty in developing countries. That is not to say that they do not live in poverty but it should be looked at in a worldwide context.

Relative poverty means in that country. What would be classed as poverty in the UK would not be classed as poverty in countries such as Africa

For others, relative poverty was viewed in terms of participation in society. For example,

Being unable to take part in similar activities to peers.

A standard of living compared to the normal UK population. Ability to participate in society as regular citizens.

Student teacher views about who can be affected by poverty

The student teachers highlighted both direct and indirect influences in terms of who can be affected by poverty, as illustrated by the following statements,

Anybody can be affected by poverty. Some may be born into poverty but there may also be people that lived once very affluent lives that have lost all they had and now have nothing.

Everyone is affected by poverty. Directly or indirectly. It affects the economy; it affects children who are already living in a family who are in the poverty category may find it very difficult to get above the poverty line as there are less opportunities available to them. It affects the older generation who may not be in the best of health because they cannot afford food and shelter and therefore require medical assistance from the [National Health Service] NHS.

Further responses illustrated a range of influencing factors, for example, a change in circumstances such as redundancy, disability or illness, mental health, unemployment, and debt:

People with higher incomes can accrue levels of debt that can significantly reduce the disposable income of a household. People can also unexpectedly find themselves in financial difficulties for a range of reasons e.g. due to redundancy, illness or spousal bereavement.

I have worked with homelessness services and have witnessed individuals who are from wealthy families, regions and jobs fall into poverty. Influencing factors such as addiction, economic recession and mental health can be contributing factors.

However, people with limited education (including those in work) were perceived as being more likely to be affected by poverty:

Low income families. Uneducated or low skilled people. People that have suffered chronic or acute illness. People that are subject to a significant life change (e.g. redundancy/death in the family).

Other responses pointed to the effect of poverty on a person's empowerment for example, lack of voice and power to influence own choices:

They lack capacity to participate fully in society and can have detrimental effects on life expectancy and the availability of such basic needs as having a voice in what happens in society and availability of education.

Similarly, some student teachers highlighted the effect of poverty on health, education, participation in society, opportunities, and aspirations:

I define poverty as a lack of income and resources to ensure comfortable life. This includes lack of food and water, inadequate housing and limited access to health care and education.

Not having money or access to a good, healthy lifestyle. Being unable to participate fully in life due to your home circumstances holding you back. *Student teacher views on the main causes of poverty*

When the student teachers (n=126) were asked what they considered the most important cause of poverty in Scotland, the results (presented in Table 3) pointed to economic factors

(37%) including unemployment, low wages and the cost of living. Intergenerational factors linked to family background (20%) were cited as the second most important cause with the political environment (16%) identified third, self-inflicted factors (15%) including drug misuse, alcohol misuse and debt fourth, and a lack of education (12%) fifth.

[Table 3 near here]

In summary, this cohort of student teachers expressed different views as to what constitutes poverty in the Scottish context often seeing poverty in multidimensional terms. In so doing, they tend to attribute poverty to a lack of basic needs underpinned by low income and attribute its effect in more relative terms to norms of standards of living and participation in society. Some student teachers go on to highlight relative poverty in normative terms making comparisons to average levels of income while others suggest a more subjective/personal view. The student teachers tend to avoid blaming individuals recognising that ‘anybody’ can find themselves in poverty and ‘everybody’ is affected by poverty to some extent either directly or indirectly. Overall, the student teachers cited economic conditions and intergenerational factors as the most important causes of poverty in Scotland.

Our findings in response to our second research question, ‘What are student teachers’ views of children/young people living in poverty in Scotland?’ are presented below.

Student teachers’ views of children and young people living in poverty in Scotland

Further to sharing their understanding of the term poverty, the student teachers commented on questions about children and young people living in poverty in Scotland. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the student teachers disagreed with the claim, “In Scotland, very few children/young people of school age live in poverty”. This indicates that most student

teachers recognise poverty among school children as a real issue. Moreover, 96% of the student teachers also thought they would likely work with children/young people who live in poverty in their teaching practice.

