



Press Release

Department of Education commissioned project, to develop an evaluation framework for teachers' professional learning in Ireland, achieves first key milestone

The Educational Research Centre (ERC) is delighted to launch a report on the first phase of a three-year study commissioned by the Department of Education, the purpose of which is to develop an evaluation framework for teachers' professional learning in Ireland, with a focus on student wellbeing. The report – **Developing an evaluation framework for teachers' professional learning in Ireland: Phase 1 Desk-based research** – was written by Caroline Rawdon, Kara Sampson, Lorraine Gilleece, and Jude Cosgrove. The report represents an important step towards meeting commitments made by the Department of Education to evaluate and enhance professional development activities of teachers and school leaders.

Minister Foley welcomes the publication of the report and said: “I am delighted to see the publication of this literature review. This is the first step in the development of an evaluation framework for Teachers' Professional Learning. We have committed in the Programme for Government to review the provision, content and delivery of teacher education and professional development. This evaluation framework will help us to meet that commitment and to ensure that the professional learning opportunities provided to teachers meet their needs, the needs of their school, and most importantly the needs of their students”.

The report, available from ERC's website at <https://www.erc.ie/TPLwellbeing/publications>, is a significant piece of work as it combines several strands of work into a single report. It:

- reviews frameworks currently in use nationally and internationally
- considers methods used for impact assessment and process evaluation
- presents national and international research findings on the wellbeing of children and young people
- summarises national policies relating to the wellbeing of children and young people, and
- provides an account of teacher professional learning related to student wellbeing provided over the past five years by the relevant agencies.

Report findings underline the need for an evaluation framework to focus on the core features of effective professional learning, rather than the mode of delivery or type of activity. The report also advocates the use of a logic model at the design stage to identify how and where change is expected as a result of participation. Conclusions to the report identify a number of principles and issues that will shape the development of the framework in subsequent phases of the work; for example, it is intended that the framework will include practical tools and resources such as templates and checklists.

The project to develop an evaluation framework for teachers' professional learning is overseen by a Steering Committee, chaired by the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education. The group includes senior representatives from a range of relevant stakeholders and agencies: the Centre for School Leadership (CSL), Education Centres, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), Health Service Executive (HSE), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), National Council for Special Education (NCSE), National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT), Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), SOLAS, and the Teaching Council. Representatives from the Department of Education's Inspectorate, Social Inclusion Unit, and Curriculum, Assessment and Policy section also sit on the Steering Committee. Detailed input from the Steering Committee ensures that the report has an applied and practical focus as well as the academic rigour of a systematic review.

Dr Caroline Rawdon, one of the report’s authors, said that “an important contribution of the current report is that it highlights the very large variety of professional development options available to teachers in Ireland. While this is a welcome finding, most courses only evaluate participants’ reactions rather than investigating the impact of participation on student learning and other student outcomes and experiences. It is hoped that the development of a new framework for the Irish context will help to address our current gaps in knowledge about the impacts of teachers’ professional learning”.

Kara Sampson, another of the report’s authors, said that “We thank the teachers and principals who responded to our survey for the second phase of this project earlier this year and we look forward to reporting on the findings of the survey in the Phase 2 report for the project. We hope that the survey data will provide useful insights into teachers’ experiences of professional learning in Ireland. We also look forward to gathering more in-depth information from the schools who have agreed to participate in the third and final phase of this project in 2021. These subsequent phases of the project will complement the findings of the Phase 1 report.”

Notes:

Next steps in the project

- Phase 2: Publish the report on the large-scale survey of teachers and principals from primary, post-primary and special schools in 2021. This survey was carried out earlier this year.
- Phase 3: Conduct further focused data collection (in collaboration with the PDST) with a small number of schools who have already agreed to participate, data collection scheduled for Q1 & Q2 2021.
- Develop and publish the final evaluation framework, publication scheduled for Q1 2022.

Contact details and further information

- The full report is available at <https://www.erc.ie/TPLwellbeing/publications>
- ERC's TPL study website including study timeline and Steering Committee membership:
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