



**Developing an
evaluation framework
for teachers' professional
learning in Ireland:**

Phase 3a Consultation with TPL providers

Caroline Rawdon
Lorraine Gilleece

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Preface

This report represents one of two outputs from the third strand of this project, which has the overall aim of developing a framework for the evaluation of Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL). The project consists of detailed desk-based research, including a literature review (Rawdon, Sampson, Gilleece, & Cosgrove, 2020); a survey of teachers and principals in primary, post-primary, and special schools (Rawdon, Gilleece, Denner, Sampson, & Cosgrove, 2021); research with TPL providers; consultation with children and young people (Rawdon, Fitzgerald, & Gilleece, 2022); and a case-study focusing on an evaluation of a specific TPL opportunity (in the area of student wellbeing). The various strands of the research project will ultimately lead to the publication of a research-based framework for the evaluation of TPL. The term TPL was selected for use in the current project in order to acknowledge the full range of learning activities undertaken by teachers and school leaders.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to members of the Steering Committee (listed overleaf), appointed to oversee the development of a framework for the evaluation of TPL. In particular, we appreciate the considerable help of members of the Steering Committee in reviewing the questionnaire used in this phase of the research and drafts of the current report.

Most importantly, we thank the representatives from organisations that provide TPL who took the time to complete questionnaires on behalf of their organisations. Data collection for this phase of the project took place at a busy and difficult time for these organisations during a global pandemic. We greatly appreciate their contributions to this research as a key stakeholder group for the evaluation framework for TPL.

We gratefully acknowledge the support provided by ERC colleagues, including Aidan Clerkin (interim CEO of the ERC), Jude Cosgrove (former CEO of the ERC), and the ERC's administrative team. We thank Marie Jennings for providing the final cataloguing information for this report.

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Glossary of Acronyms/Abbreviations

AEN	Additional Educational Needs
CAP	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit
CHO	Community Health Organisations
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSL	Centre for School Leadership
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills (<i>from 2010 to 2020</i>)
DoE	Department of Education (<i>renamed October 2020</i>)
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ERC	Educational Research Centre
ESCI	Education Support Centres Ireland
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FET	Further Education and Training
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HSE	Health Service Executive
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals Network
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
LAOS	Looking at Our School
NAPD	National Association for Principals and Deputy Principals
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCGE	National Council for Guidance in Education
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland
PD	Professional Development
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
SEC	State Examinations Commission
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SPHE	Social, Personal, and Health Education
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
TES	Teacher Education (ITE and Professional Development) Section
TPL	Teachers' Professional Learning
TPN	Teacher Professional Network

UDL	Universal Design for Learning
WHO	World Health Organization
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

Executive Summary

Introduction and aims

This report is the third in a series of publications arising from a project which aims to develop a framework for the evaluation of Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) in Ireland. The project arose from a commitment made by the Department of Education (DoE)¹ in the *Action Plan for Education 2018* (DES, 2018a). The current report represents one of two strands of the third phase of this research. Previous reports from this project outline the findings from detailed desk-based research, including a literature review (Rawdon, Sampson, Gilleece, & Cosgrove, 2020); a survey of teachers and principals in primary, post-primary, and special schools (Rawdon, Gilleece, Denner, Sampson, & Cosgrove, 2021); and a small-scale consultation with children and young people (Rawdon, Fitzgerald, & Gilleece, 2022). The final phase of the project (Phase 4) comprises an in-depth case-study of an evaluation of a specific TPL opportunity in the area of student wellbeing (TPL for Restorative Practice).

The aim of the third strand of this research was to consult with key groups, namely TPL providers (Phase 3a) and children and young people (Phase 3b). The current report presents the findings from the consultation with TPL providers. The consultation described in the current report includes the views of organisations providing TPL in the Republic of Ireland.

Methodology

Ten organisations that provide TPL to teachers and school leaders in Ireland were consulted.² A written submission template was provided by email to a representative from each organisation by the Educational Research Centre (ERC). TPL providers were allowed a period of approximately three weeks, from March 12th 2021 until April 1st 2021, to complete and return the questionnaire.

