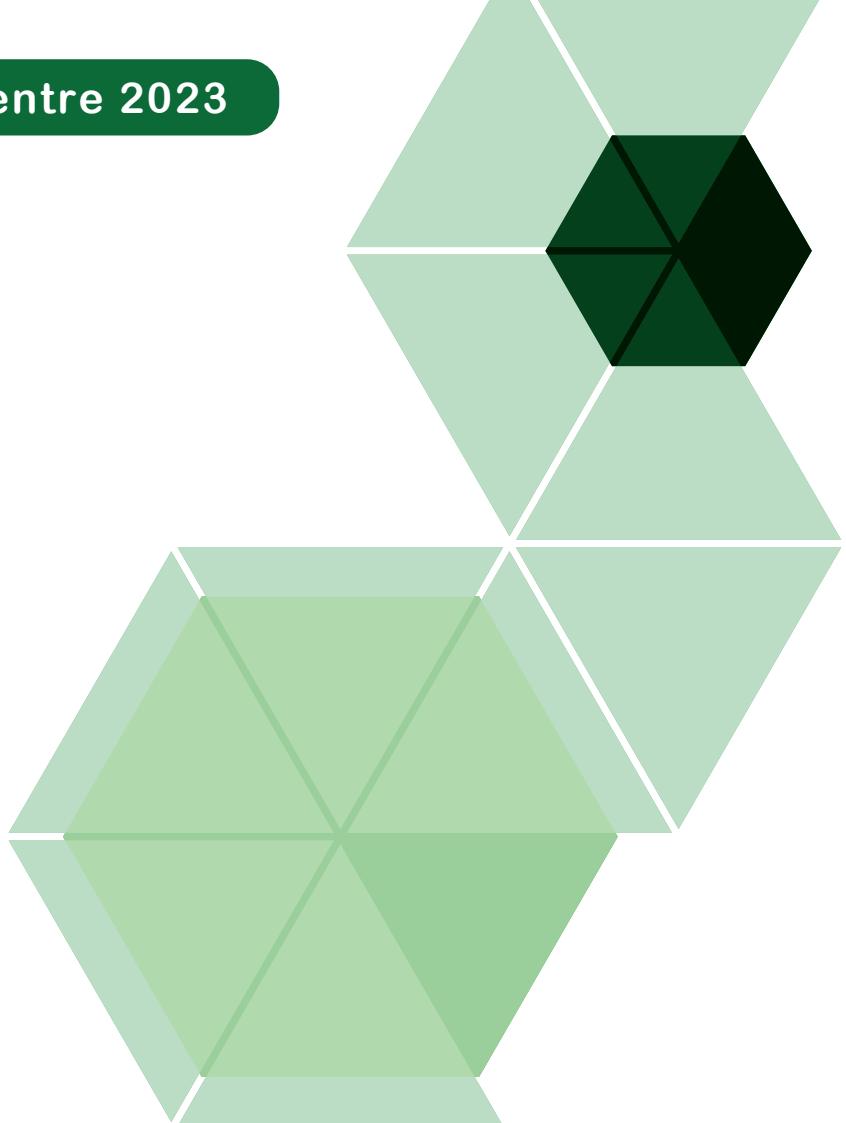


# An evaluation framework for teachers' professional learning in Ireland

Lorraine Gilleece  
Jessica Surdey  
Caroline Rawdon



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# Membership of the Steering Group

<b>Jill</b>	<b>Fannin</b>	<b>Chairperson</b> ( <i>from November 2022</i> ) PO, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE
<b>Kevin</b>	<b>Lohan</b>	<b>Chairperson</b> ( <i>May 2022 to November 2022</i> ) APO, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE
<b>Martin</b>	<b>McLoughlin</b>	<b>Chairperson</b> ( <i>December 2020 to May 2022</i> ) PO, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE
<b>Judith</b>	<b>Lyons</b>	<b>Chairperson</b> ( <i>from December 2019 until December 2020</i> ) APO, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE
<b>Jim</b>	<b>Mulkerrins</b>	<b>Chairperson</b> ( <i>until retirement in December 2019</i> ) PO, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE
<b>Brian</b>	<b>Geraghty</b>	<b>Secretary</b> , EO, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE
<b>Maria</b>	<b>Bracken</b>	HEO, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE ( <i>until March 2022</i> )
<b>Jude</b>	<b>Cosgrove</b>	CEO, Educational Research Centre (ERC) ( <i>until April 2022</i> )
<b>Brendan</b>	<b>Doody</b>	Assistant Chief Inspector, DoE Inspectorate ( <i>until May 2022</i> )
<b>Mary</b>	<b>Dunne</b>	Inspector, Primary, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE ( <i>until retirement in August 2022</i> )
<b>Margaret</b>	<b>Dunning</b>	Primary Divisional Inspector, DoE Inspectorate ( <i>until May 2019</i> )
<b>Gráinne</b>	<b>Egan</b>	APO, Social Inclusion Unit, DoE ( <i>until November 2022</i> )
<b>Noreen</b>	<b>Fitzpatrick</b>	Manager, National Innovation Unit, SOLAS
<b>Moira</b>	<b>Germaine</b>	Programme Manager, Education, Training and Programme Design, Health Service Executive (HSE) ( <i>from March 2022 until November 2022</i> )
<b>Lorraine</b>	<b>Gilleece</b>	Research Fellow, Educational Research Centre (ERC) ( <i>from January 2020</i> )
<b>Gabrielle</b>	<b>Greene</b>	Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) ( <i>until retirement in January 2022</i> )
<b>Deirdre</b>	<b>McHugh</b>	Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) ( <i>from November 2022</i> )
<b>Madeline</b>	<b>Hickey</b>	Specialist Lead in Policy and Practice, National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
<b>Carmel</b>	<b>Kearns</b>	Head of Teachers' Learning and Research, Teaching Council
<b>Pádraig</b>	<b>Kirk</b>	Director, Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)
<b>Seamus</b>	<b>Knox</b>	Senior Inspector, Post-primary, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE ( <i>until retirement in October 2020</i> )
<b>Julie</b>	<b>Lynch</b>	Inspector, Post-primary, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE

Continued on next page

## Membership of the Steering Group (continued)

Éadaoin	McGovern	Director, Navan Education Support Centre (NESC), representing ESCI research sub-committee
Meabh	McGuinness	Education Project Manager, Health Service Executive (HSE) <i>(from May 2019 until February 2022)</i>
Orla	McGowan	Education Programme Manager, Health Service Executive (HSE) <i>(until May 2019 and again from November 2022)</i>
Clíodhna	McManamon	Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) <i>(from September 2022)</i>
Eamonn	Moran	PO, Post-primary, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (CAP), DoE <i>(until retirement in April 2022)</i>
Mary	Nihill	National Director, Centre for School Leadership (CSL)
Éadaoin	O'Brien	Senior Psychologist, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
Mary	O'Callaghan	National Coordinator, National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)
Evelyn	O'Connor	PO, Primary, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (CAP), DoE
Carmel	O'Doherty	Senior Inspector, Primary, Teacher Education, ITE & Professional Development, DoE <i>(from September 2022)</i>
Ciara	O'Donnell	National Director, Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) <i>(until January 2022)</i>
Sheena	O'Loughlin	APO, Social Inclusion Unit, DoE <i>(from November 2022)</i>
Caroline	Rawdon	Research Associate, Educational Research Centre (ERC) <i>(until October 2022)</i>
Joan	Russell	Education Research Officer, Education & Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) <i>(from July 2020)</i>
Rita	Ryan	Post-primary Team Leader, The National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) <i>(from February 2022)</i>
Nuala	Taaffe	National Director, Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) <i>(from February 2022)</i>

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# Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAP – Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit

CDI – Childhood Development Initiative

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

CSL – Centre for School Leadership

DoE – Department of Education (formerly DES – Department of Education and Skills)

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

EPV – Extra Personal Vacation (days)

ERC – Educational Research Centre

ESCI – Education Support Centres Ireland

ETB – Education and Training Board

ETBI – Education and Training Boards Ireland

FESS – Further Education Support Service

HSE – Health Service Executive

ITE – Initial Teacher Education

JCT – Junior Cycle for Teachers

NCCA – National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NCSE – National Council for Special Education

NEPS – National Educational Psychological Service

NIPT – National Induction Programme for Teachers

NQT – Newly Qualified Teacher

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PDST – Professional Development Service for Teachers

PLCs – Professional Learning Communities

RP – Restorative Practice

SOLAS – State Agency for the Further Education and Training Sector

SSE – School Self-Evaluation

TES – Teacher Education (ITE and Professional Development) Section

TPL – Teachers' Professional Learning

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

The framework for the evaluation of teachers' professional learning (TPL) has been developed through a four-year project established in response to Action 46.1 of the Action Plan for Education 2018 (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2018a). The Educational Research Centre (ERC), guided by a Steering Committee, was tasked with implementing the development of a research-based framework for the evaluation of TPL. It is recognised that TPL ranges from highly informal and self-directed to structured and formal, although the scope of the current project is limited to the various types of TPL for teachers and school leaders which are funded, facilitated, accredited, or otherwise supported by the Department of Education (DoE)<sup>1</sup>, its support services, or its agencies, including but not limited to the Centre for School Leadership (CSL)<sup>2</sup>, the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)<sup>2</sup>, Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)<sup>2</sup>, Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)<sup>2</sup>, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), National Council for Special Education (NCSE), and the Education Centres. Activities of the Teaching Council, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), and relevant activities of the Health Services Executive (HSE) are also within scope.

The project comprised several phases and has had a number of published outputs which were used to inform the development of the TPL evaluation framework described in this document. Interested readers can find further details on the findings of earlier phases in the following [publications](#):

- Phase 1: [Desk-based research](#) (Rawdon et al., 2020) and an [executive summary](#);
- Phase 2: [A survey of teachers and principals](#) conducted in Spring 2020 (Rawdon et al., 2021);
- Phase 3a: [A survey of TPL providers](#) conducted in Spring 2021 (Rawdon & Gilleece, 2022);
- Phase 3b: [Consultation with children and young people](#) carried out in Summer 2021 (Rawdon et al., 2022).

The fourth component of the project (Phase 4) – an evaluation of TPL for Restorative Practice (RP) – provided an opportunity to conduct an evaluation of a specific TPL to inform the development of the framework and to gather data to illustrate the components of the framework.

There is currently a wide range of professional learning opportunities for teachers in Ireland provided by the DoE, through teacher support services, Education Centres, agencies of the DoE, and other initiatives. While participation in TPL is not mandatory for teachers in Ireland following completion of Initial Teacher Education and induction, there are several recent policy developments that support and impact on the domain of TPL. These include the movement of the *Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning* (Teaching Council, 2016a) from a development phase to a growth phase (DoE, 2021a) and an increased policy focus on the evaluation of TPL (Action 46 of the Action Plan for Education 2018; [DES], 2018a).

At the time of writing (Spring 2023), the PDST, JCT, CSL and NIPT are in the process of amalgamating into a single integrated support service ([Oide](#)). The framework presented in this document references work (including some unpublished internal work) by these and other TPL providers with the aim of showing how the framework for the evaluation of TPL builds on existing practices in the system. Also, the TPL evaluation framework is intended to complement the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* devised for the single integrated support service, described in more detail in Section 1.2.<sup>3</sup>

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1 The Department of Education was known as the Department of Education and Skills (DES) until October 2020.

2 These services will amalgamate in September 2023 into a single integrated support service – [Oide](#).

3 The *Design and Quality Assurance Process* is currently an unpublished document for internal use by the integrated support services (DoE, 2021b).

## Chapter 1: Introduction

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This document is structured as follows. Section 1.1 briefly outlines some key terms from the evaluation literature and provides links to some relevant resources; Section 1.2 summarises three recent policy developments related to TPL in Ireland; and Section 1.3 presents some key research findings related to TPL. Chapter 2 outlines the components of the TPL evaluation framework, briefly explaining why these were selected for inclusion, and indicating where the components have featured in previous TPL evaluation, research or policy. Priority is given to Irish exemplars and references where available. Links are provided to existing resources that may support the assessment of these constructs in TPL evaluation. Chapter 3 provides an overview of a specific TPL evaluation – the evaluation of TPL for RP – conducted for the purposes of informing the development of the TPL evaluation framework and illustrating its components. Further practical resources are provided in the appendices.

It should be noted that the current document is intended to provide an overarching framework to support the evaluation of different forms of formal TPL, facilitated in various formats and with varying degrees of intensity and duration. Therefore, it is not possible to be prescriptive or to present a single “correct” approach or model to be used in all TPL evaluation. Rather, TPL providers should ensure that evaluation draws on the elements of the framework, with a level of detail commensurate to the scale of the TPL. Evaluation of TPL can be conducted by TPL providers or by external evaluators; the framework is intended to support both.

The Terms of Reference for this project required the evaluation framework to be capable of being applied or used in part or in its entirety; thus, decisions about which framework components to apply in a particular evaluation rest with TPL providers and/or external evaluators, where applicable. While the Terms of Reference for the project indicate that the framework should support both process evaluation and impact evaluation of TPL, it is beyond the scope of the framework to provide in-depth instruction or a step-by-step guide on conducting evaluation and data analysis. Links to further reading related to evaluation are provided for interested readers.

In the TPL evaluation framework presented in this report, the term TPL is intended to refer to any TPL opportunity evaluated by providers, including, *inter alia*, workshops, programmes, seminars, in-school support, initiatives or interventions. The TPL opportunity may take place in a face-to-face setting, online, or using a blended approach. It is likely that there is variation across TPL providers in the modes used to facilitate TPL and modes used by one provider are not necessarily employed by another.

The term “teacher” is used throughout this document to encompass all registered teachers, including principals, deputy principals and others in leadership roles.

## 1.1: Evaluation in the social sciences

Much has been published on why it is difficult to determine the impact of TPL and several researchers have developed frameworks and approaches designed for this purpose. In order to look at specific examples of the evaluation of TPL, it is relevant to consider the broader field of evaluation and monitoring in the social sciences and to distinguish between the two. Evaluation is defined as “a systematic assessment of the design, implementation and outcomes of an intervention” (HM Treasury, 2020, p. 5).<sup>4</sup> It should be useful to the stakeholders involved, credible, robust, and proportionate (HM Treasury, 2020). A key feature of evaluation is that it refers to the “process of determining the worth or significance of an

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<sup>4</sup> The Magenta book defines an intervention as “any policy, programme or other government activity meant to elicit a change” (HM Treasury, 2020, p. 5). For the purposes of the TPL evaluation framework, “intervention” can be understood to refer to a TPL opportunity such as a programme, workshop, intervention or activity.

activity, policy or programme" (OECD, 2002, pp. 21-22). Monitoring is a related process that relies on the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide "indications of the extent of progress and the achievement of objectives and progress..." (OECD, 2002, pp. 27-28).

As part of their work in supporting evidence-informed policy making in Ireland, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA, 2019) outline three main approaches to evaluation. These are: process evaluations, outcome<sup>5</sup> and impact evaluations, and programme theory evaluations (DCYA, 2019). The TPL evaluation framework assumes that TPL evaluation may draw on elements of each of these and decisions will rest on the stage and scale of TPL being evaluated. For example, in evaluating a pilot study with potential for full national roll-out, it is likely that the focus should be on both process and impact. The evaluation of a short TPL with a more limited reach and scale (e.g., a once-off workshop) would likely undergo more limited evaluation, with a focus on process and immediate outputs rather than outcomes and longer-term impact.

These three types of evaluation can be described in more detail as follows:

**Process evaluation:** "The purpose of a process evaluation is to assess how a programme was implemented, by examining administrative processes, systems and governance structures. The primary reason for undertaking a process evaluation is to determine whether a programme is being delivered as intended" (DCYA, 2019, p. 9).

**Outcome and impact evaluation:** "The purpose of an outcome or impact evaluation is to examine the extent to which an intervention is achieving its intended objectives. Outcomes are measurable changes in the target population that may be attributed to a programme intervention. Longer-term outcomes may also be referred to as impacts. Impact evaluations can include assessments of changes to the wider community or society. Outcome and impact evaluations examine how an intervention has contributed to these outcomes or impacts" (DCYA, 2019, p. 9).

**Programme theory evaluation:** "The purpose of a programme theory evaluation is to investigate programme outcomes or impacts and also *how* and *why* these outcomes/impacts occurred. This approach is often used where traditional outcome/impact evaluation approaches are not feasible. This may occur where a programme is operating in complicated social contexts or where there are a range of competing factors affecting population outcomes. Programme theory evaluation approaches begin with the development of a logic model and/or a theory of how a programme brings about change. This model, or theory, is then tested using qualitative and quantitative methods. The contexts within which a programme is delivered are openly acknowledged and factored into outcome/impact assessments" (DCYA, 2019, pp. 9-10).

One particular framework widely used in planning and evaluation is the logic model. A logic model typically includes five key elements: Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Outcomes and Impacts. It is recognised that when a logic model is agreed in the early stages or development of a new programme, it can help frame subsequent evaluation by providing a roadmap. A programme logic model template is provided by DCYA (2019). The TPL evaluation framework outlined in this document is intended to be compatible with a logic model approach to facilitate TPL providers with experience of logic modelling although it is not intended that users of the current framework are required to have detailed knowledge of logic modelling.

<sup>5</sup> In logic modelling, the term "outcome" has a specific meaning as a measurable change that can be attributed to an intervention. In the context of curriculum development, "learning outcomes" refer to "statements in curriculum specifications to describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning" (NCCA, 2019, p. 5). The TPL evaluation framework uses the term "outcome" in the broader sense of any change that is anticipated as a consequence of participation in the TPL.

## Further reading

Several guidance notes to support evaluation have been developed by the DCYA/Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). These are directly relevant to the evaluation of TPL and provide useful resources for readers interested in further detail. Specifically, TPL providers are directed to the following three publications which outline key considerations in designing an evaluation, advice on picking methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups or questionnaires), and guidance on developing survey questions, respectively.

DCYA. (2019). [\*Evaluating government-funded human services: Evidence into policy guidance note #3.\*](#)

DCEDIY. (2021a). [\*Policy-relevant research design: picking a method: Evidence into policy guidance note #5.\*](#)

DCEDIY. (2021b). [\*A short guide to effective survey questionnaires: Evidence into policy guidance note #6.\*](#)

For wider reading on evaluation, see the OECD's (2021) [\*Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully\*](#) which outlines six criteria for evaluation:

- Relevance (Is the intervention doing the right things?)
- Coherence (How well does the intervention fit?)
- Effectiveness (Is the intervention achieving its objectives?)
- Efficiency (How well are the resources being used?)
- Impact (What difference does the intervention make?)
- Sustainability (Will the benefits last?).

The criteria are accompanied by two principles, which indicate that:

- (1) the criteria should be applied thoughtfully to support high-quality, useful evaluation, and
- (2) use of the criteria depends on the purposes of the evaluation.

For more information on measuring impact, see the [\*Practical Guide to Measuring and Managing Impact\*](#) (European Venture Philanthropy Association, 2013).

For more information on logic models and putting them into practice in evaluations, see:

DCEDIY. (2021c). [\*Frameworks for policy planning and evaluation: Evidence into policy guidance note #7.\*](#)

The need for robust evidence in the evaluation of educational initiatives is highlighted by the [\*European Commission\*](#) (2022). Their report provides an introduction to cost-benefit analysis for education policies, outlines evaluation methods in education and discusses issues associated with practical implementation.

Further reading on realist evaluation approaches, i.e., "what works, for whom and under what circumstances", is provided in Pawson and Tilley (1997, 2013) and Westhorp (2014).

The matrix-based approach proposed by Petticrew and Roberts (2003) provides further useful information for readers interested in a deeper understanding of how different research methods vary in their effectiveness to answer questions of interest in an evaluation.

Turning to resources to support thematic analysis of qualitative data, readers are advised to consult Braun and Clarke (2006) or Clarke et al. (2015).

## 1.2: Recent policy developments in Ireland related to TPL

The Terms of Reference for the development of the current framework emphasise the need for consideration of how the resultant framework may dovetail with existing frameworks in use in the Irish system. Specifically, two key policy documents were referenced: the *Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning* (henceforth *Cosán*; Teaching Council, 2016a) and *Looking at Our School* (DoE, 2022a, 2022b; DES, 2016a, 2016b). Since the establishment of the project to develop a TPL evaluation framework, another key development has been the decision to amalgamate the Department-funded support services (PDST, NIPT, CSL and JCT) providing TPL. A design framework – *the Design and Quality Assurance Process* – has been developed to support the design of TPL provided by these organisations (DoE, 2021b). A brief summary of each of these three recent developments is provided in this section.

Readers should note that there may be some parallels between data produced through teachers' reflective practices as described in *Cosán*, data gathered and used as part of the school self-evaluation (SSE) process, and data required by TPL providers to conduct effective TPL evaluation. The potential of an ICT-based solution to support teachers' reflection on, and meaningful engagement in, their own learning is recognised in *Cosán* (Teaching Council, 2016a, p. 25). However, at present, there are very limited centrally-held data to support TPL evaluation and data sharing constraints limit the potential for school SSE data to support TPL evaluation. In the longer term, and subject to relevant ICT developments, appropriate data governance (including principles of data ethics) and data sharing arrangements, there may be opportunities for TPL providers to make use of centrally-held data to support TPL evaluation.

### Cosán

In Ireland, professional learning is viewed by the Teaching Council as both a right and a responsibility of teachers and it is supported by a national framework for teachers' learning (*Cosán*; Teaching Council, 2016a). In October 2021, *Cosán* moved from a development phase to a growth phase with the launch of an action plan setting out short-term and medium-term actions. These actions are intended to support the further growth and systemic implementation of *Cosán* (DoE, 2021a).