Student teachers' views about their ability to recognise child poverty

The student teachers were less certain about how they might recognise children/young people in their schools affected by poverty. Their views fell into two main viewpoints, (i) student teachers who expected information to be elicited from schools and (ii) student teachers who recognised that poverty can be hidden and hard to identify.

Information elicited from schools

For the 37% of student teachers who claimed they would know if children/young people in their school are affected by poverty they also believed they would elicit relevant information from their school context. Such views related to professional information shared by schools, the student teacher's knowledge of the child/young person and self-declaration by children pupils as illustrated below.

Information shared by schools

I believe information may be passed to me when the child joins the school.

I think that as a student teacher you might know that a child/young person is living in poverty if the school is aware of their situation.

Student teacher's knowledge of the child/young person

I think that through getting to know the children I work with; I will soon come to understand their individual backgrounds.

If they regularly arrive for school under prepared - e.g. no pencils, no lunch, homework not done.

Children who come from poverty-stricken backgrounds may show indicators through aspects such as their appearance. Such as hygiene standards not being as high as other peers.

Self-declaration by the children

The experiences they tell you about such as what they have done at the weekend.

If the child is explicit in saying so.

They [the children] may tell you.

Poverty can be hidden, and teachers/schools cannot always know

Similar reasons were indicated by those student teachers who either did not know (35%) or were unsure (28%) if they would be able to recognise poverty in their school settings.

Illustrative examples include:

I think it might be surprisingly more difficult than originally thought to know if a child is living in poverty or not.

I don't think you can judge based on appearances or social background i.e. where they live, what school they attend whether a child is living in poverty, nor is it indicative of their intelligence and ability.

We cannot expect children suffering from the effects of poverty to come in dirty face and barefoot just to make it easy to diagnose the drivers of poverty are many and varied.

Student teachers' views about links between poverty and children

The student teachers were all in agreement that there is a link between poverty and children/young people's educational outcomes. Of these, 95% agreed, "There is a link between poverty and children/young people's life choices" and 77%, "There is a link between poverty and children/young people's educational opportunities". These findings indicate that the student teachers consider growing up in poverty to be a source of disadvantage to children/young people in education.

In summary, the student teachers recognise poverty as a real issue affecting children and young people in Scotland's schools and consider growing up in poverty a disadvantage for children/young people in education. Moreover, they anticipated that they would likely be working with children and young people affected by poverty in their teaching practice. However, these student teachers were less certain about how they would recognise these children and young people.

Discussion

This study aimed to understand student teachers' views of poverty and its potential effects on children and young people in education. The findings suggest most student teachers viewed poverty as a real issue affecting children and young people in Scotland.

The finding that student teachers tend to attribute poverty to a lack of basic needs and access to material and social resources is consistent with the findings from the Scottish Government (2015a) public attitudes survey on poverty. Similarly, the student teachers identified economic factors including low wages as the one of the main causes of poverty. These views may be a result of the UK government's policy of austerity in relation to welfare support and the wide media coverage of the rise of emergency food parcels and foodbanks in Scotland (Trussell Trust, 2020) when they began their ITE. This also suggests the student teachers

recognise the phenomenon of in-work poverty which contrasts with Eisenstadt's (2016) claim that in-work poverty is poorly understood by the wider society. These interconnected facets of poverty show that student teachers were able to view poverty relative to norms of standard of living and participation in society.

Moreover, some student teachers viewed relative poverty in terms of a comparison to average levels of income while others suggested a subjective or more personal view. As such, the student teachers' understanding of poverty echoes Townsend's (1979) conceptualisation of poverty in high income countries taking account of the societal context. They further recognise that 'anybody' can find themselves in poverty and 'everybody' is affected by poverty to some extent either directly or indirectly. This finding differs from Cox et al. (2012) and Cummings et al. (2012) who found the teachers in their studies tended to hold negative stereotypical attitudes towards families living in poverty. Our finding here also differs from the studies of Ellis et al. (2016), Thompson et al. (2016) and White and Murray (2016), which found that many student teachers held 'deficit' attitudes towards the effects of poverty on pupils, and deficit views of learner diversity (Cochran-Smith et al. 2015). This suggests that major changes to social and economic circumstances, such as policies of welfare austerity that are well publicised, and affect many people, including some of the participants in this study, may influence student teachers' views on poverty.