TPL providers were asked to give a detailed description of a TPL programme designed and facilitated by their organisation. They were advised that the programme could be in any area but ideally one which was designed within the past 5 years and which is a good representation of the work of their organisation. TPL providers were asked to identify areas of good practice in TPL in Ireland at a system-level, in their organisation, and at the school-level. They were also asked to suggest areas for improvement with respect to TPL in Ireland. The questionnaire aimed to gather information on TPL providers' perspectives on how their organisations:

- identify TPL needs;
- design and facilitate TPL;
- evaluate and assess the impact of TPL provided; and
- cater for different school contexts and participant diversity in the TPL provided.

¹ Formerly called the Department of Education and Skills (DES) from 2010 until 2020. Renamed the Department of Education (DoE) in October 2020.

² Organisations providing TPL that participated in this research (in alphabetical order): Centre for School Leadership (CSL), Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI), Health Service Executive (HSE), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), National Council for Special Education (NCSE), National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT), and Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

Key findings

Examples of TPL offered by participating TPL providers

TPL providers outlined 12 examples of TPL provided by their organisation. Two respondents provided examples of mentoring programmes. The remaining examples related to specific or elective programmes of TPL.

- The aims and objectives of the 12 examples of TPL outlined by respondents related to the following: mentoring (of school leaders/teachers) (n=2); school leadership (n=3); subject curriculum (n=1); participants' knowledge or skills (n=6); participants' teaching practice (n=5); supporting programme implementation (n=3); promoting collaboration (n=1); reflective practice (n=1); school environment (incl. school culture, context, ethos, etc.) (n=5); Special Educational Needs (SEN) (n=1); and student focus (n=4).
- The duration of each of the examples of TPL ranged from sessions lasting about 1.5 hours to those lasting a whole day. Examples of more extended TPL included those held over multiple sessions, with the longest duration referring to those that stretched over more than one academic year, e.g., mentoring.
- Nine out of 10 respondents described how the TPL example(s) they provided related to policy or curriculum. Policies and frameworks identified included:
 - » *Looking at Our School* (DES, 2016a; DES, 2016b)
 - » *The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020* (DES, 2015a)
 - » *The Action Plan for Education 2016-2019* (DES, 2016c)
 - » *'Education for Sustainability' The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020* (DES, 2014)
 - » *Action Plan for Education 2019* (DES, 2019)
 - » *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (DES, 2018b)
 - » *Framework for Junior Cycle* (DES, 2015b)
 - » *DEIS Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools* (DES, 2017).
- The need for the TPL that was cited in the examples was identified through a number of channels. One respondent advised that their example of mentoring followed the appointment of new school leaders. The need for two of the examples was determined by subject or curriculum changes. In four cases, the need for the example TPL was identified by teachers or other groups and five respondents mentioned that the need for the TPL was identified by the TPL provider.
- Consultation, with relevant stakeholders in designing the TPL programme, was reported to have taken place for 10 of the 12 examples of TPL. Respondents advised that consultation took place with teachers in three instances and mentors or current facilitators in two cases. One respondent advised that consultation took place with the TPL organisation's own staff. For three of the examples of TPL provided, consultation took place with DoE sections, support organisations, or external agencies.
- For all 12 examples provided, respondents stated that student outcomes were considered

at the design stage of the TPL. Respondents outlined a number of ways in which student outcomes were considered, including:

- » through alignment with *Looking at Our School (LAOS)*;
- » through the Teaching Council standards;
- » through alignment with the curriculum; and
- » a focus on adaptations to enable students with SEN to access the curriculum.
- For 11 of the 12 TPL programmes described, respondents clearly stated that consideration was given to facilitator preparation, qualifications, and experience.
- Respondents indicated that all 12 examples of TPL were evaluated and participant surveys or feedback forms were mentioned for all of the TPL described. For four of the examples of TPL provided, respondents indicated that reflection, review, or feedback was provided by the facilitator or mentor. For two of the examples of TPL, the respondents explicitly linked the evaluation of the example TPL back to TPL design. For three of the examples given, respondents stated that focus group data were gathered in evaluation. For some of the TPL examples, more extensive evaluations were described, e.g., through collaboration with an external partner such as a third-level institute.
- For nine of the 12 TPL examples provided, respondents described ways in which participants were encouraged to reflect on their learning.
- Details of evaluation of applying the learning or skills from the TPL examples were provided at the organisation level for 10 of the 12 examples of TPL and six of the 12 examples of TPL at school level.
- Respondents provided details of follow-up supports for each of the 12 examples of TPL.