*Cosán* is underpinned by seven key principles. These may be summarised as follows:

1. Teachers are recognised as autonomous and responsible learning professionals.
2. Teachers' learning should be linked to teachers' needs, students' needs, and school needs, and differentiated to suit the culture and context of teachers' work.
3. Teachers are best placed to identify and pursue learning opportunities which are relevant to them.
4. Teachers should be supported in assuring the quality of their learning.
5. Teachers should have access to rich and varied learning opportunities, and this should be supported by appropriate structures, resources and processes at national, regional, and local level.
6. Teachers' learning should be formally acknowledged and publicly recognised.
7. Teachers should be supported to prioritise learning that benefits them and their pupils/students.

*Cosán* (Teaching Council, 2016a, p. 13) describes four dimensions of teachers' learning:

**Formal and informal:** Both formal and informal learning are acknowledged as important aspects of teachers' learning. Teacher feedback during the consultation process for *Cosán* emphasised the importance and value of informal learning processes.

**Personal and professional:** These are "inextricably linked" and teachers who have a deep interest in professional development tend to also have a strong interest in personal development. *Cosán* recognises how interconnected these concepts are alongside their mutually beneficial relationship.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

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**Collaborative and individual:** Collaborative teacher learning is considered to be of central importance based on teacher feedback, although *Cosán* acknowledges that it is important for teachers to strike a balance between the development of their practice as an individual and the creation of a positive community of practice.

**School-based and external:** Both school-based and external teachers' learning have important positive aspects, and a combination of both tends to exhibit the best results.

While these principles and dimensions are reflected in the TPL evaluation framework presented in this document, the focus of the current evaluation framework is on formal learning opportunities, rather than informal.<sup>6</sup> For further discussion, see Chapter 1 of Rawdon et al. (2020).

## Looking at Our School and School Self-Evaluation

SSE in Ireland is underpinned by a quality framework ([Looking at our School 2022](#) [LAOS]), with a version of the framework for primary and special schools and a corresponding version for post-primary schools. The quality framework provides a set of standards for two dimensions of the work of schools – “learning and teaching” and “leadership and management”. It aims to provide a shared understanding of what effective and highly effective practices look like in the Irish school system. The most recent documents, published in August 2022 (DoE, 2022a, 2022b), correspond to the third cycle of SSE and replace the earlier versions published in 2016 (DES, 2016a, 2016b). The first cycle of SSE was for the period 2012-2016; the second covered the period 2016-2020 but was extended due to COVID-19. The structure and content of LAOS 2022 remains “substantially the same” as the corresponding 2016 version although “the framework has been updated to reflect recent educational reform, thinking and developments in areas such as child safeguarding, anti-bullying, inclusion, pupil participation, parent participation, creativity, education for sustainable development, support of pupils transitions, and *Cosán*” (DoE, 2022b, p. 6).

LAOS is intended to be complementary to *Cosán* with both frameworks providing a means through which “teachers can plan, engage in, and reflect on their learning, so as to ensure impact both on their practice and on their professional growth” (DoE, 2022a, p. 22).

LAOS recognises “career-long professional development as central to the teacher’s work and firmly situates reflection and collaboration at its heart. The framework holds that improving the quality of students’ learning should be the main driver of teacher learning” (DoE, 2022a, p. 9). Furthermore, the quality frameworks are intended to support the various bodies offering TPL in (DoE, 2022a, p. 24):

- “developing professional learning opportunities, including programmes and courses with a consistent view of what makes for high-quality learning and teaching and leadership and management;
- evaluating the strengths of current professional learning opportunities, including programmes and courses, and exploring opportunities for further development; and
- considering demands from teachers and from current and aspiring school leaders in the context of current challenges”.

The TPL evaluation framework views the evaluation of TPL as part of a cyclical process of ongoing improvement in TPL provision; i.e., findings from the evaluation of TPL should feed into the design of subsequent TPL. In this way, there are parallels between the evaluation of TPL and the six-step school SSE process, according to which monitoring and evaluation outcomes feed into the identification of focus for subsequent SSE activities. Although data gathered and analysed as part of the SSE process could support the evaluation of TPL, data sharing, ethical and other issues may limit this potential.

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6 Examples of informal TPL include accessing online materials, engaging with relevant social media (see e.g., Carpenter et al., 2022) or corridor exchanges with colleagues. Informal TPL is described in more detail in *Cosán* (Teaching Council, 2016a).

## Design and Quality Assurance for support services

Another development relevant to the evaluation of TPL in Ireland is the recent production by the DoE of a design framework intended to support the design of TPL provided by its support services. The (unpublished) *Design and Quality Assurance Process* is intended to inform the design and quality assurance process of DoE Teacher Education Section (TES) funded services (DoE, 2021b). The scope of the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* is narrower than that of the TPL evaluation framework, as the former focuses primarily on three types of TPL provision while the latter is intended to be more widely applicable. The three types of TPL within scope of the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* are: Type 1 (Core), Type 2 (Supplementary) and Type 3 (Resources). These are described as follows (DoE, 2021b):

- **Type 1 Core designs:** typically undertaken following receipt of new or revised curriculum/specifications/guidelines/framework documents at primary or post-primary level. They are responsive to education system and school priorities/policy and associated with major reform efforts or key changes in curriculum policy. Type 1 Core designs typically involve a full day's engagement, or a series of full day engagements over a specified period, with teachers at a national level.
- **Type 2 Supplementary designs:** these are generally single events or a series of single professional development events at a local or national level.
- **Type 3 Resources:** typically support the overall programme of professional development. The creation of such resources is influenced predominantly by the content of Type 1 Core and Type 2 Supplementary designs.

The design process is underpinned by a core conceptual framework that places at its centre the need to “foster sustained teacher practice to support student learning”. According to the key tenets of the conceptual framework for TPL design outlined in the *Design and Quality Assurance Process*, TPL should:

- Enhance reflective practice
- Develop pedagogical skills and content knowledge
- Be social and collaborative in nature
- Support both meaning making and teacher agency
- Focus on active learning experiences
- Be mindful of teacher needs and interests.

The key tenets of the conceptual framework for design are reflected in the TPL evaluation framework. Furthermore, prompt questions provided in the *Design and Quality Assurance Process*, intended for consideration in designing TPL, are also relevant to the evaluation of TPL. For interested readers, the full list of prompt questions from the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* framework is presented in [Appendix 3](#) of this document.

### 1.3: Selected research findings on effective TPL

Rawdon et al. (2020) identified a narrative review by Merchie et al. (2018) as having particular relevance to the development of an evaluation framework for TPL in Ireland. Merchie et al. (2018) review and build on the work of key contributors to the field such as Desimone (2009) and Guskey (2000). A key contribution of Merchie et al. (2018) is their further elaboration on the work of Desimone. In particular, the Appendix provided by Merchie et al. outlines for each of 54 studies reviewed, how the outcomes examined relate to Desimone's framework and how these are assessed. They also indicate whether or not the instruments are provided in the original paper. In this way, their paper provides an excellent resource for those interested in the assessment of TPL outcomes. Building on the work of Merchie et al. (2018), Compen et al. (2019) present a revised model of TPL evaluation which is intended to better reflect the

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interdependencies of the various components. Also relevant is a recent systematic review and meta-analysis on the characteristics of effective TPL (Sims et al., 2021).

When considering the evaluation of TPL, it is useful to refer to the continuum of approaches to TPL outlined by Kennedy (2014). According to Kennedy (2014), progression along the continuum is associated with increasing capacity for professional autonomy and teacher agency. Transmissive models comprise training, deficit, and cascade models and the purpose of these is the transmission of knowledge or information from the trainer to the teacher participant. Malleable models comprise award-bearing, standards-based, coaching/mentoring, and the community of practice model. The award-bearing model emphasises the completion of a course or programme of study while the standards-based model is usually linked to meeting standards or competencies. Both the community of practice model and related model of professional learning communities have received considerable attention in the professional development literature. While these have some common aspects, such as team learning and shared practices, there are also some distinctions between the two in terms of membership, leadership and knowledge sharing. For a detailed review, see Blankenship and Ruona (2007); see also Kennedy (2022) and PDST (2021) for relevant discussion in the Irish context.

The TPL evaluation framework recognises that the approach to TPL will likely influence the type of evaluation undertaken. For example, for TPL that is based on an award-bearing or standards-based approach, assessment of teacher outcomes will likely vary substantially from the comparable assessment for TPL based on a community of practice model.

Some attention has been given in the literature to the specific issues associated with the evaluation of communities of practice. It has been suggested that while it may be difficult to attribute with certainty the activities of a community of practice to a particular outcome, “a good case” can be built “using quantitative and qualitative data to measure different types of value created by the community” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 8).

Readers interested in further detail on the evaluation of communities of practice are advised to consult relevant materials from [BetterEvaluation.org](https://www.betterevaluation.org); see also McKellar et al. (2014). Work by Huijboom et al. (2021) may also be of interest which presents two classification instruments for use in collecting and classifying data associated with professional learning communities in schools. Drawing on work conducted in Ireland, Tannehill and MacPhail (2017) describe a longitudinal study of the professional development of physical education teachers in an Irish physical education learning community. Data were gathered in seminar/workshop evaluations, small group discussions, focus groups and individual interviews and findings are informative for learning community and community of practice models of TPL.

Another key finding from the TPL research literature is that the features, rather than the form (e.g., workshop or seminar), have been shown to be of greater importance in determining impact on students and teachers (Desimone, 2002, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001). Following the work of Desimone and colleagues, five core features of TPL have been associated with teacher change and student outcomes (Desimone, 2002, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001). These are:

- **Content focus:** the TPL focuses on subject matter content and how students learn that content;
- **Active learning:** effective TPL is linked to teacher experience of active learning, e.g., participating in interactive feedback discussions, observing or being observed, or leading discussions;
- **Coherence:** if TPL is not consistent with the broader policy and practice landscape, it will likely result in fragmentation and frustration;
- **Duration:** refers to frequency and duration of events as well as timelines and timespans. Desimone (2009) suggests that there is some support in the literature for activities that are spread over a semester and include at least 20 hours of contact time;

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- **Collective participation:** refers to opportunities for teachers to discuss, share and learn with colleagues and refers to the participation of multiple teachers from the same school.

These features are reflected in the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* for Teacher Education-funded support services (DoE, 2021b). In the work of Merchie et al. (2018, p. 148), core features are defined as those that “refer to the substance of the professional development initiative” while structural features refer to “characteristics of the activities’ structure or design”. Following Merchie et al. (2018) and Compen et al. (2019), the TPL evaluation framework presented in the current document also distinguishes between core features and structural features.

Online TPL has expanded rapidly in recent years and in particular, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. A body of literature considers its effectiveness vis-à-vis face-to-face TPL (e.g., Bragg et al., 2021; Fishman et al., 2013; Fishman et al., 2014). Encouraging findings have been reported and advantages of online TPL include its capacity to reach geographically dispersed audiences at convenient times (e.g., Morina, 2022; Owen, 2017). However, research findings underscore the need for careful consideration of the design of online TPL to ensure that it effectively meets participants’ needs (e.g., Collins & Liang, 2015; Lay, Allman, Cutri, & Kimmons, 2020; Powell & Bodur, 2019). Lay et al. (2020) argue that in the absence of systematic research specifically pertaining to online TPL, general principles and guidelines relevant for face-to-face TPL are assumed to be applicable although this may be a somewhat simplistic assumption, which fails to take into account modality-specific issues of online TPL. The current TPL evaluation framework is intended to be sufficiently general in order to be applicable to the evaluation of both in-person and online TPL, although it is acknowledged that the TPL evaluation framework does not give detailed consideration to the specifics of the online modality.<sup>7</sup>

A major contribution to the literature pertaining to TPL evaluation was made by Guskey who argues that there are five critical stages to be considered in order to effectively evaluate professional learning (Guskey, 2000, 2002; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). These are: participants’ reactions; participants’ learning; organisational support and change; participants’ use of new knowledge and skills; and, student learning outcomes. In Guskey’s view, success at one level is a prerequisite for success at the next. Some criticisms of “level” models have been advanced in the literature (e.g., Coldwell & Simkins, 2011; Holton, 1996; Reio et al., 2017) and of Guskey’s model in particular which does not take into account the extent to which a professional development initiative incorporates known effective features (Merchie et al., 2018). Furthermore, Guskey’s work does not take into account the interplay of possible outcomes (Early & Porritt, 2014). Nonetheless, Guskey’s work remains a major influence in the field and the TPL evaluation framework presented in this document includes each of his components although with differing degrees of emphasis.

In the Irish context, King (2014) built on the work of Guskey and others to develop a TPL evaluation model. King’s (2014) model also references Hall and Hord (1987) and her model would likely support in-depth evaluation, particularly of a new programme, where detailed information is required on participants’ use of new knowledge gained through the TPL. King’s model describes outcomes for participants as personal, professional or collective, with one or more subcategories described for each of these. Drawing on Hall and Hord (1987), she notes that participants’ use of new knowledge or skills is not a binary concept; i.e., learning can be implemented to a greater or lesser extent. King also notes that TPL can have a “product” outcome, i.e., a tangible outcome such as a policy or resource. Relevant to this outcome are teachers’ feelings about, and use of, the products. Regarding process outcomes, King (2014) notes the

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<sup>7</sup> For example, in international large-scale student assessments, increasing attention is given to the analysis opportunities afforded by log file data produced through online administration (e.g., Goldhammer et al., 2020). In evaluating online TPL, consideration might usefully be given to similar data, such as time spent by participants on particular elements of a programme or specific issues associated with participation in an online learning community.

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potential for new or improved systems, e.g., teachers better identifying their own TPL needs or engaging more critically in reflection on TPL. King's model also includes pupil outcomes (cognitive, affective or psychomotor) and cascading effects (to other adults in the school, other pupils in the school, adults in other school, or pupils in other schools) which refers to an impact of TPL on individuals not directly involved.

# Chapter 2: A TPL evaluation framework for Ireland

## 2.1: The TPL evaluation framework

Figure 2.1 presents the evaluation framework for TPL in Ireland. The four components of the TPL evaluation framework were identified through the different strands of the project and iterative development and revision of draft evaluation frameworks. The components of the framework are:



This chapter describes each of the four components in more detail.

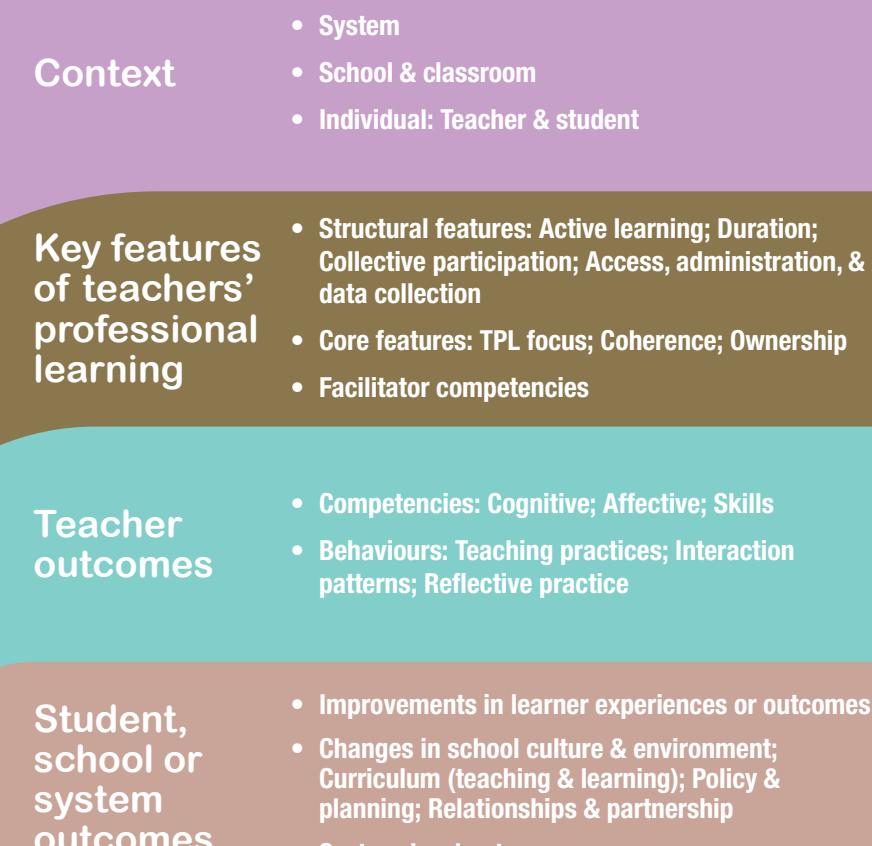


Figure 2.1: A framework for TPL evaluation in Ireland

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Context comprises system factors, school and classroom characteristics, and individual teacher and student characteristics. The key features of TPL comprise structural features, core features, and facilitator competencies. Outcomes for teachers in the current model are divided into competencies (cognitive, affective and skills) and behaviours (teaching practices, interaction patterns and reflective practice). While it is not a necessary condition for all TPL to have student, school or system outcomes, it is recognised that improvements in learner experiences or outcomes are often a focus of teacher engagement in TPL. It is recognised that these outcomes likely take a longer time to manifest and their assessment may require longitudinal follow-up beyond the scope of some TPL evaluation. Nonetheless, for more in-depth evaluation, student, school or system outcomes should be considered once participants have had a sufficient opportunity to reflect on their TPL, apply their learning and assess the impact on their practice. At the design stage of TPL, it is of central importance that the intended learning outcomes are clearly specified in order to support evaluation of the extent to which outcomes were achieved as intended. Furthermore, the reasons for which participants embark on TPL (individual factors in the framework for TPL evaluation presented in Figure 2.1), and the alignment between these reasons and the intended learning outcomes, are important considerations in TPL evaluation.

In the current model, context encompasses the three other components. This is intended to illustrate how context can directly impact on the key features of TPL and on outcomes from TPL. Key features of TPL are considered to impact directly on teacher outcomes and indirectly on student, school and system outcomes, through teacher outcomes. In the model, teacher outcomes may impact on students, the school, or the wider system but the presentation of the model is intended to show that teacher outcomes are important outcomes in their own right.

The remainder of this chapter provides further detail on each of the four components by posing three questions for each component:

- What is it? (or What are they?)
- Why is it included? (or Why are they included?)
- How can it be assessed? (or How can they be assessed?)

The answers to these questions aim to explain the component, provide a rationale for its inclusion and outline some suggestions for its assessment in TPL evaluation. It is recognised that the examples provided here are not exhaustive and each component may comprise additional elements relevant to a particular TPL evaluation which are not included in the current examples. The judgement of TPL providers should be used when identifying the aspects of a component to operationalise in a particular evaluation. For example, relevant contextual features should be prioritised over less relevant features. Also, priority should be given to those outcomes that are anticipated to change as a consequence of TPL participation.

Further materials to support use of the framework are provided in the appendices. [Appendix 1](#) provides a descriptive template which some TPL providers may wish to use when describing a TPL opportunity; [Appendix 2](#) presents an evaluation template; [Appendix 3](#) outlines the prompt questions from the Design and Quality Assurance Process; and [Appendix 4](#) provides further guidance on the application of the TPL evaluation framework.

## 2.2: Context



### What is it?

Contextual factors are the wider barriers and enablers which influence TPL uptake, participation, learning from TPL, and/or implementation and embedding of TPL learning. Contextual factors also influence the design and evaluation of TPL. Contextual factors are divided into system-level factors, school and classroom factors, and individual (teacher and student) factors.



### Why is it included?

Internationally, school context – including school leadership, school culture, school size, resources, collegial support and the school's socioeconomic status – has been shown to impact TPL needs, barriers to participation, levels of participation and sustainability of TPL outcomes (Avalos, 2011; Buczynski & Hansen, 2010; Compen et al., 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Haymore Sandholtz & Ringstaff, 2016). School context includes characteristics of the school and classes within the school. In addition to school leadership and culture, relevant contextual characteristics in Ireland include structural features such as enrolment size, language of instruction, school location (urban/rural), sector<sup>8</sup> and ethos. Other relevant contextual characteristics include the socioeconomic background of the school's enrolment, the percentage of students who speak languages other than English or Irish at home, the percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and the percentage of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Such factors are likely to influence TPL needs, capacity to participate in TPL, and teachers' capacity to implement learning from TPL. For example, the TPL needs of teachers in a small rural school with multi-grade classrooms may vary from those of teachers in a larger urban school. Drawing on data from the *Growing up in Ireland* survey gathered in 2007/2008, Banks and Smyth (2011) report that primary teachers of classes where one or more pupils had a learning difficulty<sup>9</sup> were more likely to have had high uptake of TPL (defined as more than 5 days in the previous year) compared to teachers of classes where no pupils had a learning difficulty. Also, teachers of multi-grade classes had higher take-up of TPL than teachers of single-grade classes and the authors suggest that the complexity of dealing with a range of needs may have prompted teachers to upgrade their skills through TPL (Banks & Smyth, 2011).

School socioeconomic context was taken into account in a recent Irish evaluation of the *Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme* by NEPS (Kennedy et al., 2021; see also Leckey et al., 2016). The evaluation considers findings of changes in teachers' psychological outcomes separately for DEIS and non-DEIS schools and highlights some differences between the two. Findings show that following participation in the programme, teachers in non-DEIS schools experienced larger increases in all efficacy outcome variables than their counterparts in DEIS schools. Furthermore, teachers in non-DEIS schools experienced larger improvements in wellbeing over the period of the intervention than teachers in DEIS schools. The authors suggest that the findings may relate to the higher levels of professional development already experienced by teachers in DEIS schools prior to the intervention (Kennedy et al., 2021).

