Digital Learning Framework **(DLF)** national longitudinal evaluation

One year on – What have we learned?

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FURTHER INFORMATION:

ERC DLF evaluation website

Department of Education's announcement of new Digital Strategy

PDST website (tools and resources for schools)

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What is the Digital Learning Framework (DLF)?

The **DLF** is a resource to guide schools on using digital technologies (DTs) to transform teaching, learning and assessment.

The DLF complements the **Looking at Our School** self-evaluation framework, and supports the implementation of the Digital Strategy for Schools.

The **embedding of DTs** into a wide range of teaching, learning and assessment activities is a key concept of the DLF, **defined** within the Framework as:

> ❛ *Moving beyond ICT integration, where digital technology is seamlessly used in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment to enhance the learning experiences of all students.* ❜

The DLF is organised along two dimensions (and four domains within each dimension):

Dimension 1
Teaching and Learning
→ learner outcomes
→ teachers' individual practice
→ learner experiences
→ teachers' collective/collaborative practice

Statements of effective practice

Dimension 2
Leadership and Management
→ leading learning and teaching
→ managing the organisation
→ leading school development
→ developing leadership capacity

Statements of effective practice

There is a set of standards within each of the eight domains, accompanied by **statements of effective** and **highly effective practice**. These statements **enable teachers and school leaders to plan** how the school can **support the embedding of DTs** into teaching and learning.

As a support to schools, the **PDST Technology in Education** (TiE) team provides professional learning workshops, seminars and follow-up supports for implementing the DLF, with a suite of resources available at **www.DLplanning.ie**. Support is also provided by the PDST's team of ICT advisors.

The DLF evaluation

- The Educational Research Centre (ERC) is **evaluating the implementation of the DLF** from the multiple perspectives of **school principals, Digital Learning Team leaders, teachers** and **students** over **2018/19-2021/22**.
- Evaluation design is longitudinal and mixed-method (utilising questionnaire, case study and interview data), involving a **baseline** and **two longitudinal** data collection phases.
- Baseline data collection took place Autumn 2018 – Spring 2019 and most recently, **Wave 1 occurred between Autumn 2019 – Spring 2020**.
- **Wave 2** data collection is scheduled for **Autumn 2021 – Spring 2022**.

Who participates in the evaluation

- At Wave 1, the sample consists of **150 primary schools, 100 post-primary schools and 32 special schools**, drawn from the baseline school participants.
- These samples are **nationally representative**.
- This same sample will be followed through to Wave 2, allowing for a **three-year longitudinal perspective** on the implementation and impacts of the DLF.
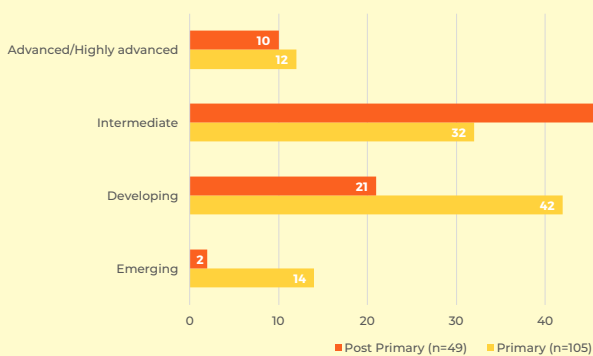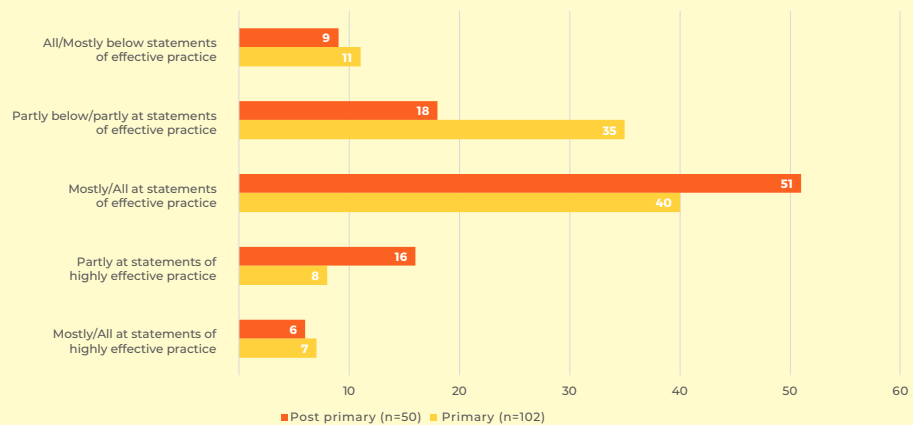
150 Primary Schools