Identification of TPL needs

- All 10 respondents indicated that the DoE or other Government Departments play a key role in determining national priorities for TPL.
- The majority of respondents also endorsed their own organisation as a group which plays a key role in determining national TPL priorities (n=8), along with school principals/leaders or school management bodies (n=7); teachers or teaching bodies (n=7); and the Teaching Council (n=6). Half of the respondents indicated that other TPL providers play a key role in determining national priorities for TPL, while less than half indicated that Education Centres (n=3); students or student bodies (n=2); or union representatives (n=2) play a key role in determining national TPL priorities.
- Nine out of 10 TPL providers indicated that introduction or change in educational policy; demand from schools arising from needs identified at school-level; and the DoE or other Government Departments are the most important influences on establishing TPL priorities for their organisations. Respondents also indicated that school leadership (n=8), research findings (n=8), curriculum change (n=6), and teachers or teaching bodies (n=6) are important influences on establishing TPL priorities for their organisations. Important influences identified by half the respondents were the Teaching Council and expertise and skills of facilitators in their organisation. It was less common for respondents to identify influences of the Education Centres (n=3), students or student bodies (n=4), or union representatives (n=2) as important.

- All respondents recognised *introduction or change in education policy* as a key influence on school-level decisions about TPL participation. Nine out of 10 respondents identified *school planning processes* [e.g., *School Self-Evaluation (SSE)* or *DEIS planning*] as a key influence. The same number selected *staff interest and motivation at an individual level*.

TPL design and facilitation

- Eight respondents indicated that their organisation uses a planning tool or framework in the design of TPL. For the most part, the planning tools and frameworks referenced were ones created by the organisations themselves.
- Three respondents indicated that TPL duration is pre-determined, e.g., as part of the establishment of the TPL and through agreement with the DoE. Another respondent indicated that the duration of their (curriculum-based) TPL was also pre-determined by DoE policy and funding arrangements. Three respondents indicated that the duration of TPL was determined based on needs or context or the nature of supports and needs of the school.
- Seven of the 10 respondents indicated that their organisation takes teacher and school preferences for different TPL formats into account in the design or facilitation of TPL.
- Nine respondents clearly indicated that their organisation's TPL is aligned with the needs of the education system.
- Eight of the 10 respondents indicated that their organisation's TPL is designed to encourage a whole-school approach to the application of learning from TPL.
- Nine of the 10 respondents indicated that their organisation follows up with schools/teachers after TPL.

Evaluating and assessing the impact of TPL provided

- Respondents outlined a number of key roles for TPL providers in assessing the impact of TPL provided. Nine out of 10 respondents submitted a response to this question. All endorsed the role of TPL providers in assessing the impact of TPL in some way. Two respondents indicated that the TPL provider has a “*fundamental*” or “*substantial*” role in assessing the impact of TPL, whilst recognising the important role of other stakeholders (e.g., participants and school leaders) in this process. Five respondents indicated that the TPL provider should select the measures or “*appropriate evaluation models*” to be used or noted that the provider should build impact assessment into the TPL. Three respondents gave responses which linked the assessment of impact back to the TPL design phase. Two respondents stated that TPL providers have a role to play in linking TPL evaluation to policy, specifically SSE, while one respondent suggested a role for the Inspectorate in assessing the impact of TPL.
- Two respondents stated that TPL participants have a role to play in assessing the impact of TPL along with other stakeholders. Six respondents noted that TPL participants should provide feedback to the TPL provider. Half of the respondents noted the importance of TPL participants engaging in reflective practice, including reflection on learning outcomes and impact on cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains.
- Three respondents mentioned the role of the school leader in linking TPL to SSE by leading and monitoring the SSE process and linking to identified improvements/targets. Four respondents indicated that school leaders have a key role to play in measuring the impact of TPL or gathering data to assess impact, including impact on teachers, impact at school level,

and identifying school-based metrics to measure outcomes. Three respondents highlighted a role for school leaders in ensuring implementation/application of learning from TPL. Three respondents noted that school leaders have a key role to play in facilitating time and space for teachers to engage in reflection.