<sup>8</sup> At post-primary level, school sector (secondary, Education and Training Board, and community/comprehensive) is a relevant characteristic of schools used when drawing samples for large-scale assessments, see e.g., Perkins & Clerkin (2020).

<sup>9</sup> The *Growing up in Ireland* questionnaire used the terms "learning/intellectual disability" and "physical/sensory disability".

## Chapter 2: A TPL evaluation framework for Ireland

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A recent small-scale research project in Ireland set out to examine school culture around teacher collaborative practice and to provide a snapshot of the extent to which such practice is enabled and/or encouraged by school leaders in voluntary secondary schools (Moynihan & O'Donovan, 2022). Participating principals reported using a variety of structures and strategies to facilitate teacher collaborative practice. These included: the provision of space and time for teachers to discuss and plan collaborative methods; distribution of leadership; challenging and encouraging teachers to challenge an “isolationist” culture; encouraging peer observation; and promoting a culture of trust, respect, sharing and teacher self-confidence. The importance of pacing was emphasised by principals who noted that increasing collaborative practice needs to occur at a slow and steady pace (Moynihan & O'Donovan, 2022).

Conducted at primary level in Ireland, research by King (2016) examines the systemic factors – support, initiative design and impact, and teacher agency – that support teacher learning leading to change (whilst acknowledging that not all TPL needs to result in new practices and change). The first of these – support – is of particular relevance to school context. In King's study, support for teachers to implement their learning from TPL came from school leadership, from having teachers acting as change agents or advocates for the new initiative, and from participation in professional learning communities. Leadership practices that were found to support teachers' engagement with, and sustainability of, new practices included top-down support for bottom-up initiatives; provision of time for collaboration; and no “micromanagement”.

Banks and Smyth (2011) noted that having controlled statistically for other factors, uptake of TPL was higher in Irish primary schools with a more positive school climate; i.e., where pupils were seen as enjoying school, being well-behaved and rewarding to work with. They also noted that principals were more likely to report teacher openness to participation in TPL in smaller schools compared to medium-to-large schools, after controlling for other factors. Principal experience was also significantly associated with teacher participation in TPL, with lower levels of TPL participation in schools led by recently appointed principals and in those with long serving principals and higher levels in school where principals were in the post for 3 to 10 years (Banks & Smyth, 2011).

Research conducted in the USA has examined the impact of providing physical resources to support learning and teaching (e.g., footballs, basketballs, and bean bags) in addition to TPL (workshops, peer learning communities and school site visits by curriculum mentors) for physical education (McCaughtry et al., 2006). Findings underscore the need for TPL to be accompanied by the necessary resources to support change and indicate that resources play a key role in TPL leading to changes in teaching and learning.

Turning to the broader system context (described as “macro conditions” by Avalos [2011]), the current TPL evaluation framework understands this to refer to factors such as organisational factors, policy, curriculum and educational redevelopments, standards and frameworks (including *Cosán*). System-level features may be expected to influence motivation for participation and uptake of TPL, e.g., the provision of incentives for participation such as Extra-Personal Vacation days<sup>10</sup> or release time. Furthermore, system-level influences may determine whether TPL priorities are determined in a top-down approach or are led by teacher and school priorities. System-level characteristics may also influence the degree to which teachers have flexibility to put learning from TPL into practice in their schools or classrooms.

Recent Irish research findings related to school- and system-level influences on TPL include Moynihan and O'Donovan (2022) and Walsh (2022). Moynihan and O'Donovan (2022) refer to the potential of policy to negatively impact on school autonomy to negotiate models of collaborative practice. Walsh (2022) discusses the impact of timetabling on teacher capacity to put learning into practice. Such system-level influences are likely outside the control of the TPL provider yet may exercise considerable influence and as such may warrant acknowledgment in TPL evaluation.

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<sup>10</sup> Extra-personal vacation (EPV) days are available to teachers who attend approved summer courses under rule 58 of the Rules for National Schools (Circular 37/97; DES 1997/2006). EPV days are not available to post-primary teachers.

Individual teacher characteristics have also been shown to be relevant to take-up of TPL (e.g., Merchie et al., 2018). Banks and Smith (2011) highlighted differences in TPL participation in Ireland by teacher gender, with female teachers participating in more TPL opportunities than male teachers, all else being equal. Level of teaching experience was also found to be significantly associated with TPL uptake in their study, with those who had 2-5 years teaching experience 2.4 times more likely to take part in more than five days' TPL in a year than newly qualified teachers.

The role of teacher motivation to participate in TPL has been examined across different jurisdictions (see e.g., Jansen in de Wal et al., 2014; Proudfoot & Boyd, 2022). In Ireland (Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland), McMillan et al. (2016) examined the factors that motivate teacher engagement in TPL. They discuss intrinsic factors (career advancement, growth and achievement), contingent factors (interpersonal relationships and school policy), and a tangential (system-wide) factor (compulsory TPL), with intrinsic factors found to be the chief catalysts in motivating teacher engagement in TPL.

The role of motivation is recognised as complex, with potential circularity in its relationship with TPL engagement; i.e., motivation is necessary for participation and participation in TPL may increase motivation for further participation. Participation in TPL may impact on levels of engagement, motivation more widely and teachers' enjoyment of their role (Teaching Council, 2016a). McMillan et al. (2016) note that while the intrinsic (personal) factors of career advancement, potential growth and achievement motivated teacher engagement in TPL, peers' feedback on TPL experiences were also influential. In addition, school policy was influential with teachers more likely to engage in TPL when there was a school culture of TPL participation.

Teacher self-efficacy represents an important contextual factor influencing a teacher's perceived need for TPL, uptake of TPL or success in implementation of learning from TPL. Changes in self-efficacy may also represent an outcome of TPL and teacher self-efficacy is discussed further under outcomes below.



## How can it be assessed?

It is important that TPL providers consider which aspects of school context are likely to impact on the effectiveness of a particular TPL as this will determine the most appropriate assessment. For example, class size may have particular relevance if the TPL focuses on hands-on activities for young children (given previous research findings indicating that larger class size places a constraint on the use of active methods in the primary classroom; McCoy et al., 2012). Similarly, school socioeconomic profile is a relevant contextual variable when considering the impact of TPL on literacy or numeracy outcomes (given the plethora of research findings from Ireland and elsewhere highlighting lower levels of achievement of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds; e.g., Gilleece et al., 2020; Mullis et al., 2020; Shiel et al., 2014; Sirin, 2005). School socioeconomic status is often operationalised using school DEIS status in Irish research.<sup>11</sup>

[Appendix 4](#) includes prompts and suggestions for how to give consideration to contextual factors when evaluating TPL. It is relevant to note that the scale of the TPL evaluation will determine the extent to which outcomes for subgroups can appropriately be examined; i.e., if the number of participating schools is low, grouping schools by contextual variables may result in groups that are too small for analysis purposes. When the number of participating schools is larger, it may be possible to examine outcomes separately for schools with different contexts, e.g., findings for Irish-medium schools compared to schools where the medium of instruction is English.

<sup>11</sup> Schools in DEIS are those serving the highest concentrations of students at risk of educational disadvantage which is defined as "the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools" (Section 32[9] of the Education Act 1998, see Department of Education (2022d)).

## Chapter 2: A TPL evaluation framework for Ireland

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A study by Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis (2005) in Australia used four items to assess teachers' perceptions of school support for professional development (a relevant contextual variable). Teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that:

- The leaders in my school actively support and encourage all staff to take part in professional development.
- Insufficient time is available in my school to support teachers' professional learning.
- Follow-up support for professional development is available within my school.
- Teachers at my school work collaboratively to resolve teaching and learning issues.

In their analysis, control variables were: teacher gender, experience (measured as number of years teaching), school sector, and school support.

## 2.3: Key features of teachers' professional learning

The key features of TPL<sup>12</sup> to be considered in evaluation are:

- Structural features
  - Active learning;
  - Duration;
  - Collective participation;
  - Access, administration & data;
- Core features
  - TPL focus;
  - Coherence;
  - Ownership;
- Facilitator competencies

Each of these features is defined in this section although there is variation in the extent to which examples are available of previous assessment of these in TPL evaluation in Ireland. In this section, the features which are emphasised in Irish policy documents (such as LAOS and Cosán) and in internal protocols of TPL providers are prioritised for more detailed discussion.

### Structural features

#### Active learning



##### What is it?

Active learning is said to take place when "the instructor and instructional activities explicitly afford students agency for their learning" (Lombardi et al., 2021, p. 15). With respect to TPL, Desimone (2009) distinguishes "active learning" from "passive learning" which might be characterised by listening to a lecture. She suggests

<sup>12</sup> In earlier phases of this project the capacity of TPL to support "diffusion", i.e., the "organic unplanned rippling of practices" (King, 2014, p. 106), was considered to be a key feature of TPL. "Diffusion" is now omitted from the key features given that by definition, it is unplanned and therefore largely outside the control of the TPL. School contextual features, including leadership, culture, and opportunities for sharing learning, likely impact on the extent of diffusion. Thus, while diffusion is recognised as relevant it is omitted from the evaluation framework not least because it would be difficult to assess in practice.

that one example of where active learning can take place is when discussion takes place following teacher observation of another teacher's lesson. Other opportunities that are likely to support active learning include increased levels of engagement with direct experiences of phenomena or with scientific data or models (Lombardi et al., 2021). According to Desimone and others, TPL is most effective when active learning opportunities are provided. For their part, Merchie et al. (2018, p. 149) define active learning as "inquiry-based through continuous inquiry of practice and reflection on professional and academic knowledge", emphasising the benefits of teachers as "co-creators" rather than "consumers" of knowledge.



## Why is it included?

The role of active learning for effective TPL has received considerable attention in the international literature (e.g., Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Lieberman, 1995; Merchie et al., 2018). TPL frameworks and guidelines in use in Ireland also place a strong emphasis on active learning. For example, *Cosán* highlights the need for teachers to be active learners rather than passive recipients for successful professional learning to occur (Teaching Council, 2016a). The CSL [\*Professional Learning Continuum for School Leadership\*](#) references relevant experiential learning and refers to both action and reflection (CSL, nd). Similarly, the PDST and JCT emphasise active learning in their provision; see e.g., the (unpublished) JCT and DES (2019) *Quality Framework for Design of Professional Learning Experiences*.

The importance placed on active learning by TPL providers in Ireland is reflected in its inclusion as one of the key tenets of the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* (DoE, 2021b) which requires TPL to place a "focus on active learning experiences". Prompt questions related to active learning are provided in the *Design and Quality Assurance Process*. These are intended for consideration at the design stage of TPL and are also relevant to evaluation (see [\*Appendix 3\*](#) of the current document).



## How can it be assessed?

- Data collection with TPL participants focusing on: participant perceptions of the relative balance between active and passive learning in the TPL; participant satisfaction with the active learning opportunities provided; participant reports of the opportunities provided in the TPL for engagement in action research<sup>13</sup>, modelling, or observation. Methods of data collection include questionnaires or focus groups.
- Data collection with TPL facilitators focusing on: facilitators' perceptions of the balance between active and passive learning opportunities; facilitator satisfaction with participant engagement in active learning opportunities.
- Observation of TPL to quantify time spent on active learning opportunities and to assess if the TPL is facilitated as intended. Merchie et al. (2018) focus on measuring key features of TPL using checklists, fidelity protocols (i.e., the degree to which the initiative is delivered as intended), or surveys. Fixsen et al. (2005) describe the systematic implementation practices which are core to the effective implementation of evidence-based practices and programmes and provide some detail on fidelity measures.

<sup>13</sup> Based on research conducted in Ireland, de Paor and Murphy (2018) discuss some specific issues associated with research as a model of TPL, noting the need for support as well as practical issues such as time and cost.

## Chapter 2: A TPL evaluation framework for Ireland

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- In outlining methodologies for the evaluation of TPL, *Cosán* advocates giving consideration to the extent to which the TPL promotes four areas, one of which is action research and inquiry (Teaching Council, 2016a).

## Duration



### What is it?

Studies of effective TPL have highlighted the need for longer investments of time and for a need to spread activities over a longer duration (e.g., Yoon et al., 2007; Desimone, 2009; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Tannehill et al., 2021) although an ideal duration has not been identified. In the current TPL evaluation framework, it is recognised that often the duration of the TPL may be outside the direct control of the TPL provider; for example, if a specific number of days of TPL is funded in the context of curriculum reform or educational redevelopments.

With reference to appropriate criteria and procedures for the evaluation of TPL, *Cosán* (Teaching Council, 2016a) includes duration/continuity as one of several appropriate criteria for inclusion. According to *Cosán*, this criterion includes examination of whether or not TPL opportunities allow for follow-up support, experimentation and consolidation, and progressive and sustained learning over time. Programme duration is also included by CSL as one of the elements to be included in the description of TPL provision.



### Why is it included?

Desimone (2009) does not explicitly identify a particular “tipping point” with respect to duration; rather, she suggests that TPL needs to be of a “sufficient” duration (p. 184). This refers to both the span of time over which the activity is spread and the number of hours spent in the activity. She suggests that there is support in the literature for activities that are spread over a semester (or intense summer institutes with follow-up during the school year) and include at least 20 hours of contact time. A review of over 100 papers by Avalos (2011, p.17) highlights the greater effectiveness of “prolonged interventions” compared to shorter ones. Nonetheless, some recent work cautions that a longer TPL intervention is not always better, as a sustained programme of TPL may place greater pressures on teachers resulting in poor implementation or drop-out (Sims et al., 2021). Rather, the authors underscore the need for balance between the desire to promote meaningful learning and the need to minimise pressure on teacher and curriculum time.

The *Conceptual Framework for Professional Development Provision* used by the PDST (prior to amalgamation with other support services) include reference to duration with the following prompt questions on this topic (PDST, 2017):

- How many interactions does the programme comprise?
- Over what timespan does the professional development activity last? (Weeks? Months? Years?)
- What is the frequency of the support?

While these questions focus on duration, further reflection is required to assess if the number of interactions, timespan and frequency are considered adequate by TPL participants and facilitators. Protocols used by the JCT in their design of TPL also incorporate consideration of TPL duration.



## How can it be assessed?

Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis (2005) used self-developed instruments to examine contact hours and time span of professional development activities in Australia. To assess contact hours, teachers were asked to indicate the total number of hours they spent in activities related to the TPL programme (less than 10; 10-20; 20-50; 50+). To assess time span, teachers were asked to indicate the total time the professional development activity covered (less than one week; one month or less; six months or less; more than six months).

As well as focusing on the number of hours and the timespan, it may also be useful to consider the timing of the TPL (e.g., during school time, in the evenings, at weekends or during school holidays).

## Collective participation



## What is it?

According to Desimone (2011, p. 69) “groups of teachers from the same grade, subject, or school should participate in professional development activities together to build an interactive learning community”. Desimone and others suggest that TPL is most effective when there is collective participation. Lesson study, based on collective participation in a learning community, has been shown to be an effective approach for supporting TPL (Saito & Sato, 2012); for further information in the Irish context, see <https://pdst.ie/primary/stem/lesson-study> and PDST (2021). A version of the lesson study model is used in the coaching cycle of the *Droichead* programme.<sup>14</sup> Also in Ireland, TPL for Junior Cycle supports collective participation of teachers as JCT has developed national clusters of schools, facilitating subject teachers to share practice, collaborate and build community. The PDST promotes collective participation in its leadership programmes and in TPL for new senior cycle subjects and specifications (see PDST, 2021).



## Why is it included?

According to Desimone (2009), collective participation allows for greater potential interaction and discourse between teachers. This is also supported by *Cosán*, which calls for “purposeful collaboration that is social” and “acknowledges that it is important for teachers to strike a balance between the development of their practice as an individual and the creation of a positive community of practice” (Teaching Council, 2016a, p. 12). Collective participation is also a core element of the CSL model which indicates that “...the deepening of reflection and experiential learning to sustain and improve practice depends on collaboration. There is a need for a disciplined and purposeful approach to collaborating where there are clear purposes and identified outcomes with opportunities to co-construct possible strategies” (CSL, nd, pp. 21-22). One of the key tenets of the *DoE Design and Quality Assurance Process* is that TPL should be social and collaborative in nature. Finally, another example of the importance ascribed to collaborative professional development in Ireland is reflected in the publication by the PDST (2021) of *Civitas Parium PDST Models of Collaborative Professional Development*.

14 *Droichead* is an integrated professional induction framework for newly qualified teachers in Ireland. Readers interested in more detail about *Droichead* can find information at <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/teacher-education/droichead/>.

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## How can it be assessed?

An assessment of participants' experience of collective participation may be carried out through data collection with participants. Facilitators' perceptions can also be gathered. However, it is more difficult to assess the extent to which collaboration is meaningful and the extent to which TPL supports collaboration to become embedded in teachers' everyday practices.

Detailed prompt questions related to the "Social and collaborative nature" of the TPL are provided in the *DoE Design and Quality Assurance Process* (see [Appendix 3](#) of the current document).

Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis (2005) assess collective participation through a single item asking if more than one teacher from a school participated in the TPL programme although this is likely to represent a simplistic assessment of collective participation.

## Access, administration and data collection



## What is it?

High-quality TPL requires effective management and administration – the areas covered by this component of the TPL evaluation framework and one of three themes of the CSL [endorsement process](#) (CSL, 2019). Examples of factors that may be included in *Access, administration and data collection* are: application of the principles of Universal Design for Learning,<sup>15</sup> the convenience and appropriateness of the location,<sup>16</sup> ease of accessing the TPL through the school's language of instruction, cost to participants, and the extent to which facilitation is inclusive. Effective management and administration also require an awareness of the needs of the intended audience, ease of access for the target audience, inclusive teaching methodologies and approaches, good data gathering, good communication, and effective evaluation feedback loops. In order to have effective TPL evaluation feedback loops, i.e., to use learning from TPL evaluation to inform future provision, adequate data are required. The potential of an ICT-based solution to support teachers' reflection on, and meaningful engagement in, their own learning is recognised in *Cosán* (Teaching Council, 2016a, p.25). The development of such a database would likely support the gathering of rich qualitative data and may, in the longer term, provide one source of valuable data for the purposes of TPL evaluation, notwithstanding the need to ensure appropriate data governance and sharing arrangements.

<sup>15</sup> Universal Design for Learning recognises that there is variability within and across learners. This gives rise to a need for choice and flexibility to ensure that all learners are supported in accessing and participating in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities (see Meyer, Rose & Gordon, 2014 and <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>).

<sup>16</sup> Locations for TPL include, *inter alia*, the classroom or school as well as external locations such as Education Centres. Increasingly, TPL provision also incorporates online activities. The appropriateness of the location should be determined by the type of TPL (e.g., peer-to-peer mentoring, action research, community of practice or seminar), the capacity of the location to enable key features of effective TPL to be incorporated and participants' preferences.



## Why is it included?

While the authors are not aware of this feature being included in previous evaluation of TPL in Ireland, survey findings emphasise the importance to teachers and principals of TPL being held in accessible locations at convenient times (Rawdon et al., 2021). Furthermore, *Cosán* recognises the complexities associated with issues of access, particularly in the context of more formal learning opportunities, and notes that access can have cost, time, linguistic and geographical dimensions (Teaching Council, 2016a). The importance of accessible information, different modes of engagement (e.g., printed materials, face-to-face training, webinars) and flexibility (e.g., time and location) has also been highlighted in international research (Sims et al., 2021) and the increasing role played by online TPL in widening access has been noted (e.g., Lesiak et al., 2021). An absence of these factors may be considered a barrier to participation in TPL.

In addition to access and administration, data collection is included in this component as effective evaluation relies on having access to appropriate data. *Cosán* includes participant involvement in design and evaluation as one of several appropriate criteria for evaluating TPL. Thus, participants contribute not only to data collection for the evaluation but should also be afforded opportunities to be involved in TPL design and evaluation.



## How can it be assessed?

As part of their endorsement process, CSL (2019) suggests that TPL provider(s) should:

- Have efficient and effective administrative backup to support the development, facilitation and evaluation of the provision;
- Have an accurate and clear marketing plan which specifies learning impacts and outcomes;
- Have a clear communication plan to address participants' needs throughout the course of the programme/activity;
- Ensure there are systems to manage the systematic gathering, review and use of evaluation and impact data to support ongoing development;
- Ensure ease of access for the target audience, through the use of a blended learning approach, as appropriate, and an adequate infrastructure to support this blended learning;
- Provide opportunities for participants to engage through the medium of Gaeilge according to context, or when requested.

Drawing on the work of CSL and others, relevant indicators for TPL evaluation purposes may include: attendance, retention and completion statistics (relevance of these will vary in line with duration of TPL); destination statistics; geographical location and the criteria used to inform the decision; details of if/how provision is enhanced by a blended learning approach; evidence of how the programme and timetable are conveyed to participants; participant/facilitator feedback on perceived effectiveness of TPL administrative procedures; participant questionnaire with questions on satisfaction with location and satisfaction with accessibility; participant reflection; or TPL provider reflection on administration. A contextual factor (at school- or system-level) likely to influence access is whether or not release time was available for participation.

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## Core features of TPL

Compen et al. (2019) identify three core features of effective TPL – a content focus, coherence and ownership. As outlined in Rawdon et al. (2021), content focus is adapted to TPL focus for the Irish TPL evaluation model. As there are few studies that disentangle the effects of these features, they are discussed together in this section.



### What are they?

**TPL focus:** Desimone (2009) suggests that the content focus of the TPL may be its most important and influential feature; i.e., TPL has been shown to be most successful when it focuses on subject matter content and how students learn that content. Gore and Rosser (2022) have recently shown benefits of TPL that is pedagogy-focused but inclusive of teachers of diverse subjects, rather than focused exclusively on a specific subject or part of the curriculum. The rationale for replacing “content focus” with “TPL focus” in the current framework is to allow for the evaluation of TPL related to leadership and management and other content that is not directly related to subject matter content.