Overall, our study shows that this cohort of student teachers expressed different views as to what constitutes poverty in the Scottish context, often seeing poverty in multidimensional and dynamic terms. This finding resonates with Forbes and Sime (2016) who call for the rejection of a single category definition of the poor that marginalises some children, and with Barnes et al. (2010), who caution against viewing poverty as a single static concept. Viewing poverty in

multidimensional and dynamic terms is perhaps a promising starting point for those entering ITE, although this remains to be seen.

The findings also reveal that the student teachers recognise poverty as a real issue affecting children and young people in Scotland's schools and believe that growing up in poverty can disadvantage children/young people in education. One possible explanation for this recognition of the reality of poverty may be linked to the backgrounds of the student teachers with approximately 40% self-identifying as having personal experience of low income. However, it is also possible that media coverage surrounding the so-called poverty-related attainment gap and the Scottish Attainment Challenge (Scottish Government 2015b) may have influenced their view. Moreover, in preparing for entry into ITE, the student teachers may well have encountered the well-publicised cost of the school day and the statistical claim that one-in-four children living in Scotland is growing up in poverty (Child Poverty Action Group 2015; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2019). The student teachers' views are consistent with the wider international view that poverty is detrimental to children's education (OECD, 2016; UNESCO, 2015).

The findings further indicate that the student teachers anticipated they would likely be working with children and young people affected by poverty in their teaching practice; however, they were less certain about how they would recognise such individuals. This lack of certainty can be explained by the multidimensional and dynamic nature of poverty (Barnes, Chanfreau and Tomaszewski, 2010) where poverty can present as complex, and at times, hidden. Nevertheless, it is important for student teachers to understand structural and deficit views relating to poverty (Gorski, 2016) and to recognise that individual circumstances can influence the relationships between structural inequalities and educational

outcomes in different ways (Grudnoff et al, 2016). By holding mostly structural views, rather than blaming individuals, it is anticipated that, perhaps, the student teachers in this study will be open to developing inclusive ways of working with all children and young people.

In conclusion, this paper reported how student teachers think about poverty in the context of rising rates of child poverty both nationally and internationally. The findings suggest that the student teachers in this study recognised poverty as a real issue applicable to children and young people in Scotland's schools. These findings offer a point of reference for thinking about how ITE can be a key site for interrogating the shifting nature of poverty in and for, the preparation of teachers.

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Tables

Table 1. Profile of Questionnaire Respondents

Variable	Category	% Response
Gender	Male	76.8
	Female	21.8
	Other	0.7
Age Group (years)	21-25	35.9
	26-30	23.9
	31-35	11.3
	36-40	12.0
	41-50	12.0
	Over 50	0.4
Ethnicity	White Scottish	35.5
	White British	34.0

	Other	30.5
Socio Economic Status	No/Low income	21.1
(during upbringing)	Medium income	69.0
	High income	9.9
Qualifications	UGrad degree	100.0
	Masters degree	15.5
	PhD	2.1
	Professional	13.4

Table 2. Student teachers' socio-economic backgrounds as self-identified

	High Income	Middle Income	Low Income	Total
During your upbringing (0 - 17 years),	14 (9.86%)	98 (69.01%)	30 (21.12%)	142
From age 18 years to the start of ITE programme	15 (10.5%)	103 (72.54%)	24 (16.90%)	142
Currently as an ITE student	5 (3.52%)	83 (58.45%)	54 (38.03%)	142

Table 3. Factor groupings of the main causes of poverty in Scotland by order of importance (N=127)

Factors	1*	2**	3	4	5	Total causes for each factor	% of total causes

Economic	77	49	36	12	6	180	37.0
Intergenerational	15	25	22	20	18	100	20.5
Political Environment	12	19	17	17	13	78	16.0
'Self-inflicted'	9	16	23	15	9	72	14.8
Lack of Education	14	13	13	11	6	57	11.7
Total	127	122	111	75	52	487	

* most important cause, **second most important cause etc.