- The majority of respondents indicated that their organisation collects evidence about the impact of TPL provision from *principals/teachers* (n=8). Less than half of the respondents indicated that their organisation collects evidence about the impact of TPL provision at the *whole-school level* (n=4). Fewer respondents indicated that their organisations collect evidence about the impact of TPL provision from *students* (n=2).
- Respondents highlighted a wide range of instruments that their organisations use to gather evidence on the impact of TPL provision. Examples of instruments used to gather evidence about the impact of TPL provision on *principals/teachers* included: evaluation forms, surveys, focus groups, interviews, reflection logs, verbal check-ins, formal and informal conversations, observations, self-reports, meeting platforms, peer learning sessions, feedback from Community of Practice (CoP) support forums, and other mechanisms.
- Eight out of 10 TPL providers indicated that their organisation collects evidence about the impact of TPL upon completion of the TPL activity or at a later follow-up date. Five respondents indicated that their organisation gathers evidence to assess the impact *upon completion of the TPL activity and at a later follow-up date*. Three respondents indicated that their organisation collects evidence of impact of TPL activities *upon completion of the TPL activity* only. Only one TPL provider indicated that their organisation *rarely or never* collects evidence of the impact of TPL activities.
- All respondents indicated that their organisation seeks feedback from participants in the TPL.
- Nine out of 10 TPL providers indicated that TPL evaluation plays a role *to a large extent* for the purposes of planning ahead for future provision. This finding emphasises the circular relationship between design and evaluation.

Influence of school context and participant diversity on TPL provided

- Of the nine TPL providers that submitted responses, all indicated that their organisation takes *some* contextual differences into account when facilitating TPL.
- Nine out of 10 TPL providers indicated that their organisations take school enrolment size into account for TPL facilitation. Eight out of 10 respondents indicated that their organisations take into account: schools serving high numbers of students at risk of educational disadvantage; schools in rural locations; or language of instruction, i.e., language needs for Irish-medium schools. Seven out of 10 indicated that their organisation takes account of: students' ethnic or cultural background, e.g., students from Traveller or Roma communities or students living in direct provision accommodation; students for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL); or students with SEN.
- In relation to *contextual factors* which enable high impact of TPL provision in school communities, school leadership (n=9) was the most common response, followed by collaboration within school (n=5), school culture/climate (n=3), and time and resources (n=3).
- TPL providers identified *key features of professional development* which enable high impact of TPL provision. These features included: support from the TPL provider/sustained support (n=4) and quality and content of TPL (n=3). Other responses included high quality facilitation;

'mentoring/supervision; diffusion; active learning; and having a cyclical approach to the development of TPL.'

- Respondents also highlighted the importance of reflective practice (n=3) which was categorised under the heading *teaching behaviour*.
- Four responses were categorised under the heading *outcomes for teachers or students*. These included understanding the link between teaching and student learning and having a focus on improving teaching and learning.

Identification of good practice and areas for improvement

- Four out of nine respondents selected 'identification of need' as an area of strength for the Irish education system. Three out of nine respondents selected 'design of the TPL' as an area of strength. Respondents were much less likely to identify 'facilitation and follow-up' or 'evaluation' as areas of perceived strength in the system.
- Six out of nine respondents selected 'evaluation of TPL' as an area which could benefit from improvement in the Irish education system. One respondent identified 'design' as an area which could benefit from improvement and one respondent identified 'facilitation and follow-up' as an area which could benefit from improvement.
- Three out of nine respondents selected 'design of the TPL' and three respondents selected 'facilitation and follow-up of TPL' in relation to areas of strength for their organisations.
- Evaluation emerged as the key area in need of improvement for their organisations from the perspective of TPL providers. Seven out of nine respondents identified 'evaluation' as an area for improvement. Two providers identified 'facilitation and follow-up of TPL' as an area for improvement.
- All nine TPL providers selected 'identification of need' as an area of strength for the schools that their organisation works with.
- 'Facilitation and follow-up' (n=4) and 'evaluation' (n=4) were most commonly identified as phases that may benefit from improvement at school-level. One respondent selected 'identification of need' as an area for improvement in schools.