**Coherence:** Refers to the alignment of the TPL experience with participants’ (teacher) goals; standards and current reforms; and theory and research evidence (Merchie et al., 2018).

**Ownership:** Merchie et al. (2018) indicate that TPL demonstrates a high degree of ownership when it responds to participants’ self-identified needs and interests.



### Why are they included?

As outlined previously, “content focus” is replaced with “TPL focus” in the current framework to allow for the evaluation of TPL that is not directly related to subject matter content. Coherence is included in the framework given the importance that TPL is aligned with participant goals; the curriculum, academic standards and policy reforms; and current research and theory.

Ownership is included because it has been shown that TPL is “more meaningful to teachers when they exercise ownership of ... content and process” (Merchie et al., 2018, p.149). Compen et al. (2019) note that there are few studies in the literature that examine the ownership feature in isolation, making it difficult to provide direct evidence for the beneficial influence of ownership. Nonetheless, there is strong endorsement of teacher ownership of professional learning in *Cosán* which views teachers as “professionals who are intrinsically motivated to take ownership of their professional development and steer the course of their own learning journeys” (Teaching Council, 2016a, p. 6). *Cosán* is intended to be sufficiently flexible to allow for heterogeneity across teachers in terms of their learning needs while simultaneously allowing the needs of students, the school and the system to be met. LAOS emphasises that the principal, the deputy principal(s) and other leaders in the school should “promote professional learning that is evidence-based and adapted to the identified needs of the school” (DoE, 2022a, p. 36).

The following extract from the most recent SSE guidelines (DoE, 2022c, p. 6) has many parallels with the process of supporting effective TPL. It recognises the need to balance local and national priorities (reflecting both coherence and ownership in the TPL evaluation framework) and across various content areas. While SSE balances school and system goals, TPL also needs to balance teacher goals.

*"Through SSE, schools can shape their own improvement agenda by identifying priority areas for development and by planning for improvement in a way that takes account of their own unique school context. Balanced with this view is the recognition that schools also work within a system of national requirements, including those relating to child safeguarding (including child protection and anti-bullying) and wellbeing. There are also expectations relating to curriculum, inclusion and equity, digital education, and education for sustainable development. Indeed, over the coming years, the SSE process used by schools will need to be flexible enough to support ongoing curriculum redevelopment and implementation. SSE that works for Irish schools needs to balance school and system goals." (DoE, 2022c, p. 6).*



## How can they be assessed?

In the work by Ingvarson et al. (2005), content focus was assessed by asking teachers about the emphasis given to four aspects of content: content or subject knowledge, knowledge of how students learn content, knowledge of methods of teaching content, and models to illustrate those methods of teaching that content. Teachers were asked to respond using a four-point scale (1 = no emphasis, 2 = minor emphasis, 3 = moderate emphasis, 4 = major emphasis). The authors indicate that the scores of each of these items were averaged to give a measure of content focus.

An example of examining content focus in the evaluation of TPL comes from Desimone et al. (2013) who conducted a 3-year longitudinal quasi-experimental study of mathematics content-focused professional development for teachers at Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth grade in high poverty schools in the US. They examined the impact of teaching practice on student achievement, and then examined the link between professional development and the kind of teaching practice that was shown to influence student achievement. Findings indicate that when teachers taught advanced topics (rather than more basic topics), student achievement grew more quickly, and that teachers who engaged in the professional development were more likely to teach advanced topics.

Turning to the assessment of coherence, Ingvarson et al. (2005) indicate that they did *not* include a measure of coherence as they regarded it as not applicable to the Australian context where TPL programmes would not receive funding unless they were coherent with relevant standards.

Compen et al. (2019) cite two examples of studies which included a focus on ownership. In one, ownership was implemented by allowing teachers to select between a number of options for breakout sessions during their TPL (Batty et al., 2015); this likely reflects a relatively limited degree of ownership. In the other example, a 'teacher-as-learner' approach was adopted with the aim of increasing perceived relevance and meaning (Hensley et al., 2017).

In Ireland, ESCI places a strong emphasis on ownership at school level in selecting opportunities for TPL at local level. Following completion of TPL with ESCI, participants are issued with an evaluation which incorporates an open-ended needs analysis, intended to elicit information on key priorities and evolving needs of teachers and schools. The intention is that these needs inform the process of future TPL design. ESCI asks the question: *Can you indicate future supports which may be beneficial to your professional development or may address key teaching and learning priorities in your school context?*

In summary, the review of the research conducted for this project has not identified simple quantitative measures of TPL focus, coherence or ownership that are sufficiently general for application to the evaluation of TPL in any content area. To address this gap, the prompt questions and participant evaluation materials ([Appendix 4](#)) are intended to support TPL providers with data collection in these areas.

## Facilitator competencies



### What are they?

Facilitator competencies refer to the content knowledge and skills of the TPL facilitator.



### Why are they included?

Merchie et al. (2018) note the TPL facilitator<sup>17</sup> plays a key role in facilitating effective TPL, referencing the importance of facilitators having both sufficient content knowledge and skills (e.g., supporting self-regulation and providing qualitative feedback). *Cosán* identifies the skills and knowledge of facilitators as one of several appropriate criteria for evaluating TPL.

Findings from the survey of teachers and principals conducted during the development of the current framework show that survey respondents valued the role of a high-quality facilitator in TPL (Rawdon et al., 2021). Teachers and principals were asked to describe the most effective TPL that they had experienced. On the basis of open-ended responses provided, a coding scheme was applied. Findings showed that over one-quarter of primary school principals mentioned a high-quality facilitator as one feature of the most effective TPL they had experienced. Illustrative responses presented in Rawdon et al. (2021) include reference to content knowledge and skills of facilitators; e.g.,

- “We had excellent guest speakers on various aspects of chemistry not only related to chemistry in industry. ...It was invaluable for enriching your content...”
- “Excellent facilitator...for those of us who are IT challenged we left that day feeling confident and competent re putting a plan in place”.

In reporting on findings of research on TPL for physical education, Tannehill et al. (2021, p. 155) recognise that effective TPL is “facilitated with care” and note the importance of listening to the voice of teachers, drawing on teacher insights gained through practice, recognising teacher strengths and promoting engagement in action research projects.



### How can they be assessed?

While there are limited research examples of assessing facilitator skills and knowledge, the importance of high quality personnel is recognised in the CSL endorsement process which indicates that TPL should be “provided by high quality personnel, committed to their own on-going professional learning and system improvement” (CSL, 2019, p. 7). It is suggested by CSL that evidence of high quality personnel may include: an outline of facilitator selection processes, training, and on-going professional learning/support for them and/or an overview of the facilitators’ skills, attributes and experience. In the list of CSL [Endorsed Programmes](#), many provide some information on TPL facilitators, providing a high-level description of staff working on the programme.

17 Merchie et al. (2018) used the term “trainer” which has been replaced by “facilitator” in the current framework.

As a further example, the Education Support Centres have a detailed process to support high quality facilitation of TPL. This involves several steps, one of which is to secure a commitment on the part of facilitators to engage in ongoing professional learning associated with the facilitation of TPL. Following TPL, participants are asked to evaluate the facilitation.

TPL participants' perceptions of facilitator skills and competencies may be gathered through focus groups or through surveys. [Appendix 4](#) provides sample statements that TPL providers may wish to adapt for use in the evaluation of TPL.

## 2.4: Teacher outcomes

*Cosán* recognises that teachers' learning is "fundamentally, a journey, and one in which the act of travelling on that journey is more important than the destination" (Teaching Council, 2016a, p. 2). Nonetheless, TPL is designed with intended learning outcomes or success criteria, e.g., as outlined in the *Design and Quality Assurance Process*. *Cosán* standards note that "as learning professionals, teachers demonstrate a commitment to ... continued professional growth for enhanced professional practice ..." (Teaching Council, 2016a, p. 22).

In the current TPL evaluation framework, TPL outcomes for teachers are divided into competencies and behaviours. Competencies comprise outcomes that are cognitive, affective or related to skills. Outcomes categorised as behaviours relate to changes in teaching practices, interaction practices (e.g., interactions between teachers and students, teachers and colleagues, other members of school staff, parents or guardians, or the wider school community), or reflective practice.

TPL providers using a logic model at the design stage of TPL may wish to map "outcomes" in the logic model to teacher outcomes (competencies or behaviours) in the TPL evaluation framework. Longer term "impacts" identified in the logic model are likely to relate to outcomes for students, the school or the wider system in the current framework.

### Teacher competencies



#### What are they?

Compen et al. (2019) consider that TPL may have outcomes for teachers that relate to cognitive outcomes, affective outcomes or changes in skills. Cognitive outcomes relate to changes in teacher knowledge.

Affective outcomes refer to changes in values, attitudes or beliefs. Merchie et al. (2018) distinguish between teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching and teachers' beliefs about themselves. Zee and Koeman (2016) conducted a review of the impact of teacher self-efficacy on classroom processes, student academic adjustment, and teacher wellbeing and reported a positive association between teacher self-efficacy and aspects of teachers' psychological wellbeing. For this reason, changes in teacher self-efficacy may be considered to represent one important affective outcome of TPL.

Drawing on Guskey (2000), Merchie et al. (2018, p. 150) indicate that skills "relate to what participants are able to do with what they have learnt" during the TPL initiative.

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## Why are they included?

The Teaching Council's (2016b, p. 8) *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* requires teachers to take personal responsibility for sustaining and improving the quality of their professional practice. Teachers should do this by:

- "actively maintaining their professional knowledge and understanding to ensure it is current
- reflecting on and critically evaluating their professional practice, in light of their professional knowledge base
- availing of opportunities for career-long professional development."

There is a strong policy and research basis for including cognitive, affective and skills outcomes as key outcomes of TPL and TPL guidelines and frameworks in use by TPL providers in Ireland place a strong emphasis on changes in teacher competencies and skills as anticipated outcomes of TPL. The *Design and Quality Assurance Process* (DoE, 2021b) emphasises the role of TPL in supporting teachers to "develop pedagogical skills and content knowledge".

The importance of high levels of teacher knowledge and skill, as well as appropriate attitudes, values and beliefs, is recognised in the LAOS standards and statements of highly effective practice:

- "The teacher has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills" (Standard, p. 25)
- "Teachers have high expectations of students' learning and behaviour, communicate these expectations effectively to students, and facilitate students in internalising them" (Statement of highly effective practice; p. 30)
- "Teachers model enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning, and thereby create a learning environment where students are self-motivated to engage in, extend and enjoy their learning" (Statement of highly effective practice; p. 30)
- Teachers create an inclusive, purposeful, student-centred learning environment based on mutual respect, affirmation and trust, in which pupils regulate and monitor their own behaviour (Statement of highly effective practice; p. 30)
- Teachers demonstrate competence and proficiency in the skills and knowledge of the subjects of their subject areas and can these to other areas across and beyond the curriculum" (Statement of highly effective practice; p. 30).

The *Preparation for Teaching and Learning – Guidance for All primary and Special Schools* (DoE et al., nd.) advises that teachers' decisions about teaching and learning are shaped by three key pillars. These are: the teacher's knowledge of the children and their prior learning; teachers' knowledge of the curriculum; and teachers' knowledge of pedagogy. In further detail,

- knowledge of the children "includes both the children as learners and the children as members of a family and community, and can be deepened through observation, information gathering and assessment" (p. 8).
- knowledge of the curriculum includes a "knowledge of the underpinning **rationale and aims** and the **approaches** to teaching and learning supported by the curriculum. It also includes knowledge of the rationale and focus of each **Learning Outcome** as well as the links that can be made across elements and strands or indeed across other curriculum areas" (p. 8, emphasis in original).
- knowledge of pedagogy is required as "an understanding of pedagogical approaches is important in choosing, with the child(ren) where possible, appropriate and engaging learning experiences.

Teachers' knowledge of content is also an important factor in developing meaningful and engaging learning experiences" (p. 9).

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023* (DES, 2018b) also recognises the importance of teacher knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and beliefs. Some relevant statements of Effective Practice include (DES, 2018b):

- “Opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are provided to teachers to ensure that they have the relevant knowledge and understanding to promote wellbeing and to create a positive classroom environment” (Effective practice for All – Key Area 1 Culture and Environment; p. 40)
- “Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to attend relevant CPD to meet the needs of the school population and are encouraged to incorporate and model learnings in their practice and engage in collaborative working” (Effective practice for All – Key Area 2 Curriculum [Teaching and Learning]; p. 42)
- “Teachers attend CPD and deliver specialised and targeted programmes, selected in line with best practice and grounded in research and evidence, to individuals and/or small groups” (Effective practice for Some and Few – Key Area 2 Curriculum [Teaching and Learning]; p. 43)
- “There is a comprehensive CPD plan to ensure all teachers have the necessary training to incorporate wellbeing promotion in their teaching practice to meet the particular needs of the school population” (Effective practice for All – Key Area 3 Policy and planning; p. 44)
- “The school promotes teachers' engagement in networks for teacher collaboration” (Effective practice for Some and Few – Key Area 4 Relationships & partnerships; p. 47)

Specifically in the area of teachers' knowledge and skills for supporting students with SEN, the NCSE provides supports to schools for auditing TPL needs and planning relevant TPL. More information is available on the [NCSE website](#).

There are several research examples of TPL having outcomes related to teacher cognitive, affective and skills outcomes. As noted earlier, an evaluation led by NEPS of the *Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management* programme in Ireland reported significant improvements in teacher wellbeing, decreases in emotional exhaustion, increases in personal accomplishment and increases in self-efficacy amongst participants (Kennedy et al., 2021; see also Leckey et al., 2016). These may be considered to represent affective outcomes; in particular, self-efficacy represents an example of teacher beliefs about themselves.

The importance of teacher self-efficacy is reflected in the large body of research examining this construct (see e.g., a review of 165 articles by Zee and Koomen, 2016). Research has shown that teachers with high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to try out new ideas, set more challenging goals, persist in the face of challenges, collaborate with others, take personal responsibility for student outcomes, and successfully implement new programmes (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Han & Weiss, 2005; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Furthermore, it has been shown that teacher self-efficacy influences teachers' response to TPL, with high self-efficacy positively associated with teachers' implementation of new practices or programmes (Guskey, 1988; Scribner, 1999). In their review, Zee and Koomen (2016) examined the impact of teacher self-efficacy on classroom processes, student academic adjustment, and teacher wellbeing and reported a positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and aspects of teachers' psychological wellbeing. While TPL evaluators may find teacher wellbeing challenging to assess directly, teacher self-efficacy has been shown to be easier to assess empirically (see below). Given the recognised links between teacher self-efficacy and teacher wellbeing, as well as documented associations between self-efficacy and other positive teaching practices, the assessment of teacher self-efficacy may serve as a helpful outcome to examine in TPL evaluation.

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## How can they be assessed?

In the work of Ingvarson et al. (2005), teachers were asked to indicate on a four-point scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) the extent to which their participation in TPL had led to increased knowledge of:

- The content they teach;
- Teaching and learning strategies appropriate to the content they teach;
- How students learn the content;
- Individual differences amongst students and how to cater for their needs;
- How to link assessment into the teaching and learning cycle; and
- Classroom organisation and management.

Merchie et al. (2018) note that often teacher skills are assessed through teacher self-report which asks teachers to estimate their skill level. An alternative is to assess teacher skills using a standardised observation tool; e.g., [ORACLE \(Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation\)](#).

Relevant to the assessment of teacher self-efficacy, wellbeing and burnout, see the:

- [Teachers' Sense of Efficacy scale](#);
- [Everyday Feeling Questionnaire](#); and
- [Maslach Burnout Inventory](#) (see Kennedy et al., 2021, for use of these in Irish research).

## Teacher behaviours

This refers to teachers employing relevant behaviours in their classrooms and professional lives. This component of the TPL evaluation framework comprises teaching practices, interaction practices and reflective practice. TPL outcomes related to reflective practice were not explicitly included in the evaluation frameworks of Merchie et al. (2018) or Compen et al. (2019) but were added to the current TPL evaluation framework, given the centrality of reflection in *Cosán* which places a strong emphasis on the need for teachers' critical reflection on their professional practice.

## Teaching practices, Interaction practices, Reflective practice



## What are they?

Teaching practices refer to the teaching and assessment approaches that teachers use in the classroom. Interaction practices refer to interactions between teachers and students as well as to interactions between teachers and other members of staff, parents/guardians, school management or the wider school community. Reflective practice refers to "the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. This involves paying critical attention to the values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively" (CSL Model of Professional Learning, nd, p. 19). In *Cosán*, reflective practice underpins each of the learning processes in the framework (Teaching Council, 2016a).



## Why are they included?

The *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (Teaching Council, 2016b) sets out standards that apply to registered teachers, including standards related to professional values and relationships, professional practice, and professional collegiality and collaboration. These standards are directly relevant to this component of the TPL evaluation framework. Related to teaching practices, the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* indicates, *inter alia*, that teachers should "maintain high standards of practice in relation to pupil/student learning, planning, monitoring, assessing, reporting and providing feedback" (Teaching Council, 2016b, p. 8). Related to interaction patterns, the *Code* requires teachers to "seek to develop positive relationships with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others in the school community, that are characterised by professional integrity and judgement" (Teaching Council, 2016b, p. 7). Also, teachers should "work in a collaborative manner with pupils/ students, parents/guardians, school management, other members of staff, relevant professionals and the wider school community, as appropriate, in seeking to effectively meet the needs of pupils/students" (Teaching Council, 2016b, p. 8). In terms of reflection, teachers should "take personal responsibility for sustaining and improving the quality of their professional practice by ... reflecting on and critically evaluating their professional practice, in light of their professional knowledge base" (Teaching Council, 2016b, p. 8).

LAOS recognises the importance of teachers selecting and employing approaches to teaching that are appropriate to the learning intentions and to students' learning needs (DoE, 2022a, p. 15). LAOS also recognises the role of the school leader in encouraging teaching that is "engaging and challenging" (DoE, 2022a, p. 16). Practices related to the effective use of digital technologies are also emphasised in LAOS where one statement of highly effective practice indicates that "the principal and other leaders in the school lead a process of empowering teachers to embed digital technologies in their learning, teaching and assessment practices, and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the use of these technologies" (DoE, 2022a, p. 35).

Related to interaction patterns, the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* refers to the need for TPL design to explore the principles of Universal Design for Learning to support an inclusive approach to teaching, assessment and learning. In the domain of teachers' individual practice, LAOS requires that "the teacher responds to individual learning needs and differentiates learning and teaching activities as necessary" (DoE, 2022a, p. 25). Interaction patterns between teachers are also referenced in LAOS which refers to teachers' collective/collaborative practice; i.e., "how teachers learn from each other's expertise and how they interact with each other to reflect on their own practice" (DoE, 2022a, p. 13). The importance of relationships with parents is also recognised in LAOS, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationship between the board, principal and parents' association.

Reflective practice is also emphasised in Irish policy, guidelines and in TPL frameworks in use by TPL providers. The importance of reflective practice is recognised in *Cosán* where it is envisaged "that teachers' learning journeys will be guided by standards that will facilitate them, as individuals or collectively, in: reflecting critically on their teaching and their learning, and the relationship between them" (Teaching Council, 2016a, p. 22). The Teaching Council has developed a bank of resources related to reflection and produced a Research Ezine on the topic ([Reflective Teaching, Reflective Learning: Continuing the Conversation](#)). Reflective practice is also a key tenet of the *Design and Quality Assurance Process*, as described in further detail in Section 1.2.

The themes of teaching practices, interaction patterns and reflective practice have also been examined in the research literature as outcomes of TPL. One recent example explored how critical reflection was developed through professional learning communities (Sæbø & Midtsundstad, 2022). Findings from the

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study indicate that at the beginning of the innovation, reflection was mainly of the first order variety—focusing on how things are or should have been. By the end of the innovation, reflection was mainly second order; i.e., involving critical reflection on the school's practices. Change was promoted by the use of different reflective work forms in mixed groups, focusing on collective capacity and common expectations.

The themes of teacher practices and interaction patterns have also been examined in evaluations of the *Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management* programme nationally and internationally (e.g., Baker-Henningham et al., 2009; Webster-Stratton et al., 2008). In Ireland, findings have documented enhanced classroom management skills, improvements in student-teacher relationships, improved teacher psychological outcomes and reductions in student problem behaviours (e.g., Kennedy et al., 2021; Leckey et al., 2016; Newman, 2015).



### How can they be assessed?

Merchie et al. (2018) suggest that teaching behaviour, i.e., teaching practices or interaction patterns, can be assessed using interviews, questionnaires, rating scales, observations or writing logs.

Two examples of using teacher self-reported measures of changes in interaction patterns and in practice as a result of participation in TPL come from the work of Ingvarson et al. (2005). Teachers were asked about the impact of the TPL on the school's professional community (relevant to interaction patterns) by seeking responses to three items:

- Teachers at my school discuss teaching and learning more with their colleagues.
- Teachers have increased their collaboration in planning, teaching and assessment activities.
- I have passed an idea I learned from the programme on to other teachers in my school.

Ingvarson et al. also asked teachers about changes in their practice as a consequence of participation in TPL by asking whether, as a result of participation, they now (Ingvarson et al., 2005, pp. 10–11):

- “make clearer links between their teaching goals and classroom activities;
- manage classroom structures and activities more effectively;
- use more effective teaching and learning strategies appropriate to the content that they teach;
- use more effective teaching and learning strategies appropriate to the classroom context;
- use teaching and learning strategies that are more challenging and engaging;
- are better able to meet the individual learning needs of their students;
- link assessment into the teaching and learning cycle more effectively;
- provide more effective feedback to their students to support their learning;
- engage students in higher order thinking;
- access and use materials and resources more effectively”.