100 Post-Primary Schools

32 Special Schools
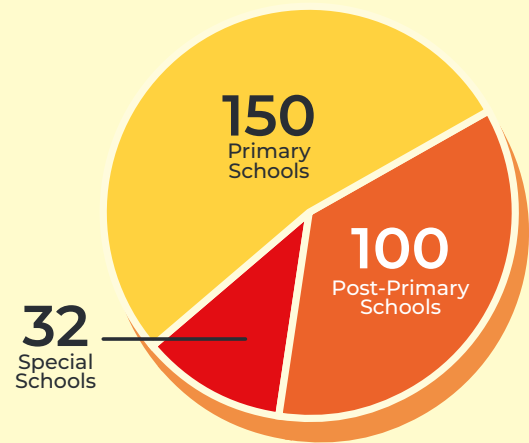
DLF Wave 1 evaluation key findings

Evidence from Wave 1 suggests **high levels of engagement** with the DLF by schools

Post-primary schools (73%) were more likely to report that they were **mostly or all at the statements of effective practice, or higher.**

Primary schools (46%) were more likely to report that they were **partly, mostly, or all below the statements of effective practice.**
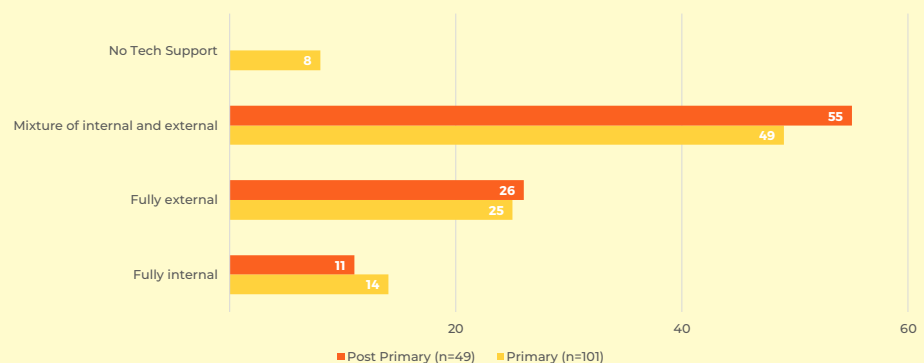
Category	Post primary (n=50)	Primary (n=102)
All/Mostly below statements of effective practice	9	11
Partly below/partly at statements of effective practice	18	35
Mostly/All at statements of effective practice	51	40
Partly at statements of highly effective practice	16	8
Mostly/All at statements of highly effective practice	6	7

Category	Post Primary (n=49)	Primary (n=105)
Advanced/Highly advanced	10	12
Intermediate	68	32
Developing	21	42
Emerging	2	14

Over three-quarters of **post-primary** schools (78%) rated their **level of DT embedding** as **intermediate/advanced.**

Over half of **primary** schools (56%) rated their **level of DT embedding** as **emerging/developing.**

Technical support and maintenance in schools was most commonly provided by a **mixture of internal and external sources.**

Perceived technical support effectiveness was rated significantly higher in **post-primary** schools than in primary schools.

Category	Post Primary (n=49)	Primary (n=101)
No Tech Support		8
Mixture of internal and external	55	49
Fully external	26	25
Fully internal	11	14

Vast majority of schools at **both levels (over 90%)** had either **begun or completed their Digital Learning Plan (DLP).**

Extensive consultation on DLPs and DT policies was evident with **teachers** and **school management board**, but **less so with parents and students.**

Digital Learning Team (DLT) leaders reported high levels of implementation of **DT-related policies and guidelines.**

Generally, over **90%** of schools had **policies or guidelines** on the following:

Acceptable use of technology in school

Acceptable use of the internet in school

Online safety

DT infrastructure and connectivity and **technical support and maintenance** emerged as significant enablers of successful **DLF implementation** at both levels. There was lot of **variation** across schools on these measures. **Difficulties were more common at primary level.**
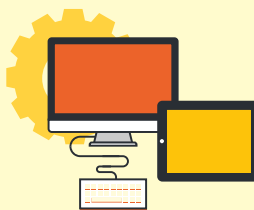
Most common difficulties at primary:
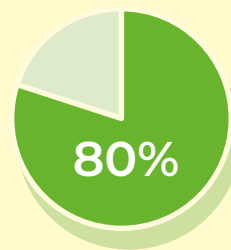
Availability of digital tools
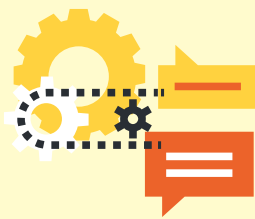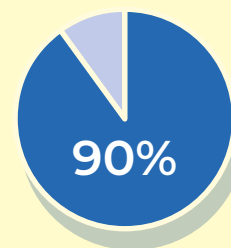
Technical support and maintenance

Availability of appropriate number of computing devices for all students

There were high levels of involvement in DT-related CPD.

Primary

80%

Post Primary

90%

Widespread **positive views** by DLT leaders and teachers of DTs for supporting teaching, learning and assessment with "**Digital advocates**" within schools cited as key enabler of this.

The majority of **DLT leaders** at both levels had visited the **PDST's DLplanning.ie** website. Widespread praise for the **DLplanning.ie** website as a useful resource, **especially:**

- Videos of effective and highly effective practice
- DL planning guidelines document
- DL planning templates

Trends

Four measures were assessed for change across baseline and Wave 1:
DLF **impact** measures:
1. Level of embedding DTs in TLA
2. Level of engagement of teachers and students with DTs

DLF **enablers**:
3. DT Infrastructure and connectivity
4. Technical support effectiveness

Level of Embedding:
- Primary: no change from baseline to Wave 1
- Post-primary: overall increasing trend, with ratings tending to move from 'developing' to 'intermediate' levels

Level of Engagement with DTs:
- Primary: significant increase from baseline to Wave 1
- Post-primary: around the same at Wave 1 and at baseline.

No change in **enablers** of DLF at either primary or post-primary:
- DT infrastructure and connectivity
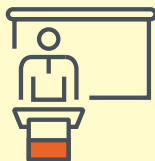- technical support effectiveness

Impacts

At both **primary and post-primary level**, the DLF had the **largest impacts** on:

Students' interest and engagement

Decisions on enhancing DT infrastructure

Teaching and learning activities during class time

Collaboration and sharing of resources among teachers

DT knowledge-sharing among teachers was mostly informal, occurring throughout the school day.

Impact on assessment practices was low in both primary and post-primary.
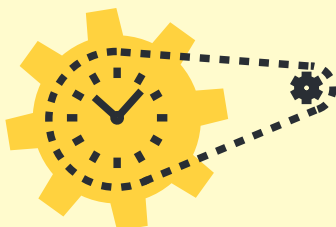
Challenges

The most common **challenges** were:

Primary
- Connectivity
- Gathering evidence for implementation

Both Levels
- Infrastructure
- Leadership for implementation
- Time for implementation

Post-primary
- Sharing learning across school
- Staff DT competence

Enablers of the implementation of the DLF

The forthcoming **Digital Strategy for Schools** should **prioritise the key enablers identified in the DLF evaluation:**

- Adequate **infrastructure and connectivity**
- **Effective technical support**
- Consultative and collaborative **school leadership**
- **Collaboration among teachers**
- Presence of a **'digital advocate'** or advocates in the school
- **CPD** for using DTs in teaching, learning and assessment needs to be **sustained and tailored** to local need

Priorities for Wave 2 of the DLF evaluation

- Gathering the **views of young people**
- **Identifying changes in DLF implementation** that may have occurred **in response to COVID-19**
- Investigating **barriers and enablers to DT-based assessment** in more depth
- Further establishing **needs and priorities of schools with poor levels of infrastructure, connectivity and technical support/maintenance.**

Thanks

The ERC would like to sincerely thank all the principals and teachers who are taking part in the DLF evaluation.