Implications for the TPL evaluation framework

- Alignment with system priorities was highlighted in the responses from TPL providers. Nine respondents indicated that introduction or change in educational policy is a key influence on their priorities, emphasising the role of system priorities in determining TPL in Ireland. The TPL evaluation framework will allow TPL providers to illustrate linkages between TPL provision and system priorities.
- While system priorities are important, the TPL evaluation framework also needs to balance the role of teachers' needs and interests as priority in informing TPL design.
- TPL providers showed an awareness of the need to take into account school characteristics when designing and facilitating TPL. Respondents indicated that their organisations take into account school enrolment size, language of instruction, school location, and/or school socioeconomic composition. The TPL evaluation framework will allow TPL providers to evidence how such contextual factors are taken into account in the provision of TPL.

- The recognised importance of ‘facilitator competencies’ is seen in the responses from TPL providers with respondents indicating that facilitators of their TPL examples had qualifications relevant to the TPL or engaged in induction or training with the organisation itself before facilitating the TPL. Facilitator competencies will feature in the TPL evaluation framework.
- TPL providers showed a high degree of awareness of the need for an improved approach to the evaluation of TPL – at system-level, provider-level, and school-level. This underscores the need for the current research project and the development of a framework for the evaluation of TPL.
- The limited time that teachers and school leaders have to engage with TPL, the implementation of learning from TPL, and TPL evaluation poses a challenge to the successful implementation of the TPL evaluation framework arising from this project.
- A need for capacity building in relation to data analysis was highlighted by some TPL providers. It is recognised that impact evaluation is a complex area requiring technical expertise, as well as considerable investment of time and resources. Implementation of the TPL evaluation framework would likely need to be accompanied by opportunities for some TPL providers to build capacity in methods of evaluation and data analysis whilst recognising that shorter or less intensive TPL provision will likely not warrant evaluation on the scale of more intensive programmes.
- The role and importance of reflective practice will be evident in the TPL evaluation framework and it may be worth considering how data from individual teacher reflection can contribute to the evaluation of TPL.
- The TPL evaluation framework should recognise that duration of TPL activities may not be determined exclusively by the TPL provider.
- The TPL evaluation framework will endeavour to give appropriate consideration to how teacher learning benefits student outcomes.

Limitations and next steps

The following limitations are noted in relation to the findings outlined in the current report:

- The participant group is limited to respondents from 10 organisations which offer TPL for school leaders and teachers in Ireland. It is unknown how much consultation was carried out within organisations as respondents completed their questionnaires and questionnaires were completed by respondents over a relatively short time frame.
- In line with any cross-sectional study, responses represent a snapshot at a particular point in time and approaches may have been modified since data collection took place.
- While the variation in examples of TPL programmes provided reflects the breadth of TPL on offer, making comparisons or generalisations across organisations is difficult. As the TPL providers were asked to share details of TPL that they had designed and facilitated, the responses may not reflect the depth of TPL on offer from these organisations.
- Respondents completed their questionnaires during a time when schools and TPL provision were disrupted by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, there was increased facilitation of online TPL while some TPL had been postponed as a result of restrictions in schools and more generally.

In Phase 4 of the current project, a case study will be carried out, focusing on the evaluation of a specific TPL opportunity (TPL for Restorative Practice). This work provides an opportunity to follow the evaluation of TPL in practice and for learning from that evaluation to inform the emerging TPL evaluation framework. Findings of this work are anticipated in early 2023. The final output from this project will be the framework for the evaluation of TPL with anticipated publication in early 2023.