While the *frequency* of engagement in reflective practice can be assessed, it is more difficult to assess the *quality* of reflection. However, resources are available to support high quality reflection and TPL evaluation may consider the extent to which TPL promotes usage of appropriate resources for this purpose. Furthermore, TPL evaluation might usefully ask TPL participants about their reflective practice and how this has changed as a result of TPL participation. For example, participants might be asked to indicate whether or not they use a particular model to guide the reflective process or the extent to which they use an evidence-informed approach to reflection. Participants might also usefully be asked to indicate the extent to which they incorporate individual and collaborative approaches to reflection.

Resources to support reflective practice:

- The Teaching Council provides a suite of [resources](#) to support reflection on professional learning, drawing on various models (e.g., Brookfield, 1995; Gibbs, 1988; Rolfe et al., 2001).
- The CSL self-reflection [tool](#) is designed to support reflection on the Leadership and Management standards outlined in LAOS. The tool generates a graphic which is intended to allow an individual or a team to identify strengths and areas for further leadership development. The [self-reflection tool](#) aims to support individual or team reflection.
- [DoE resources to support SSE](#) include [reflection sheets](#) for use in capturing the perspectives of a number of different parties on teaching and learning outcomes, experiences or practice. Resources are also provided for [reflection – peer observation](#).

## 2.5: Student, school or system outcomes



### What are they?

In the TPL evaluation framework, outcomes for students are defined as improvements in learner experiences or outcomes. *Cosán* recognises that TPL can have benefits for students related not only to their learning, but also to their motivation, engagement and enjoyment, thus providing a rationale for including not only improvements in student outcomes but also improvements in student experiences as possible student outcomes of TPL. *Cosán* also acknowledges the potential impact of TPL on school culture and the wider school community (Teaching Council, 2016a), thus supporting the inclusion of school outcomes in the TPL evaluation framework.

LAOS provides standards for both learner outcomes and learner experiences. In the domain of learner outcomes, the LAOS standard indicates that primary pupils (DoE, 2022b, p. 25):

- “enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners;
- have the necessary knowledge and skills to understand themselves and their relationships;
- demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the curriculum;
- attain the stated learning outcomes for the term and year.”

In the domain of learner experiences, primary pupils (DoE, 2022b, p. 25):

- “engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities;
- grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive;
- reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning;
- experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning.”

School outcomes are defined in the TPL evaluation framework using four key areas (drawn from the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023*; DES, 2018b) – Culture & environment; Curriculum (teaching & learning); Policy & planning; Relationships & partnership. The TPL evaluation framework allows for changes at school level in any of these key areas as a result of participation in TPL.

System outcomes relate to impacts of TPL beyond the level of the school; e.g., wider influence at a national level on policy, frameworks, curriculum, educational redevelopment, or standards.

## Chapter 2: A TPL evaluation framework for Ireland



## Why are they included?

The LAOS framework indicates that “improving the quality of pupils’ learning should be the main driver of teacher learning” (DoE, 2022b, p. 9). *Cosán*, too, recognises that teachers undertake learning activities for their own benefit and for that of their students (Teaching Council, 2016a).

In one example of a TPL evaluation conducted in Ireland, Brown et al. (2017) examined teachers’ perceptions of changes in student outcomes associated with teacher participation in TPL for Assessment using e-portfolios. Participating teachers were asked at the beginning and end of the TPL initiative if students in their school were able to do various tasks associated with e-portfolio digital workspaces. Higher percentages of participating teachers reported that students were able to do the tasks at the end of the initiative compared to at the beginning.

An evaluation of the link learning model of professional development for literacy and numeracy at primary level in Ireland collected data from TPL facilitators’ reflective learning logs (O’Donnell, 2013). Facilitators’ reports were examined and consideration was given to the types of impacts they reported, including the perceived pupil impact of teacher participation. Impacts on pupils which were reported to have occurred according to facilitators included: an increased focus on active learning; increased pupil enjoyment of and attitudes towards learning; and greater pupil participation and engagement as a result of new methodologies employed in the classroom (O’Donnell, 2013). Some additional pupil outcomes related specifically to impacts on numeracy were also noted, including more positive pupil responses to the learning experience; deeper pupil understanding; greater emphasis on pupil voice; and positive pupil engagement. Direct measurements of pupil impacts were not available to triangulate findings from facilitators’ reports.

In contrast to the two examples described where student outcomes were not directly assessed, a study by NEPS directly assessed a number of outcomes for pupils whose teachers were trained to deliver the FRIENDS for Life programme (Ruttledge et al., 2016). Their study involved a representative sample of 27 primary schools in Ireland where teachers were trained and supported by NEPS to deliver the FRIENDS for Life programme. Positive outcomes for pupils included improved emotional wellbeing, greater coping skills and an enhanced sense of connectedness with school. Outcomes for pupils were assessed using validated measures such as the Spence Children’s Anxiety Scales, the Beck Self-Concept Inventory for Youth, the Coping Efficacy Scale, the School Connectedness Scale and the FRIENDS Social Validity Measures.<sup>18</sup>

Further examples in the literature of direct assessment of student outcomes arising from teachers’ participation in TPL include a randomised experiment implemented with over 270 teachers and 7,000 students in six states of the USA (Heller et al., 2012). The study design allowed for causal inferences and showed improved student outcomes in science, with effects that were maintained a year later. Drawing on data from a quasi-experimental study, Desimone et al. (2013) investigated the effect of content-focused professional development on student achievement in mathematics. Their findings showed that when teachers participated in professional development that focused on mathematics content or teaching strategies, they were more likely to teach in ways associated with student achievement growth.

Turning to outcomes at school-level from TPL, Brown et al. (2017) note that participation in the ePortfolio TPL initiative was associated with higher likelihood of schools using all of the various functions of an ePortfolio and they highlighted examples of participating teachers providing training to other (non-participating) teachers in their schools in the use of ePortfolios. Their conclusions indicate that TPL activities were associated with a “genuine strengthening of the digital capacity of participating schools”

18 Readers interested in substantive findings regarding the FRIENDS programme are also advised to consult Wigelsworth et al. (2018).

(p. 74). For the purposes of the current framework, this is considered a school-level outcome as it is an outcome beyond that experienced by an individual participating teacher.

While it is difficult to directly attribute changes at system-level to teacher participation in TPL, there are several examples that point towards TPL having some association with change at the system-level. For example, the *National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020* introduced requirements that continuing professional development courses for teachers included mandatory units on literacy, numeracy and assessment (DES, 2011). The [Interim review](#) of the strategy (DES, 2017) showed that Ireland had made considerable progress, particularly in literacy, and new targets were set for student achievement in reading and mathematics. Under Pillar 2 – Improving teachers’ and early childhood care and education (ECCE) practitioners’ professional practice – the interim reviews summarises several measures already put in place and outlines further TPL opportunities to be provided during the lifespan of the strategy. It is reasonable to assume that actions associated with TPL contributed at least in part to the progress made towards improved student outcomes.

NEPS has reported on the Student Support Team (SST) development project that took place over the academic year 2018/2019. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from psychologists, teachers and school leaders. Findings relate to system-level outcomes and showed: an increased focus on systemic issues; more defined roles and responsibilities; clearer referral procedures; improved communication and an increased focus on reviews. One of the recommendations in the unpublished report on the pilot project was that the original SST guide to establishing a team or reviewing an existing team, dating from 2014, should be revised and updated. Following the pilot project, updated [guidelines](#) were published (NEPS, 2021). The publication of the updated guide may be considered to represent a system-level outcome of the pilot project.



## How can they be assessed?

The examples outlined above illustrate that student outcomes are often indirectly assessed by asking teachers about perceived benefits of TPL on student learning. In an example of indirect assessment, Igvarson et al. (2005) asked teachers whether, as a result of participation in the TPL programme, their students now:

- have fewer difficulties in understanding what they are being taught;
- are learning more purposefully;
- are more actively engaged in learning activities;
- demonstrate enhanced learning outcomes;
- access and use materials and resources more effectively.

LAOS underscores the importance of pupils having the “opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions with teachers to inform learning and teaching” (Inspectorate DoE, 2022b, p. 9). Schools that demonstrate highly effective practice are those where “those leading the SSE process meaningfully consult and engage with pupils and parents to review and improve learning, teaching and assessment practices” (p. 41). The following approaches are suggested as ways to support meaningful student (or parent) engagement in SSE:

- surveys;
- focus groups;
- engagement with the student council;
- digital or other communication about the progress and outcomes of SSE.

It is reasonable to consider these as appropriate methods of gathering data directly from students for the purposes of TPL evaluation.

## Chapter 2: A TPL evaluation framework for Ireland

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In engaging with students during SSE, schools are encouraged to have regard for the *National Framework for Children's and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (DCEDIY, 2021d) and the *Child and Youth Participation Toolkit* (TUSLA, 2016). Developed by Hub na nÓg in association with Professor Laura Lundy, Queen's University, [the Participation Framework](#) provides guidance and checklists for decision-makers on the steps to take in giving children and young people a meaningful voice in decision-making. The [TUSLA Child and Youth Participation Toolkit](#) is aligned to the Lundy model of participation. It includes resources and child-friendly tools and activities to support the implementation of each of the elements of [the Lundy model](#).

For the development of the current framework, consultation occurred directly with children and young people to explore their perspectives on what makes learning easier and what makes learning more engaging.<sup>19</sup> Full details are provided in Rawdon et al. (2022). The approaches employed may be relevant to TPL providers conducting TPL evaluation as findings show high levels of engagement with the task on the part of participants.

Data on student outcomes may also come from validated instruments; e.g., as described in the example above from NEPS (Ruttledge et al., 2016) or from student assessment (e.g., Desimone et al., 2013; Earley & Porritt, 2014; Heller et al., 2012).

School-level outcomes may have particular relevance for specific TPL initiatives, e.g., programmes designed to support planning at school level. Weir et al. (2014) describe supports provided by the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI)<sup>20</sup> through professional development courses on school planning and self-evaluation. Specifically for DEIS schools, the SDPI supported schools in planning to address educational disadvantage; e.g., through cluster meetings for school planning coordinators; regional seminars for school leaders; and school-based advisory and facilitation services. Weir et al. (2014) describe findings of a principal survey, one component of which covered the DEIS planning process in their school. They report that principals' views of the planning process and target setting were markedly positive.

System-level outcomes of TPL are likely difficult to assess in the short-term or to attribute directly to TPL participation. Nonetheless, in the context of a more in-depth evaluation of a specific TPL programme, potential system-level outcomes may warrant attention.

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19 The term "engagement" was replaced with "fun" for pupils at primary level.

20 The School Development Planning Support Service was established in 1999. In 2010, the service was discontinued and became part of the remit of the PDST; for further information see: <https://pdst.ie/node/596>.

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## Chapter 3: Illustration of aspects of the TPL evaluation framework

CPD<sup>21</sup> in Restorative Practice (RP)<sup>22</sup> emerged as a response to school requests for support in dealing with conflict and bullying. It was initially provided as a pilot project between the PDST and the Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) in Tallaght, conducted over the school year September 2018 to March 2019. The pilot project involved five school visits over the course of the school year to allow for in-school support in the use of RP approaches. The programme aims to support the fostering of positive relationships within the school, to prevent the escalation of conflict, to resolve conflict in a healthy manner, to promote positive behaviour, and to develop the skills associated with emotional language.

The pilot project was subject to evaluation by the PDST (2019) and findings are publicly [available](#).<sup>23</sup> In summary, PDST findings show that teachers reported a growth in confidence over the course of participation in the TPL, including growth in confidence in using Restorative Circles, Restorative Language and Restorative Conversations (PDST, 2019). There are recognised limitations associated with the quantitative findings presented in the evaluation report as some participating schools completed multiple questionnaires while no data were provided by others. Qualitative findings from participants in the pilot project referenced the capacity of RP to facilitate enhanced relationships between pupils, teachers and parents. Key learning points raised by facilitators of the sessions related to scheduling of the TPL in schools; a need for lesson modelling in the classroom; a need to review the effectiveness of the TPL in schools with larger staff sizes; and a need for co-presentation by TPL facilitators. Qualitative findings drawn from reflective templates completed by school staff relate to staff size and the need for two facilitators for larger staff sizes; a resistance to change on the part of some teachers; and a need for ongoing support (PDST, 2019).

Since the initial pilot project, the PDST continues to offer TPL for RP. As part of the development of the TPL evaluation framework, the evaluation of a specific TPL programme was sought to serve as a case study example to support the framework's development (Phase 4 of the project). Following Steering Group discussion, the evaluation of TPL for RP was selected as an appropriate case study example. One reason for this relates to the programme's wellbeing focus and its fit with the aims of the current project. Secondly, TPL for RP uses a model of sustained support in line with best practice of TPL having a sustained duration. Thirdly, evaluation instruments had previously been developed for the PDST's evaluation of the pilot project in RP and these were made available for modification for the current project. Fourthly, TPL for RP took place at the same time as the development of the TPL evaluation framework, with the TPL under the responsibility of the PDST and the development of the evaluation framework implemented by the ERC. The parallel work on the TPL for RP and the development of the TPL evaluation framework meant that the evaluation framework could not be applied in its entirety to the evaluation of TPL for RP. However, there was some flexibility to modify components of the RP evaluation to trial selected aspects of the framework and conversely, to modify aspects of the framework in response to practical challenges of applied evaluation.

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21 The term "continuous professional development [CPD]" is used by the PDST. As explained in Rawdon et al. (2020), the current project uses the term "teachers' professional learning [TPL]". For the purposes of consistency throughout this report, the term CPD has been replaced in this chapter by TPL. An exception to this is where direct quotations from participants are provided and the term CPD is retained. Note that in line with PDST practices and procedures, evaluation materials for participants (e.g., letters of invitation and questionnaires) referred to CPD rather than TPL.

22 See <https://www.pdst.ie/post-primary/health-wellbeing/restorative-practice> and <https://pdst.ie/primary/health-wellbeing/restorative-practice>

23 The CDI's facilitation of RP in the wider community has also been evaluated in Ireland. This focused on both the implementation of the programme (through a process study), and outcomes of the programme, including impact and value (see Fives et al., 2013).

### Chapter 3: Illustration of aspects of the TPL evaluation framework

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ERC researchers did not attend any RP TPL sessions as external evaluators. Rather, one ERC researcher attended a small number of introductory sessions for the purposes of gaining some insight into the content of RP TPL in order to facilitate reporting on findings. Similarly, any examination of RP TPL documentation undertaken by ERC researchers was conducted in order to gain a high-level insight into TPL for RP but not for evaluation purposes. Reasons underpinning these decisions related to the sensitive issues discussed in the TPL pertaining to relationships and conflict in participating schools. It was anticipated that the attendance of any external researcher at sessions beyond the introductory session might inhibit discussion. Also, TPL providers typically do not have access to external research capacity. It was therefore of limited value for the purposes of developing the evaluation framework for ERC researchers to conduct a more in-depth study than would routinely be conducted. As explained in more detail later in this chapter, data were gathered by the PDST from teachers and principals. The ERC administered an online questionnaire to TPL facilitators.

Phase 4 enables consideration of the degree to which the four domains identified for the draft framework encompass the areas examined in a specific applied evaluation; i.e., to consider if anything that occurs in a particular applied example is missing from the draft framework such that revision of the framework is required. Phase 4 is used in this chapter to illustrate assessment of the components of the framework.

Phase 4 was implemented as follows: in February 2022, schools that had applied for TPL in RP were advised of the ongoing research project to develop an evaluation framework for TPL and informed that RP TPL participants would have the option to share evaluation data with the ERC to contribute to the research project. It was confirmed that non-participation in the research would *not* impact on the support facilitated by the PDST; i.e., schools could avail of the TPL for RP and decide not to share their evaluation data with the ERC. Thus, there were no negative implications of not sharing data with the ERC. The design of the TPL for RP allows for a larger number of participants from each school to attend the Introductory session to gain a high level insight into what is offered by RP. Following the introductory session, a core group in each school is identified to complete the remaining school support sessions.

The initial invitation materials advised schools that the PDST use questionnaires and reflective templates as part of their process for facilitating and evaluating TPL. The instruments used by the PDST in their evaluation of the RP pilot were pre- and post-TPL questionnaires as well as a reflective template. In order to trial data collection with individual teachers as part of the TPL evaluation framework development, a pre- and post- teacher questionnaire was jointly devised by the PDST and ERC, drawing heavily on the principal questionnaire previously used in the PDST's RP pilot evaluation and updated for the current project.

Scheduling of TPL for RP was implemented by the PDST to support the inclusion of a diverse profile of schools in the research component, while balancing other internal priorities and considerations. In addition, the timeframe of the current project placed some limitations on the numbers of schools contributing evaluation data because TPL needed to be completed by December 2022 in order to have analysis completed within the lifespan of the project.

Readers are reminded that it was not mandatory for RP TPL participants to provide evaluation data; rather, participants were invited to complete the evaluation instruments and informed that data were for research purposes only. Conclusions about the effectiveness or otherwise of TPL for RP should not be made on the basis of information provided in this chapter. Readers interested in the substantive findings of the earlier evaluation of TPL for RP are directed to the report by the PDST (2019) and to the wider reading referenced therein.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: Section 3.1 describes the schools participating in TPL for RP in 2022 that contributed evaluation data to the current project.<sup>24</sup> Section 3.2 provides an overview of the instruments used in data collection for the evaluation and provides links to all

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<sup>24</sup> At primary level, most participating schools completed a majority of in-school support sessions at the end of the academic year 2021/2022. At post-primary level and special school, most sessions were completed early in the academic year 2022/2023.

questionnaires used. It also outlines the numbers of questionnaires and reflective templates completed by participants. Section 3.3 provides some examples of how selected questionnaire items used in the evaluation of TPL for RP map to the TPL evaluation framework. Section 3.4 shows a (partially) completed TPL evaluation template.<sup>25</sup> Section 3.5 outlines findings from facilitators of TPL for RP. Section 3.6 presents concluding remarks, including suggestions for future work on the TPL evaluation framework.

### 3.1: Characteristics of schools participating in Restorative Practice TPL

Table 3.1 outlines the profile of the 21 schools from which some TPL evaluation data are available for analysis. There is some variation across school characteristics, with data available for urban and rural schools at primary level, both mixed and single-sex schools at primary and post-primary levels and across varying enrolment sizes. Both DEIS and non-DEIS schools are represented and data are provided by one Irish-medium school at post-primary level. A special school is also included in the group of participants. This school facilitates both the primary and post-primary curricula, providing education for pupils aged 4–18 years with a Mild General Learning Difficulty. The variation across the characteristics shown in Table 3.1 illustrates the need for TPL to take into account contextual issues in facilitation and when considering how implementation of learning from TPL may vary across schools. However, the comparatively small number of groups in any particular category limits the extent to which conclusions can be drawn; this is likely to represent a challenge in many TPL evaluations where the numbers of participating schools are comparatively small.

**Table 3.1: Characteristics of schools (primary, post-primary, special) participating in RP TPL (2022)**

Location	Gender composition	Language of instruction	Enrolment size <sup>1</sup>	DEIS status <sup>2</sup>	Sector <sup>3</sup>
<b>Primary<sup>4</sup> (n = 14)</b>					
Urban = 4 Rural = 10	Mixed = 12 All Girls = 0 All Boys = 2	English = 14 Irish = 0	Small = 1 Medium = 6 Large = 7	DEIS = 5 non-DEIS = 9	
<b>Post-primary (n = 6)</b>					
Urban = 6 Rural = 0	Mixed = 4 All Girls = 2 All Boys = 0	English = 5 Irish = 1	Small = 1 Medium = 2 Large = 3	DEIS = 5 non-DEIS = 1	Secondary = 4 ETB = 2
<b>Special school (n = 1)</b>					
Urban = 1	Mixed = 1	English = 1	Large = 1		

1 Categorisation of enrolment size into small, medium and large is conducted in line with Rawdon et al. (2021). At primary level, Small=1-80; Medium= 81-200; Large>200. At post-primary level, Small=1-350; Medium=351-600; Large >600. For special schools, Small=1-35; Medium=36-70; Large >70.

2 Applicable to primary and post-primary schools only. Note DEIS at primary level comprised Urban Band 1 and DEIS rural schools.

3 Post-primary only.

4 Of participating primary schools, 7 have at least one special class.

On the basis of numbers reported by facilitators, Table 3.2 shows that a total of 484 participants attended the Introductory session for Restorative Practice. Included in this group are participants from a special school, primary and post-primary schools. As noted earlier, the design of the TPL for RP allows for a larger number of participants from each school to attend the Introductory session to gain a high level insight into what is offered by RP. All attendees at the Introductory session were eligible to complete the pre-TPL questionnaire.

25 Note that the template is partially completed as the purpose of the case study was not to conduct a detailed evaluation of TPL for RP. Rather the case study was intended to gather some evaluation data for the purposes of illustrating aspects of the framework and trialling some approaches.

### Chapter 3: Illustration of aspects of the TPL evaluation framework

**Table 3.2: Numbers of participants reported by TPL facilitators for each in-school support session, by school level**

	Introduction	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
Special school	35	23	13	13	10
Primary	200	140	137	144	128
Post-primary	284	72	69	43	63
Total	484	212	206	187	192

Following the introductory session, a core group in each school was identified by the school to complete the remaining sessions. Information was not gathered in the evaluation on how members of the core group were selected but it is likely that factors including teacher interests, experience, motivation and responsibilities in the school influenced ongoing participation in the core group. Thus, the core group in each school may have comprised teachers with higher levels of engagement in, and motivation for, TPL. Numbers of participants following the introductory session fluctuated around 200 (Table 3.2).

## 3.2: Evaluation instruments used in Restorative Practice TPL

The following six instruments were used in data collection for the current case study:

- [Teacher pre-TPL questionnaire](#)
- [Teacher post-TPL questionnaire](#)
- [Principal pre-TPL questionnaire](#)
- [Principal post-TPL questionnaire](#)
- [Reflective journal prompts](#)
- [TPL facilitator questionnaire<sup>26</sup>](#)

Principal questionnaires were based on the earlier principal questionnaire used in the PDST evaluation of the pilot RP project (PDST, 2019). Teacher questionnaires were derived from the principal questionnaires. The reflective journal prompts from the earlier evaluation were used without change in the current project. Participants were asked to generate a unique identifier (see [Appendix 4](#) for details) to allow questionnaires and reflective templates to be linked longitudinally. This is of particular importance given the very high level of attendance at the introductory session compared to subsequent sessions.

**Table 3.3: Numbers of pre- and post-TPL questionnaires completed, by school level**

	Pre-TPL teacher	Pre-TPL principal	Post-TPL teacher	Post-TPL principal
Special school	29	1	2	1
Primary	199	14	51	11
Post-primary	230	5	0	1
Total	458	20	53	13

Table 3.3 shows the numbers of pre- and post-TPL questionnaires completed by teachers and principals across school levels. Pre-TPL questionnaires were completed by a large number of teachers (n = 458) and principals (n = 20), with some variation in the timing of administration of the pre-TPL questionnaire

<sup>26</sup> The facilitator questionnaire was developed after the project had begun so was not referenced in initial training for facilitators on the administration of the evaluation instruments.

either before, during or after the introductory session.<sup>27</sup> As anticipated by the TPL design which requires a core team to attend sessions following the introductory session, much lower numbers of post-TPL questionnaires were submitted (teacher n = 53; principal n = 13). Just 45 participating teachers had sufficient data available to allow matching of pre- and post-questionnaires. While drop-off between pre- and post-questionnaires was anticipated based on the design of the TPL (whereby the introductory session was attended by a large group and subsequent sessions were attended by a core group), the scale of drop-off highlights the challenges associated with data collection for TPL evaluation. As previously noted, participants in the evaluation of TPL for RP were advised that participation was optional and for research purposes. It is not possible to determine the extent to which this may have impacted on motivation to provide evaluation data.

**Table 3.4: Numbers of reflective templates completed, by TPL session and school level**

	Introduction	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
Special school	27	13	4	7	4
Primary	121	115	109	93	56
Post-primary	72	26	23	28	24
Total	220	154	136	128	84

Table 3.4 shows the numbers of reflective templates submitted. A total of 220 reflective templates were submitted following the introductory session and 84 were submitted following the final session. The drop-off over time in the completion rate of reflective templates mirrors the drop-off in submission of questionnaire data. The perspectives of TPL facilitators on the evaluation instruments are outlined in Section 3.5.

### 3.3: Illustration of the components of the TPL evaluation framework

It is useful to consider the alignment of the TPL evaluation framework and the various data collection instruments used in the case study as these instruments are reflective of the types of instruments routinely used by the PDST in their TPL provision. Researcher review of the instruments indicates that the framework is sufficient to cover the content of the case study instruments; i.e., there are no elements of the case study instruments that cannot be described by the components of the framework. The second purpose of the case study is to illustrate the assessment of aspects of the framework. The following (non-exhaustive) examples illustrate how each of the four components of the framework are represented in the case study (Boxes 1 to 4).

Focusing on the context component of the framework (Box 3.1), the first item selected from the pre-TPL teacher questionnaire refers to the frequency with which the participating teacher witnesses conflict in their school either in the classroom or at break time. This is considered to represent a school-level contextual factor which likely influences the uptake of the TPL; e.g., if conflict between students was very infrequent prior to the TPL, it may be less likely that the school would participate in the TPL. Secondly, this contextual factor likely impacts on the implementation of learning from the TPL; e.g., if conflict was very frequent prior to the TPL, even a small drop in frequency following the TPL may represent a meaningful outcome in a particular school.

The second item shown in Box 3.1 relates to individual student factors; i.e., their baseline capacity to deal with various conflict-related situations. The third item, drawn from the post-TPL questionnaire, refers to organisational issues or school contextual issues likely to impact on the implementation of learning from the TPL.

27 Further consideration is given to the timing of the administration of the pre-TPL questionnaire in Section 3.5.

### Box 3.1: Context

Examples of items related to context in the case study are:

- How often do you witness conflict at school... (Four response options: Daily/ Weekly/ Monthly/ Yearly)
  - In the classroom
  - At break time
- How would you rate the capacity of the students in your class(es) to... (Three response options: Low/ Moderate/ High)
  - Identify conflict
  - Identify solutions to conflict situations in school
  - Resolve conflict independently
  - Moderate their behaviour independently
- To what extent have any of the following served as barriers to implementing learning from CPD in Restorative Practice? (Three response options: This has not been a barrier/This has been somewhat of a barrier/This has been a major barrier)
  - Time for individual reflection on what I have learned
  - Time for group reflection on what I have learned
  - Resources
  - Support from school leadership
  - Other (please specify):

In the post-TPL questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the TPL had met their expectations in several areas related to the key features of TPL identified in the evaluation framework (see Box 3.2). For example, participants were asked about the extent to which TPL had met their expectations with respect to its relevance to curriculum and policy. In this way, participants provide some information on the perceived coherence of the TPL (a core feature). Participants were also asked about the knowledge and experience of the facilitator and the support received from the facilitator.

## Box 3.2: Key features of professional development

Post-TPL questionnaire item: For each of the following, to what extent has CPD for Restorative Practice met your expectations? (Three response options: has not met expectations/ partially met my expectations/ fully met expectations)

- › Organisation of the CPD, e.g., timing, location
- › Learning materials
- › Sufficient adaptation of content for our school context
- › Sufficient balance of theory and practical examples/strategies
- › Knowledge and experience of facilitator
- › Sufficient support from the facilitator to apply my learning from this CPD
- › Relevance of CPD to curriculum and policy

The TPL facilitator questionnaire gathered some data on the implementation of the evaluation (related to the access, administration and data collection element of the framework).

Example:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding the role of data collection as part of CPD for Restorative Practice. (Three response options: Agree / Disagree/ No opinion)

- › Completion of the questionnaires and reflective templates took a considerable amount of time during CPD for Restorative Practice
- › Completion of questionnaires and reflective templates negatively impacted on the CPD for Restorative Practice by taking time away from other necessary activities
- › Completion of questionnaires and reflective templates was useful to support teacher reflection on their learning
- › Completion of questionnaires and reflective templates as part of CPD for Restorative Practice was important in order to gather evaluation data

Outcomes for teachers are a key area of focus in the case study; selected examples are provided from the post-TPL questionnaire in Box 3.3. Comparable items were included in the pre-TPL questionnaire to allow examination of change over time. For example, in the pre-TPL questionnaire, teachers were asked to rate their baseline knowledge and skills in several areas and their confidence in using techniques associated with RP. They were asked to rate the expected impact of the TPL in various areas related to outcomes for teachers, outcomes for students and school-level outcomes. Selected items from the post-TPL questionnaire are shown in Box 3.3 where teachers are asked to rate changes in knowledge, confidence and perceived impact.

## Chapter 3: Illustration of aspects of the TPL evaluation framework

### Box 3.3: Teacher outcomes

Examples of items intended to assess changes in teacher competencies or behaviours associated with participation include:

Following completion of CPD for Restorative Practice, how would you rate your own knowledge and skills in the following areas? (Four response options: Limited or no knowledge/ Low/ Moderate/ High)

- › Building and improving relationships within groups in school
- › Having difficult conversations with students or parents (in relation to behaviour/conflict)
- › Seeking solutions when a behavioural/conflict situation arises in school
- › Supporting a whole school community

How confident do you feel to engage with... (Five response options: I am not familiar with this term/ No confidence/ Low confidence/ Moderate confidence/ High confidence)

- › Restorative Circles
- › Using Restorative Language
- › Restorative Conversations

For each of the areas listed below, please rate the impact (already experienced) of CPD in Restorative Practice on you/your school... (Five response options: No impact yet/ Small (to date)/ Moderate (to date)/ Large (to date)/ I don't know)

- › Your own knowledge
- › Your attitudes or beliefs
- › Your teaching practices or skills
- › Your own reflective practice

It is recognised that learning takes time to embed and requires ongoing critical reflection on the part of the TPL participant. For this reason, the post-TPL questionnaire also asked teachers:

For each of the areas listed below, please rate the anticipated future impact of CPD in Restorative Practice on you... (Five response options: No impact yet/ Small (to date) /Moderate (to date) / Large (to date) /I don't know)

- › Your own knowledge
- › Your attitudes or beliefs
- › Your teaching practices or skills
- › Your own reflective practice

The case study gathers some data on perceived outcomes for students and the school (Box 3.4).

## Box 3.4: Student, school or system outcomes

In the TPL evaluation framework, outcomes for students are defined as improvements in learner experiences or outcomes. School outcomes are defined as changes at school level in one of four key areas (Culture & Environment; Curriculum; Policy & Planning; Relationships & Partnerships) as a result of participation in TPL activities. System outcomes are impacts of TPL beyond the level of the school; e.g., wider influence at a national level on policy, frameworks, curriculum or standards.

The following example illustrates an item intended to gather data on student and school outcomes associated with TPL participation:

For each of the areas listed below, please rate the impact (already experienced) of CPD in Restorative Practice on your school... (Five response options: None/Small/Moderate/Large/I don't know)

- › Student outcomes (e.g., increased positive behaviours, reduced aggression, improved self-worth)
- › School culture and environment
- › Curriculum/teaching and learning of specific subjects
- › Extra-curricular learning
- › Relationships and partnerships in the school
- › School policy and planning

The post-TPL teacher questionnaire also gathered data on the anticipated future impact of the TPL on various student and school outcomes. It is recognised that the anticipated future impact relies on speculation on the part of TPL participants. However, there may be merit in providing participants with the opportunity to reflect on anticipated future impact, given the recognition that learning from TPL takes time to embed and the practical challenges associated with longitudinal follow-up of participants. Where longitudinal follow-up is feasible, this would be preferable to gathering participants' perspectives on anticipated future impact.

For each of the areas listed below, please rate the anticipated future impact of CPD in Restorative Practice on your school... (Five response options: None/Small/Moderate/Large/I don't know)

- › Student outcomes (e.g., increased positive behaviours, reduced aggression, improved self-worth)
- › School culture and environment
- › Curriculum/teaching and learning of specific subjects
- › Extra-curricular learning
- › Relationships and partnerships in the school
- › School policy and planning

Most of the pre- and post-questionnaire items were designed to gather quantitative data; e.g., assessment of frequency of behaviours; self-reported confidence in using techniques; or self-reported knowledge. The questionnaires included a limited number of open-ended items which were intended to gather qualitative data. The main source of qualitative data in the current case study is the reflective journals, designed for completion by participating teachers and principals. As in the PDST's evaluation of the RP pilot project, the following prompts were used to guide written reflection on the part of case study participants:

- › Today I have learned.....
- › Have you noticed an impact on relationships since engaging in RP with pupils, staff, parents?
- › Have you noticed any improvements for example: behaviour, interactions, atmosphere?
- › Have there been challenges?

### Chapter 3: Illustration of aspects of the TPL evaluation framework

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While participants were free to refer to any relevant aspects of the TPL, it is anticipated that the first prompt encourages reflection on the teacher outcomes component of the framework. The second and third prompts likely encourage reflection on outcomes for students or the wider school community. The fourth prompt offers an opportunity to reflect on relevant contextual considerations. At a high level, the reflection template is likely to gather data related to the four components of the framework.

## 3.4: Illustration of the TPL evaluation template

This section presents an example of a (partially) completed TPL evaluation template drawing on data gathered in the case study of TPL for RP. The purpose of this section is to illustrate evaluation in action rather than to draw conclusions about the quality of facilitation or impact of TPL for RP. Current content is based on data collected from six instruments: teacher pre-TPL questionnaire, teacher post-TPL questionnaire, principal pre-TPL questionnaire, principal post-TPL questionnaire, reflective journal prompts, and TPL facilitator questionnaire. As the numbers of participants with valid data for some of these instruments is low, conclusions about TPL for RP should not be drawn on the basis of findings presented.

### Template for TPL evaluation

**Title of TPL:** Restorative Practice

**Brief overview of TPL:** TPL in Restorative Practice by the PDST aims to support the fostering of positive relationships within the school, to prevent the escalation of conflict, to resolve conflict in a healthy manner, to promote positive behaviour, and to develop the skills associated with emotional language. It involves five school visits to provide in-school support for using RP approaches.

**Target audience:** Teachers in primary, post-primary, and special schools.

**Location of TPL:** School-based

**Date span of TPL:** March – December 2022 (within this period, there was some variation across participating schools)

**Number of TPL hours for each participant:** 10 hours across 5 sessions

**Timing of TPL:** During the school day

**Numbers of participants (Table 3.5):**

Restorative Practice TPL Attendance	Introduction	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
Special school	35	23	13	13	10
Primary	200	140	137	144	128
Post-primary	284	72	69	43	63
Total	484	212	206	187	192

**Number of participating schools:** 21 schools: 14 primary, 6 post-primary, 1 special.

## Context

### Evidence that context was taken into account in the TPL

TPL for RP is situated in the wider policy context of the *Wellbeing policy statement and framework for practice 2018-2023* (DES, 2018b) as well as the *Anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools* (DES, 2013). RP is intended to support a whole school approach to the fostering of relationships as part of a positive school climate. The PDST's design template for RP at primary level also links TPL for RP to the development of emotional literacy in *Social, Personal and Health education* and references the *Well-being in Primary Schools; Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention* (DES et al., 2015).<sup>28</sup> Data from the post-TPL questionnaire show that almost 70% of participants indicated that the TPL met their expectations with regards to the relevance of the TPL to curriculum and policy while almost all remaining participants indicated that the TPL "partially met" their expectations in this regard.<sup>29</sup> This questionnaire items relates to participants' perceptions of coherence between the national policy context and the TPL so is discussed again below in relation to findings regarding the key features of TPL.

Data were gathered in the pre-TPL questionnaire about the school contexts in which participants worked, specifically related to the frequency with which they witnessed conflict and the capacity of students to resolve conflict. Of the 458 teachers who completed pre-TPL questionnaires, 25% indicated that they witnessed conflict at school on a daily basis in the classroom and a further 37% indicated that they witnessed conflict weekly. Percentages of teachers that indicated witnessing conflict at break time on a daily or weekly basis were similar. While over one-quarter of teachers indicated that prior to participation in the TPL, they considered that pupils had a high capacity to identify conflict, much lower percentages reported that pupils had high capacity to identify solutions to conflict at school (4%), resolve conflict independently (2%) or moderate their behaviour independently (2%). Almost 60% of participating teachers indicated that pupils had a low capacity to resolve conflict independently prior to the TPL. These items illustrate the context in schools prior to the TPL for RP.

While specific examples of modifications to the TPL in response to local school context are not available, participants were asked in the post-TPL questionnaire to indicate whether their expectations had been met, partially met, or not met regarding sufficient adaptation of content for their school context. Based on the responses of 45 teachers with matched pre- and post-questionnaire data, over half indicated that the TPL met their expectations regarding sufficient adaptation of content to their school context, over one-third indicated that their expectations were partially met, and just 7% reported that their expectations were not met in this regard.<sup>30</sup>

### Evidence of consideration of the influence of context on implementation of learning from TPL

Teachers were asked in the post-TPL questionnaire to indicate the extent to which various issues posed barriers to implementing learning from the TPL. For four items (time for individual reflection on what they had learned; time for group reflection on what they had learned; resources; and support from school leadership), teachers were asked to indicate whether this had "not been a barrier", "somewhat of a barrier", or "a major barrier" in implementing learning from TPL for RP. Teachers were also provided with a free text box to record other barriers, if required.

28 The corresponding document at post-primary level is: *Well-being in Post-primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention* (DES et al., 2013).

29 While conclusions about the implementation, effectiveness or impact of TPL for RP should not be drawn from this section, participant data are used to illustrate completion of the TPL evaluation template.

30 This finding is intended to illustrate how analysis of participant quantitative data may be used to support statements in the evaluation template.

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Across 45 participants with matched pre- and post-questionnaire data, the issue most commonly identified as posing “somewhat of a barrier” to the implementation of learning from TPL for RP was time for group reflection on what had been learned. Almost half of participants (47%) identified this as “somewhat of a barrier” (Table 3.6). Time for individual reflection was identified as “somewhat of a barrier” by 38% of participants with matched data. Resources or a lack of support from school leadership were less likely to be seen as barriers to implementation; i.e., high percentages of participants indicated that resources (69%) or support from school leadership (87%) had *not* been barriers to implementation.

Five participants provided some further information regarding “other” barriers<sup>31</sup>:

*“As it’s the end of the year and I am working in SEN it’s difficult to calculate the impact yet – but I will definitely try to implement it from Sept.”*

*“In-school sessions rushed – going out to yard duty.”*

*“It would be great to have a school plan going forward.”*

*“Timing of the RP sessions going into June - earlier in the year would have been more useful for implementation.”*

*“We have a large staff and do not have sufficient numbers of staff members trained to implement RP across the school.”*

**Table 3.6: Percentages of teachers indicating that specified areas served as barriers to implementing learning from TPL in Restorative Practice**

	Has not been a barrier	Somewhat of a barrier	A major barrier
	%	%	%
Time for individual reflection on what I have learned	62	38	0
Time for group reflection on what I have learned	51	47	2
Resources	69	29	2
Support from school leadership	87	11	2

**Lessons from the TPL evaluation on the role of context to inform future TPL for RP:** The current case study was undertaken for research purposes rather than to inform service improvement.

## Key features of TPL

### Evidence that key features were incorporated into the TPL and participant satisfaction with key features

For the purposes of TPL evaluation, the evaluation framework identifies as key features of TPL: active learning; duration; collective participation; access, administration and data collection; TPL focus; coherence; ownership; and facilitator competencies. Some information on many of these is available from the case study. Data in this section are drawn from the 45 teachers who had matched pre- and post-TPL questionnaire data. As the ERC did not undertake independent evaluation of the extent to which key features were incorporated into the TPL, the focus of this section is on participant satisfaction with

<sup>31</sup> In the comments that follow it is important to acknowledge that the timing of facilitation of TPL for RP in the case study schools took into account not only school requirements and PDST scheduling constraints but also the lifespan of the current project to develop an evaluation framework. In this regard, completion of the TPL in the school year 2021/2022 may have been prioritised to a greater degree than would typically occur.

the key features. When the TPL evaluation framework is applied by a TPL provider for the purposes of evaluation, the provider may usefully reflect on if/how key features were incorporated into the TPL.

*Active learning:* a fidelity protocol is not used as part of RP facilitation so the evaluation cannot examine whether or not facilitation occurred as intended with regards to active learning. Nonetheless, it can be noted that 71% of participants indicated that the TPL met their expectations with respect to a “sufficient balance of theory and practical examples/strategies”. A further 22% of participants indicated that their expectations were “partially met” and just 7% indicated that their expectations in this regard were “not met” (see Table 3.7).

*Duration:* TPL for RP is facilitated using a sustained support model which means that the duration of the TPL extends over several sessions, typically five per school. A large majority of participants (78%) reported that the TPL met their expectations with regards to “organisation, e.g., timing, location”. When provided with space to provide open-ended responses, two participants commented that they considered TPL for RP to be too long.<sup>32</sup>

*“10 hours to cover this was too long, could have been covered in a shorter time.”*

*“The length of the course could have been shortened to 2/3 sessions.”*

*Collective participation*, as assessed by the participation of several teachers in the same school, is a feature of TPL for RP. As improved relationships are an anticipated outcome of TPL for RP, the next section on outcomes focuses in more detail on participants’ responses related to improvements in relationships in the school generally. Specifically focusing on collective participation in the TPL, one participant noted that:

*“It would be better to get the whole school trained to implement RP fully.”*

*Access, administration and data collection:* TPL for RP takes place in the setting of the school which supports access across geographical locations. A very small minority of participants (4%) indicated that their expectations were “not met” with respect to organisation of the TPL (e.g., timing, location). Just 2% reported that their expectations were “not met” regarding learning materials (Table 3.7).

**Table 3.7: Percentages of teachers indicating that their expectations were “met”, “partially met” or “not met” in various areas related to key features of TPL for RP**

	Met my expectations	Partially met my expectations	Did not meet my expectations
	%	%	%
Organisation of the TPL, e.g., timing, location	78	18	4
Learning materials	67	31	2
Sufficient adaptation of content for our school context	55	38	7
Sufficient balance of theory and practical examples/strategies	71	22	7
Knowledge and experience of facilitator	85	13	2
Sufficient support from facilitator to apply learning from this TPL	69	31	0
Knowledge and skills I have gained	69	27	4
Relevance of TPL to curriculum and policy	69	29	2

32 These extracts are intended to illustrate how qualitative data may be used to provide further insights when populating the evaluation template.

### Chapter 3: Illustration of aspects of the TPL evaluation framework

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**TPL focus:** Almost all participants indicated that their expectations were “met” (69%) or “partially met” (27%) regarding the knowledge and skills that they gained in the TPL for RP (Table 3.7). All open-ended comments on the content of the TPL were positive, including general comments such as “excellent” or “great”. Other positive comments on resources or content included:

*“Question cards are a handy tool.”*

*“I thought it was excellent and see how using visuals and actions you could adapt the questions to suit very young children and children with additional needs.”*

*“Learned a lot, especially restorative circles.”*

**Coherence:** Table 3.7 shows that 69% of teachers indicated that the TPL met their expectations with regards to relevance of the TPL to curriculum and policy. Alignment with school priorities can be assumed as participation at school-level was voluntary and TPL occurred at the request of the school.

**Ownership:** Over half of participants indicated that the TPL met their expectations in terms of sufficient adaptation of content for their school context. A further 38% of participants indicated that the TPL “partially met” their expectations in this regard (Table 3.7).

**Facilitator competencies:** Findings from participants show that 85% of respondents indicated that the TPL “met their expectations” regarding knowledge and experience of the facilitator (Table 3.7). A further 13% indicated that their expectations were “partially met” in this regard while just 2% reported that their expectations were not met regarding the facilitator’s knowledge and experience. In open-ended comments, several respondents commented positively on their facilitator. These included for example that “the facilitator was excellent” and the following comment:

*“Thank you for being so positive, realistic and reminding us the importance of just being kind.”*

In reporting on TPL evaluations, it is anticipated that this section would also outline how participants were involved in designing the evaluation in addition to contributing data.

#### Lessons from the TPL evaluation related to key features to inform future TPL

Current data collection was undertaken for research purposes rather than for service improvement.

## Teacher outcomes

### Evidence that expected outcomes were achieved (if achieved)

Comparable items were included in the pre- and post-TPL questionnaires to allow examination of change in teachers’ self-reported skills and knowledge over time. Both questionnaires asked participants to rate their own knowledge and skills as “high”, “moderate”, “low”, or “limited/no knowledge” across four areas: Building and improving relationships within groups in school; having difficult conversations with students or parents (in relation to behaviour/conflict); seeking solutions when a behavioural/conflict situation arises in school; and in supporting a whole school community.

At the time of administration of the pre-TPL questionnaire, not more than one-in-six participants rated their knowledge or skills as “high” in each of the areas assessed (Table 3.8). In contrast, at the time of administration of the post-TPL questionnaire, almost two-fifths of participants rated their knowledge and skills as “high” in relation to having difficult conversations with students or parents in relation to behaviour/conflict and half or more rated their knowledge and skills as “high” for each of the other areas (Table 3.8). Conversely, the percentages of participants rating their skills or knowledge as “low” decreased substantially between the two time points. (Tests of statistical significance are not conducted given the small numbers involved).

**Table 3.8: Percentages of teachers describing skills and knowledge in various areas as high, moderate, low, or limited/none, before and after TPL for RP**

	High		Moderate		Low		Limited or no knowledge	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Building and improving relationships within groups in school	11	56	64	44	25	0	0	0
Having difficult conversations with students or parents in relation to behaviour/conflict	11	38	64	56	20	4	4	2
Seeking solutions when a behavioural/conflict situation arises in school	16	53	68	44	16	2	0	0
Supporting a whole school community	11	47	56	44	26	7	7	2

Participating teachers were also asked to rate their confidence in various areas prior to and after TPL for RP. Specifically, teachers were asked to rate as “high”, “moderate”, “low”, “not confident”, or “not yet familiar with this term”, their confidence in engaging with Restorative circles, using Restorative language and Restorative conversations. Prior to TPL, no teachers rated their confidence as “high” on any of these (Table 3.9). In contrast, after TPL, two-fifths to half of teachers rated their confidence in these areas as “high”. Conversely, while about half of teachers prior to TPL indicated that they were “not confident” or “not familiar” with the terms, no teachers indicated that they were “not confident” after the TPL and just 2% indicated with they were “not familiar” with the terms.<sup>33</sup>

In the post-TPL survey, teachers were asked to assess both the impact (already experienced) and the anticipated future impact of the TPL in several areas. Focusing on teacher outcomes in various areas, Table 3.10 shows the percentages of teachers who responded that the impact already experienced in a number of areas was “large”, “moderate”, “small”, “I don’t know”, or “none yet”. Very large majorities of teachers indicated “large” or “moderate” impact already experienced for each of the areas assessed.

**Table 3.9: Percentages of teachers reporting high, moderate, low, or no confidence in using various RP approaches in the pre- and post-TPL questionnaires**

Confidence in engaging with...	High		Moderate		Low		Not confident		I am not yet familiar with this term	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Restorative circles	0	44	16	44	27	9	16	0	42	2
Using restorative language	0	49	20	42	33	7	29	0	18	2
Using restorative conversations	0	47	13	44	38	7	31	0	18	2

33 As 2% corresponds to one individual, this response may reflect a data entry error on the part of the individual rather than a lack of familiarity with the terms.

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**Table 3.10: Percentages of teachers reporting that impact experienced to date of TPL on four teacher outcomes is large, moderate, small, don't know or none yet**

	Large	Moderate	Small	I don't know	None yet
	%	%	%	%	%
Your own knowledge	40	44	16	0	0
Your attitudes or beliefs	47	49	4	0	0
Your teaching practices or skills	40	49	7	2	2
Your own reflective practice	44	44	9	0	2

In open-ended questionnaire data, a small number of teachers provided a rationale for their ratings. These included:

*"When I said that there has been little or no impact on my attitudes and beliefs, it is because I am a big believer in RP already and agree with everything that we have been taught."*

*"As I work in Support, I haven't had the opportunity to put a lot of the theory into practice. Next year I will be back in the classroom and I hope to be able to use my skills then. I found the course very interesting and although our school has very few behaviour difficulties, it was very helpful to reflect on my own practice. I really enjoyed participating in this course."*

One teacher referred to the impact of TPL for RP on their own beliefs and noted the "re-energising" impact of the TPL:

*"...Overall, it has prompted me to evaluate my own beliefs and practises and to re-energise how I relate to pupils, staff & people in my own life."*

Teachers provided open-ended data in their reflective journals during or after each TPL session. A total of 84 entries were available for analysis for the final TPL session. In response to the question "this week I have learned", about half of participants provided responses referring to "restorative meetings and conferences". About one-third provided responses pertaining to planning, implementing or embedding RP daily in their school. Smaller numbers of participants referred to learning related to the fishbowl strategy, the need to take time before responding, or a whole school approach. The importance of fairness, respect, trust and good relationships was also mentioned as an area of learning in the final RP session.

## Lessons from the TPL evaluation on teacher outcomes to inform future TPL

Data collection for the case study was intended to illustrate aspects of the framework rather than for ongoing service improvement.

## Student, system or school outcomes

### Evidence of TPL impact on student outcomes and evidence of TPL impact on school-level outcomes

Of 45 teachers with pre- and post-TPL questionnaire data, most indicated that outcomes already experienced for students or the school were "large" or "moderate". For example, at the time of administration of the post-TPL questionnaire, more than a quarter of participants reported that student outcomes were "large"; the same percentage reported a "large" impact on extra-curricular learning. Approximately one-third of respondents reported a "large" impact on school culture and environment; similar percentages reported a "large" impact on curriculum/teaching and learning of specific subjects; relationships and partnerships in the school; or school policy and planning (Table 3.11).

**Table 3.11: Student, school or system outcomes: teacher perceptions of extent of impact already experienced at the end of TPL for RP**

	Large	Moderate	Small	I don't know	None yet
	%	%	%	%	%
Student outcomes (e.g., increased positive behaviours, reduced aggression, improved self-worth)	27	56	9	2	7
School culture and environment	31	47	13	2	7
Curriculum/teaching and learning of specific subjects	33	44	11	7	4
Extra-curricular learning	27	36	20	9	9
Relationships and partnerships in the school	36	36	13	9	7
School policy and planning	31	49	4	4	11

Outcomes for students or schools referenced in teachers' reflective journals included reference to a calmer atmosphere or environment in the school, greater empathy on the part of students, improved behaviour, improved relationships generally, or successful implementation in the classroom of RP approaches such as restorative circles. With respect to impact on relationships, respondents noted better student-teacher relationships as well as better student-student relationships, improved cooperation, more in-depth discussions with students when issues arise, and more evidence of a whole school approach.

### Evidence of TPL on system outcomes

Outcomes beyond the individual school were not considered in the case study although a very small number of participants made relevant comments in open-ended questions or in their reflective journals. For example, one participant referred to the need for more resources for pupils in the early years of primary school:

*"A lot of the language and conversations can be modified to Junior School level, however a lot of the current resources in existence are for upper-primary and beyond."*

Another commented on the high quality of [PDST resources<sup>34</sup>](#) which may be considered to represent a system-level benefit of the TPL as many resources are made publicly available, e.g., podcasts, links to websites and recommended reading materials.

### Lessons from the TPL evaluation related to wider outcomes to inform future TPL

The case study gathered data for research purposes only so lessons for future TPL are not considered.

### 3.5: Facilitator perspectives on evaluation of TPL for RP

In the evaluation of TPL for RP, facilitators were asked for their perspectives on the ease or difficulties associated with the data collection process. (Note [Appendix 4](#) provides the instructions for constructing the unique identifier referenced in facilitator comments in this section). Responses from facilitators indicate that data collection was generally perceived to be straightforward and facilitators reported that they recognised the benefits of electronic data collection. The following quotations illustrate these:

*"I found the QR Unique codes and questionnaires very effective, quick and easy to use."*

*"They were quick and more effective than using hardcopies of evaluations."*

*"They were easy to incorporate on the school visits and provided feedback to facilitator."*

34 Resources for primary schools are available at <https://www.pdst.ie/primary/health-wellbeing/restorative-practice>

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Regarding the wider purpose of TPL evaluation, one facilitator noted that “*Gathering some data from reflective templates is very important for the evaluation of CPD... When participants become accustomed to this way of collecting data it will be an efficient manner of gathering valuable information to aid the delivery of effective CPD*”. Nonetheless, the potential for data gathering to impact on the flow of the TPL session or the time available for the content of the session was raised by two facilitators who noted that:

*“Explaining the unique identifier and the role of the ERC at the start of the first session was a little time consuming and wasn’t the best intro to a CPD experience.”*

*“The work was moderate but not such much in an administrative/ preparatory way, but in the sense of needing to time manage the content of the presentation in order to create ample time for it. As well as making sure technology was available and supporting participants using the technology during the designated time to get the survey done.”*

All seven facilitators reported that they used the reflective template in each session they facilitated and they indicated that they provided time for participants to complete the reflective template in the session. One facilitator noted that “*on some occasions a staff member requested to leave a few minutes early. I asked them to complete the questionnaire at a time that suited them*”.

All facilitators agreed that instructions for creating the unique identifiers for the pre- and post-TPL questionnaires were clear (see [Appendix 4](#)) and most (n = 6) reported that they consider the current approach for unique IDs to be suitable for future evaluations without further modification. Many (n = 5) agreed that participants were generally comfortable with the use of unique IDs across TPL sessions. A minority (n = 2) agreed that creating unique IDs took a considerable amount of time. Facilitator comments on using the unique identifier system included:

*“Participants were willing to create these unique codes at the first session and saved them for use for subsequent training sessions.”*

*“The system does take a little time to get up and running... however both facilitators and participants will adapt and become very familiar with it in a short time... when working well it is very efficient manner of collecting data.”*

*“Participants were generally able to follow the instructions to set up the Unique code... Some hadn’t a QR code scanner installed on their phones but using the facility camera seemed to work.”*

Facilitators were asked to indicate when they had distributed the pre-TPL questionnaires for principals and teachers. Responses show that a majority of TPL participants received the pre-questionnaire either in advance of the first introductory visit or at the beginning of the first introductory visit. However, a small number (n=2) of facilitators indicated that they distributed the pre-TPL questionnaire *after* the introductory visit but before the first TPL session. As these TPL participants had experienced the introductory visit at the time of questionnaire completion, it might be expected that their baseline knowledge of RP content would be higher than those who completed the pre-TPL questionnaire prior to any input on RP.

Facilitators also reported some minor variation in the timing of distribution of the post-TPL questionnaire although this is likely to have more limited impact on participant responses. Just over half of facilitators (n = 4) indicated that they provided the questionnaire at the final session and provided time for participants to complete it. A slightly smaller number of facilitators (n = 3) indicated that they provided the questionnaire at the final session and asked participants to complete it in their own time. Through open-ended responses, it was evident that this was also the method used if participants had to leave early or were called away in which case they were sent the questionnaire via email and were issued with an email reminder. Variations in the timing of the post-TPL questionnaire might be anticipated to impact on the quality of data gathered; e.g., there may be variation in the extent to which participants wish

to invest time outside of the TPL to complete evaluation materials. Alternatively, participants may be likely to invest more time to complete in detail outside of the session. Facilitators recognised the likely variation in data quality across instruments and participants noting that:

*"Overall I found it an efficient way to conduct the reflection & feedback from sessions... It was difficult to gauge the level of interaction with the reflective templates as some participants seemed to complete it very quickly."*

*"It seemed like participants found other methodologies more engaging for reflecting on their learning... doing the survey sometimes seemed like a 'chore' to them, rather than the lively discussions around learning that we had/ were having in sessions."*

In summary, a large majority of participating facilitators (n = 6) agreed that pre- and post-TPL questionnaires and reflective templates were useful for the evaluation of TPL. Many (n = 5) agreed that the questionnaires and reflective templates were useful to support teacher reflection on their learning. The drop-off across sessions in the numbers of questionnaires or reflective templates completed may reflect participant fatigue with the evaluation instruments and shows that successful evaluation relies on building understanding of the importance of the evaluation process.<sup>35</sup> Given the central importance of reflective practice to successful TPL, it is important that TPL participants fully understand the value of answering the same questions on multiple occasions.

### 3.6: Concluding remarks

The evaluation framework for TPL in Ireland presented in this document comprises four components for consideration in any evaluation of TPL. These are: context; key features of TPL; teacher outcomes; and student, school or system outcomes. It is recognised that not all TPL is intended to have student, school or system outcomes so some TPL evaluation may focus only on context, key features of TPL, and teacher outcomes.

The TPL evaluation framework is designed to be sufficiently general to support evaluation of different models of TPL (e.g., workshops, seminars, sustained support, in-school support, or a mix of these), in different areas, across different levels of the education system, and facilitated in-person, online or using a mix of these. The framework is intended as a resource for TPL providers and to support some harmonisation across TPL evaluations, where this is required by providers.

A number of outstanding issues merit further consideration following the conclusion of the current project. These include:

- **Supporting teacher involvement in the design of TPL evaluation:** Involving TPL participants in the design of TPL evaluation is recognised as good practice in *Cosán* and TPL providers may wish to give further consideration to this issue as applied to their own context.
- **Encouraging teachers to contribute data to TPL evaluation:** Effective TPL evaluation relies on the quality of data available to the evaluator. In quantitative research, the response rate is one key consideration when examining data quality. It is important that response rates are high in order to reduce the risk of bias; i.e., if only the most engaged TPL participants provide evaluation data, findings are not representative of all participants. Phase 4 of the current project highlighted the challenges associated with gathering participant data at several timepoints throughout the TPL. Further consideration should be given to improving participant response rates and approaches to support this.

<sup>35</sup> As noted earlier, *Cosán* highlights the important role for TPL participants in the supporting the design of the evaluation and it may be anticipated that such stakeholder involvement would be important in securing buy-in for ongoing data collection.

Chapter 3: Illustration of aspects of the TPL evaluation framework

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- **Data sources:** *Cosán* recognises the potential of an ICT-based solution to support teachers' reflection on, and meaningful engagement in, their own learning (Teaching Council, 2016a, p.25). At present, a very limited amount of centrally-held data are available to support TPL evaluation. In the longer term, and subject to relevant ICT developments, appropriate data governance (including principles of data ethics, etc.) and data sharing arrangements, consideration should be given to if/how centrally-held data may be used to support TPL evaluation.
- **Alignment of terminology related to TPL across Department-funded services and documentation:** The establishment of Oide in September 2023 offers an opportunity to ensure consistency in terminology around TPL across services and documentation.
- **Periodic review and update of the TPL evaluation framework:** The TPL evaluation framework is intended to reflect current research findings, relevant policy and current practice at the time of writing (Spring 2023). There is a need to review the TPL evaluation framework periodically in order to ensure that it continues to reflect up-to-date research findings, policy and practice.
- **Application of the TPL framework:** It is necessary for the TPL evaluation framework to be widely applied and used by TPL providers and researchers to fully test its utility in practice. Proposed edits should be collated for consideration at the framework's review which should occur periodically. In particular, components of the TPL evaluation framework for which limited examples of assessment were available at the time of writing (see Chapter 2) should be prioritised for further consideration at the review stage.
- **Sharing of good practice:** As TPL providers use the framework to develop materials for use in TPL evaluation, it would be helpful if materials developed can be shared and made available for adaptation. This would promote good practice and ongoing improvement in the area of TPL evaluation.
- **Consideration of the need for further resources:** Consideration should be given to other resources required to support full implementation of the framework. These may include development of further summary documentation or training for staff members working on evaluation in organisations providing TPL.

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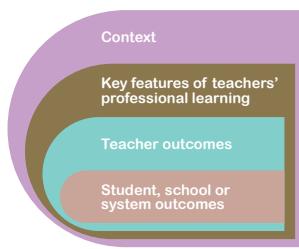
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# Appendix 1:

## A descriptive template for TPL

*This is a descriptive template which may be of use to TPL providers when designing TPL. It is designed to mirror the TPL evaluation template.*



**Title of TPL:**

**Brief overview of TPL (including model, language and cost [if applicable]):**

**Target audience:**

**Location of TPL (e.g., school-based, Education Centre, other external venue):**

**Date span of TPL (for TPL involving sustained support, provide start & end date):**

**Number of TPL hours for each participant:**

**Timing of TPL (e.g., during school-time, in the evening, at the weekend, during school holidays):**

### Context

Please outline the wider context in which this TPL takes place:

Please describe how the TPL is designed to...

- › take into account local school or classroom context
- › take into account individual participant characteristics
- › align with national policy, frameworks, curriculum and system priorities
- › consider the influence of context on implementation of learning from TPL

### Key features of TPL

Please describe how the TPL incorporates the key features:

- › active learning
- › duration
- › collective participation
- › effective administrative procedures and data collection for evaluation
- › promotes access, e.g., through adherence to principles of Universal Design for Learning
- › is coherent with national policy, frameworks, curriculum and system priorities
- › is evidence based, referencing current relevant research
- › promotes ownership of content on the part of participants
- › is relevant to participants' daily practice and provides tools for implementation
- › is facilitated by an effective and knowledgeable facilitator

Please provide an overview of the TPL facilitator(s):

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### Teacher outcomes

Please describe the expected outcomes for teachers:

How will the TPL:

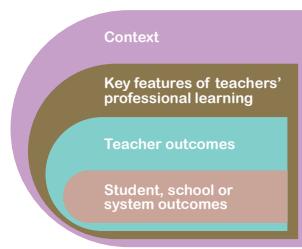
- › Add to teacher skills and/or knowledge?
- › Support teacher reflection on attitudes and beliefs and/or challenge their assumptions (as appropriate)?
- › Support teachers to develop teaching practices, interaction patterns, or reflective practices?

### Student, school or system outcomes

Please describe the expected outcomes (if any) for:

- › Students:
- › The school:
- › The wider system:

## Appendix 2: An evaluation template for TPL



**Title of TPL to be evaluated:**

**Brief overview of TPL (including model, language and cost [if applicable]):**

**Target audience:**

**Location of TPL (e.g., school-based, Education Centre, other external venue):**

**Date span of TPL (for TPL involving sustained support, provide start & end date):**

**Number of TPL hours for each participant:**

**Timing of TPL (e.g., during school-time, in the evening, at the weekend, during school holidays):**

**Numbers of participants:**

**Number of participating schools:**

*(Where TPL is of sustained duration, please provide numbers of participants across time-points to allow for identification of the levels of attrition at school- and individual-level over time)*

### Context

Evidence that context was taken into account in the TPL

Evidence of consideration of the influence of context on implementation of learning from TPL

Following reflection on the findings of the TPL evaluation by the TPL provider, indicate any learning from this evaluation regarding the role of context that will inform future TPL

### Key features of TPL

Evidence that key features (as identified in the TPL evaluation framework) were incorporated into the TPL

Participant satisfaction with key features of the TPL

Following reflection on the findings of the TPL evaluation by the TPL provider, indicate any learning from this evaluation regarding the key features that will inform future TPL

### Teacher outcomes

Evidence that expected outcomes were achieved (if achieved)

Following reflection on the findings of the TPL evaluation by the TPL provider, indicate any learning from this evaluation regarding teacher outcomes that will inform future TPL

### Student, system or school outcomes (where applicable)

Evidence of TPL impact on student outcomes (where applicable)

Evidence of TPL impact on school-level outcomes (where applicable)

Evidence of TPL impact on system outcomes (where applicable)

Following reflection on the findings of the TPL evaluation by the TPL provider, indicate any learning from this evaluation regarding student, system or school outcomes that will inform future TPL

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# Appendix 3: Questions from the Design and Quality Assurance Process

Detailed questions regarding key features of TPL are provided in the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* document by the DoE.<sup>36</sup>

## Enhance reflective practice

- › Does the material support teacher iterative reflective practice and include learning experiences designed to build capacity for personal professional reflection? Does the material elicit prior knowledge and learning?
- › Does the design of the TPL support collaborative reflective practice encouraging teachers to collectively reflect on their learning and their personal, classroom, subject department and school experiences?
- › Are the opportunities for reflective practice multi-faceted? Does the material explore different models of reflective practice?
- › Are participants in the TPL supported across the reflective cycle with the 'now what' or future planning aspect of reflective practice underlined as important in terms of sustainability of practice?
- › Does the design provide opportunity to elicit participant prior knowledge and learning?
- › Does the design provide opportunity for observation, analysis, reflection and feedback on teachers' own and others' understanding of practice?
- › Does the design provide opportunities to review students' work individually and/or collaboratively?

## Develop pedagogical skills and content knowledge

- › Does the design focus on supporting teachers in improving learning for students by placing the student at the centre of the learning experience?
- › Does the design support participation in exploring the knowledge, understanding, skills and values approach espoused by learning outcomes?
- › Does the design support participants in exploring new terminology, concepts and theories of knowledge and understanding?
- › Are there opportunities for participants to share pedagogical practices and to critique their own practice in order to support the development of pedagogical content knowledge?
- › Are there opportunities to focus on how participants support student learning? Are participants empowered to use their learning to contribute to conversations about teaching, learning, assessment and reporting?

## Social and collaborative in nature

- › Are there opportunities to support participants in sharing authentic classroom practice and experience?
- › Are there opportunities for participants to consider how they will bring the learning back to their schools and how they will use the learning in the classroom?

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36 The elements of the conceptual framework used in the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* are: Enhance reflective practice; develop pedagogical skills and content knowledge; social and collaborative in nature; support both meaning making and teacher agency; focus on active learning experiences; and mindful of teacher needs and interests. Detailed prompt questions are included in the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* to encourage reflection on the key tenets during the process of designing TPL. These questions are replicated here for use by providers who have reflected on these questions at the design stage to support continuity between design and evaluation. Note that while CPD is used in the design protocols, this is replaced by TPL here.

- Are opportunities to develop collaborative practice, both within subject departments, cross-departmentally, at whole school level and between schools, fostered where possible? Is there a focus on opportunities for collaboration?
- Are learning experiences within the TPL designed to model effective co-dependent collaboration with a focus on each participant making a meaningful contribution?
- Does the design stimulate conversation around teaching, learning and assessment that can be continued and developed further with colleagues?
- Are there opportunities highlighted which develop collaborative practice both within and beyond the school?
- Are there opportunities for the facilitation of discussion which allows for critically exploring, practicing and providing feedback through a variety of approaches?
- Are there stimuli provided which allow participants to engage and make meaningful contribution?

## Support both meaning making and teacher agency

For teachers, starting with experience in ITE, is the material designed as part of an overarching professional learning journey for teachers? Does the TPL build on previous learning as part of teachers' professional learning provision?

- Does the TPL design support participants in collectively exploring their implicit beliefs about teaching, learning, assessment and reporting in a safe collegial environment?
- Does the TPL provide participants with opportunities to interrogate data or research that is relevant to the subject or pedagogical areas?
- Does the TPL provide participants with opportunities to explore the context and rationale for curricular change, to support participants in identifying how the CPD is relevant to their own practice?
- Does the design provide participants with opportunities to explore the context and rationale for change, to support them in identifying how the learning is relevant to their own practice?
- Does the design build on previous learning
  - within the area of focus?
  - across the sector?
  - cross-sectorally?
- Is effective questioning woven through the design as a catalyst for participant reflection and discussion?
- Does the design provide participants with opportunities to consider their values while challenging their assumptions and bias?

## Focus on active learning experiences

- Does the design support participants in experiencing learning from the student perspective?
- Does the design explore the principles of Universal Design for Learning to support an inclusive approach to teaching, assessment and learning?
- Are learning experiences constructivist or socio-constructivist in approach?
- Does the design provide participants with opportunities to consider links with other subject areas with a focus on enhancing student engagement?
- Are experiences and methodologies modelled supporting teachers in developing their understanding of effective pedagogical approaches, including active learning?
- Is this followed by opportunities to discuss and reflect on these experiences and to consider how this is relevant and applicable to their own contexts?

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- › Are there opportunities to co-construct meaning and understanding through engaging in active learning experiences?

### Mindful of teacher needs and interests

- › Does the design reflect insights gained through an analysis of evaluations of previous provision which give valuable feedback on teacher needs and interests?
- › Is the TPL designed to include learning experiences that elicit teacher needs and interests? Does the TPL support transforming or extending these into new knowledge, skills, values and beliefs?
- › Does the design acknowledge that participants work in a variety of contexts? Support participants in acknowledging and sharing prior learning and experience?
- › Are examples of student work and teacher practice – captured in authentic classroom situations – used, where possible, as a stimulus for discussion? Does the design support participants in exploring this work in their own school contexts?
- › Are the materials mindful of the stage of implementation?
- › Does the design reflect insights gained through previous engagements?

## Appendix 4:

# Further guidance on the application of the TPL evaluation framework

It is intended that the guidance that follows is sufficiently general to support evaluation of different models of TPL, in different curricular areas, and across different levels of the education system. The scope and depth of any particular evaluation will depend on the purpose for which evaluation is conducted. Furthermore, the emphasis placed on each component of the framework will vary depending on the purpose of the evaluation. The content in this section is provided for adaptation by TPL providers and providers should feel free to map their own existing evaluation materials to the components of the framework in order to evaluate their programmes using the TPL evaluation framework. While not all TPL programmes, initiatives, activities or events will be anticipated to have student, school or system outcomes, it is expected that all TPL evaluation will encompass the other three components of the framework – context; key features of TPL and teacher outcomes. These components are considered central to all TPL as outlined in Chapter 2.

While variation will occur across TPL activities and providers in evaluation design and data collection, the TPL evaluation framework is intended as a resource for providers to support TPL evaluation. It is designed to support some harmonisation across TPL evaluation where required by providers.

Effective TPL evaluation relies on the quality of data available to the evaluator. This means that considerable attention should be given to involving participants in evaluation design and to improving response rates when gathering evaluation data.



While some TPL providers may engage in longitudinal research, e.g., with an academic partner, it is recognised that many providers have limited resources and capacity to follow-up with TPL participants over time. Through the *Cosán* framework, teachers engage in ongoing individual and collaborative reflection on their learning. Through the SSE process, reflection may take place on the impact of TPL. Further examination is required of how these processes may support schools and teachers to contribute data to TPL providers interested in evaluating the long-term impacts of TPL.

### A4.1: Getting started with the TPL evaluation framework

**Step 1:** Review the TPL evaluation framework components (see [Figure A4.1](#) for reference).

**Step 2:** Use the evaluation guiding questions that follow to plan and guide your evaluation ([see A4.2](#)). To help in planning and designing your evaluation, review some of the background reading provided through the links and resources in the relevant sections of [Chapter 1](#).

**Step 2:** Finalise your approaches to evaluation design and data collection. You may wish to adapt the TPL participant feedback questionnaire ([see A4.3](#)) or consult the DoE [guidelines for conducting focus groups](#). Consider using a unique identifier for participants ([see A4.4](#)).

**Step 3:** Following data collection, complete the [TPL evaluation template](#). For TPL providers who use a logic model in TPL design, it is likely that the outputs section of the logic model may be used to populate numbers of participating schools and teachers and number of hours' engagement.

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You are asked to consider each of the four components of the framework in the evaluation of TPL. While it is anticipated that all TPL evaluation references context, key features of TPL, and teacher outcomes, not all TPL will necessarily be expected to impact on student, school or system outcomes. Nonetheless, it is expected that in a majority of instances, this component will also be relevant and should be incorporated in TPL evaluation.

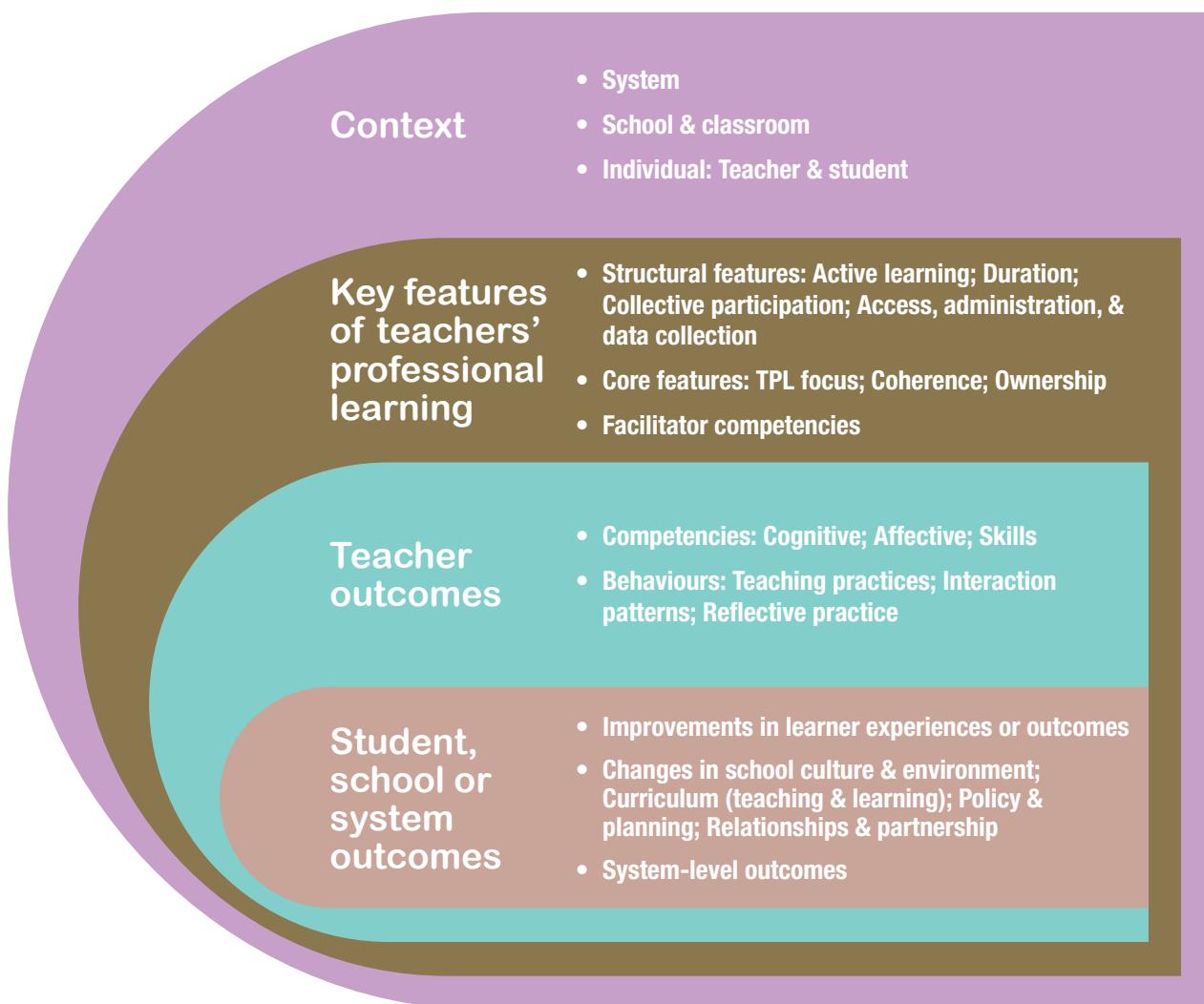


Figure A4.1: The TPL evaluation framework

## A4.2: Guide questions for TPL evaluation



The evaluation questions in this section are intended to provide a springboard for discussion. They do not necessarily all require full and detailed written answers. It is intended that reflection on these questions will allow providers to:

- focus on the purposes of the evaluation;
- select appropriate research designs; and
- choose the most appropriate methods of data collection.

The *Design and Quality Assurance Process* document outlines further detailed questions related to key features – these were provided in [Appendix 3](#).

When reflecting on each of the prompt questions, TPL providers should also ask “*how will we know*”; i.e., what design is required for our evaluation and what methods of data collection will provide the relevant answers? That is, what sources of evidence will best inform answers to these questions? Given the strong evidence base emphasising that effective TPL exhibits certain key features, a strong emphasis is placed on the process of facilitating the TPL in the questions that follow.

## Context (see Section 2.2 for definition and examples)

- Was the national policy context, including the *Cosán framework for teachers' learning*, taken into account in TPL design? If not, why not? If yes, how?
- Did TPL take into account school contextual factors such as:
  - DEIS status
  - Percentage of students with Special Educational Needs
  - Percentage of students with home languages other than Irish or English
  - School language of instruction
  - School urban/rural location
  - Multi-grade teaching
  - School leadership and management
  - If not, why not? If yes, how?
- Did TPL take into account individual teacher characteristics (i.e., those deemed most relevant to the particular TPL – may include teacher experience or prior knowledge of the TPL content). If not, why not? If yes, how?
- Is the implementation of learning from the TPL expected to vary by school or classroom context?
- Is the implementation of learning from the TPL expected to vary by individual participant characteristics?

## Key features of teachers' professional learning (see Section 2.3 for definition and examples)

- Is the duration of the TPL within the control of the TPL provider?
- Was the duration adequate, according to participants and/or the TPL facilitator?
- Was the timing of the TPL (e.g., during school, in the evenings, at the weekend or during the school holidays) convenient for participants?
- Was the TPL competently facilitated?
- Did the facilitator have sufficient relevant content knowledge?
- Was the TPL designed with adherence to principles of Universal Design for Learning?
- Did it incorporate the purposeful use of active learning?
- Did it encourage collective participation and collaboration?
- Was there effective management and administration of the TPL?
- Did the TPL offer opportunities for feedback and reflection?
- Does the TPL provide an opportunity for participants to provide feedback after time has elapsed to allow for reflection and application of learning?
- Was the TPL appropriately grounded in theory and research?
- Did it include hands-on, readily implementable resources for practical application?
- For each question, if the answer is no, why not?

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### Teacher outcomes (see Section 2.4 for definition and examples)

- Did the TPL contribute to teacher professional growth?
- Did the TPL support teacher reflection on attitudes and beliefs and/or challenge their assumptions (as appropriate)?
- Did the TPL support teachers to gain increased knowledge or confidence in teaching practices, interaction patterns, or reflective practices?
- For each question, if no, why not? For example,
  - It may be too soon after completion of the TPL to assess whether or not outcomes have been fully achieved
  - The TPL was not implemented as planned
  - The TPL was implemented as planned but less effective than had been anticipated
- What can be changed for future facilitation of this TPL to improve the likelihood of anticipated outcomes being achieved?

### Student, school or system outcomes (see Section 2.5 for definition and examples)

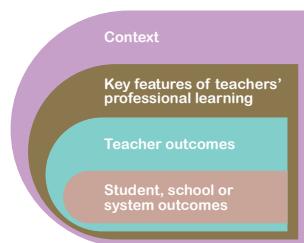
For TPL where student, school or system outcomes are anticipated, consider:

- Is there evidence that the TPL resulted in improvements in learner experiences or outcomes? If not, is it likely that the TPL will result in future improvements to student experiences or outcomes once learning is embedded?
- Did the TPL support improvements or changes in:
  - School culture & environment?
  - Curriculum (teaching & learning)?
  - Relationships & partnerships?
  - Policy & planning?
- Did the TPL lead to changes at system level?
- If student, school or system outcomes were anticipated but not achieved by the TPL, what can be changed for future facilitation to improve the likelihood of outcomes being achieved?

### A4.3: Items and prompts for adaptation

Under each of the four components of the framework, this section provides statements and prompts to guide teachers' reflection on the TPL experience and its impact. Statements marked with \* are reproduced (with some minor modifications) from Ingvarson et al. (2005).

TPL providers may wish to edit and adapt these items for use in their evaluations. Note that the items provided examine outcomes as perceived by participants (teachers). Comparisons between pre- and post-TPL responses can provide a measure of change; however, it is important to take into account an appropriate research design if causal conclusions are required.



## Context

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements...	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Having participated in the TPL, I understand clearly how the TPL relates to relevant national policy, curriculum, frameworks or standards				
The TPL supported my learning in ways coherent with <i>Cosán, the national framework for teachers' learning</i>				
The TPL was sufficiently tailored to the local context in my school (e.g., school DEIS status, language of instruction, percentage of students with Special Educational Needs or percentage of students with home languages other than English or Irish)				
The wider education system (e.g., school self-evaluation, inspections, curriculum reform, policy development, support for TPL) will support the implementation of my new learning from this TPL in my subject or classroom				
The local context in my school (e.g., leadership & management, access to resources, school culture) will support the implementation of my new learning from this TPL in my subject or classroom				
School leadership at my school actively supports and encourages all staff to take part in TPL*				
Insufficient time is available in my school to support TPL*				
Follow-up support for TPL is available within my school*				
Teachers at my school work collaboratively to resolve teaching and learning issues*				

*Please explain how the TPL was tailored to the local context in your school, including opportunities for co-construction of content between participants and the TPL facilitator*

*Please explain your understanding of how this TPL links to national policy priorities, curriculum changes or relevant frameworks*

*Please outline the barriers and enablers which will impact on putting learning from this TPL into practice*

## Appendices

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Key features of TPL				
In your opinion, to what extent did the TPL...	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
Include a sufficient emphasis on active learning				
Take place over a sufficient period of time to adequately engage with content				
Promote collective participation of more than one teacher within your school				
Promote collaborative work among participants				
Include a focus on relevant content				
Have coherence with wider policy and curriculum developments				
Encourage ownership of content by participants (e.g., through co-construction of content or by providing TPL in response to needs identified at school level)				
Encourage and support participants to actively reflect on their practice*				
Engage participants in identifying specific areas of their practice in need of development*				
Provide opportunities to test new teaching practices*				
Have immediate relevance for your school, classroom or subject				
Provide opportunities to collaborate with other teachers in examining students' work*				
Provide ongoing assistance in your school or classroom to help implement changes*				

\*Statements marked with \* are reproduced from Ingvarson et al. (2005)

Please rate the degree of emphasis that the TPL placed on each of the following in your opinion...	No emphasis	Minor emphasis	Moderate emphasis	Major emphasis
Subject knowledge or content*				
Knowledge of how students learn content*				
Knowledge of methods of teaching content*				
Models to illustrate those methods of teaching that content*				

\*Statements marked with \* are reproduced from Ingvarson et al. (2005)

In your opinion, to what extent was the TPL...	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
Well planned and organised				
Facilitated by a competent facilitator				
Facilitated by a facilitator with a high degree of relevant content knowledge				
Inclusive of the diverse needs of participants				
Grounded in current research and theory				

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements regarding facilitation of the TPL...	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The facilitator provided sufficient opportunities for participant interaction				
The facilitator was professional and engaging				
The facilitator effectively managed the available time				
The facilitator incorporated examples that were relevant to my practice				

*Please outline any improvements or changes you may suggest for future TPL related to TPL content, structure, mode of facilitation or facilitator*

**Appendices**

## Teacher outcomes

<b>Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
<i>Participation in the TPL...</i>				
improved my knowledge in a relevant area				
improved my skills in a relevant area				
increased my confidence in a relevant area				
helped challenge some existing assumptions				
supported my reflection on my beliefs and attitudes				
encouraged my development as a reflective practitioner				
<i>As a result of participation in the TPL,...</i>				
I have increased knowledge of the content I teach*				
I have increased knowledge of teaching and learning strategies appropriate to the content that I teach*				
I have increased knowledge of how students learn the content that I teach*				
I have increased knowledge of individual differences amongst students and how to cater for their needs*				
I have increased knowledge of how to link assessment into the teaching and learning cycle*				
I have increased knowledge of classroom organisation and management*				
I make clearer links between my teaching goals and classroom activities*				
I manage classroom structures and activities more effectively*				
I use more effective teaching and learning strategies appropriate to the content that I teach*				
I use more effective teaching and learning strategies appropriate to the classroom context*				
I use teaching and learning strategies that are more challenging and engaging*				
I am better able to meet the individual learning needs of my students*				
I link assessment into the teaching and learning cycle more effectively*				
I provide more effective feedback to my students to support their learning*				
I better engage students in higher order thinking*				
I access and use materials and resources more effectively*				
My ability to meet the learning needs of my students has expanded*				
My confidence in teaching my class or subject has increased*				
Teachers at my school discuss teaching and learning more frequently with colleagues*				
Teachers have increased their collaboration in planning, teaching and assessment activities*				
I have passed ideas from the TPL to other teachers in my school*				

\*Statements marked with \* are reproduced from Ingvarson et al. (2005)

<i>Please provide further detail on what you have learned from participation in the TPL</i>

## Student, school or system outcomes

In your opinion, to what extent has your learning from the TPL led to improvements in...	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
learning experiences for students				
wellbeing of students				
outcomes for students				
relationships and partnerships in the school				
school policy and planning				
school culture and environment				
curriculum (teaching and learning in the school)				
wider changes at the level of the education system				
Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
As a result of your participation in the TPL, students now...				
have fewer difficulties in understanding what they are being taught*				
are learning more purposefully*				
are more actively engaged in learning activities*				
demonstrate enhanced learning outcomes*				
access and use materials and resources more effectively*				

\*Statements marked with \* are reproduced from Ingvarson et al. (2005)

### A4.4: Creating a unique identifier for participants

The evaluation of TPL for RP described in Chapter 3 used a unique participant identifier to allow linkage of pre- and post-TPL questionnaire data.

Participants were advised to construct their ID as follows:

1. The first letter of your first name
2. Your day of birth (two digits; e.g., if you were born on the second day of the month, enter 02)
3. Your month of birth (two digits; e.g., if you were born in March, enter 03)
4. The first letter of your middle name (if you do not have a middle name, enter X)
5. The first letter of the city/town where you were born (or enter X if you cannot/do not wish to use actual).

An example for Aoife Jane Collins, born in Cavan on 30th September 1979

1. First letter of first name = A
2. Day of birth = 30
3. Month of birth = 09
4. First letter of middle name = J
5. First letter of city/town of birth = C

Unique ID code = A3009JC



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