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

The current report presents one set of findings from the third phase of a broader project which aims to develop a framework for the evaluation for Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL).³ In the *Action Plan for Education 2018* (DES, 2018a, p. 43), a commitment was made to evaluate the impacts of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities. This commitment made a specific reference to the evaluation of CPD related to student wellbeing although the current framework is intended to be widely applicable to TPL more broadly. The research project is funded by the Department of Education (DoE)⁴ and managed by the Teacher Education Section (TES) of the DoE, under the guidance of a Steering Committee⁵ comprising members of key TPL support organisations, DoE representatives, and other stakeholders. The Educational Research Centre (ERC) is responsible for implementing the study. Work on this project commenced in 2019.

Phase 1 of this project consisted of detailed desk-based research, including a literature review (Rawdon, Sampson, Gilleece, & Cosgrove, 2020). Phase 2 of the project reported on a survey of teachers and principals in primary, post-primary, and special schools carried out in 2020 (Rawdon, Gilleece, Denner, Sampson, & Cosgrove, 2021).⁶

The report from Phase 1 includes:

- a systematic review of existing TPL evaluation frameworks;
- TPL frameworks in the Irish context;
- information on best practice for process evaluation and impact assessment of TPL;
- a description of the broader school and policy context for student wellbeing;
- a review of key findings from large-scale national and international studies pertaining to the wellbeing of 5-18 year olds; and
- a description of TPL in the area of student wellbeing provided over the 5 years preceding the publication of the report.

The report from Phase 2 addressed principals' and teachers':

- views on TPL in general;
- recent uptake of TPL activities;
- views on student wellbeing; and
- needs in relation to TPL in the area of student wellbeing.

³ As mentioned in the Preface of this report, the term *Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL)* is preferred and usually replaces *Continuing Professional Development (CPD)* or other analogous terms used in the literature. Exceptions to this are direct quotations or if the original term is required to conserve the intended meaning.

⁴ Previously named the Department of Education and Skills (DES), until October 2020.

⁵ Steering Committee members' names and affiliations are listed in the front matter of this report.

⁶ Reports from Phases 1 and 2 of this project are available at <https://www.erc.ie/TPLwellbeing/publications>

1.1 Key concepts and definitions

Definitions of the key concepts, agreed by the Steering Committee and the ERC for the purposes of the current research at its outset, are outlined in this section. Draft definitions of some of the key concepts were provided in the Terms of Reference for the research. Following the development of the Terms of Reference for the research, the Steering Committee further refined and agreed definitions of some of the key concepts relevant to this research, including *teacher*, *Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL)*, *wellbeing*, *framework (descriptive and evaluative components)*, and *impact*. It is recognised that future research may further refine these definitions but current wording is retained for consistency across the different phases of this project.

Teachers

The Terms of Reference for the current research project define teachers as those registered with the Teaching Council. Professional learning for support staff, such as Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), is not within the scope of this study.

Teachers' professional learning

According to the Terms of Reference, the focus of this research is the various types of continuing professional learning and development activities for teachers and school leaders which are funded, facilitated, accredited, or otherwise supported by the DoE, its support services, or its agencies and a small number of other relevant bodies. Organisations within the scope of the project are: CSL⁷, NIPT, PDST, JCT, NEPS, NCSE, the Education Centres, the Teaching Council, ETBI, and relevant HSE activities. TPL provided by private organisations and funded by teachers themselves is not within the scope of the overall project.

For the purposes of the current research, TPL does not include Initial Teacher Education (ITE). However, the definition used in this study is intended to reinforce the continuous and ongoing nature of the professional development process. It is recognised that TPL ranges from highly informal⁸ to structured and formal. For the purposes of the overall research project, it is not possible to include all forms of TPL, particularly those which are highly informal and self-directed. In selecting TPL for examination for the overall project, preference is given to TPL activities with objectives that may be linked to measurable outcomes.

Wellbeing

For the purposes of the present research, the definition of wellbeing is taken from the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023* (DES, 2018b). According to this definition, which is adapted from a definition originally proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001, cited in DES, 2018b, p. 10), wellbeing is present when:

“...a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life.”

⁷ These acronyms are explained in the Glossary of Acronyms/Abbreviations in the front matter of this report.

⁸ Informal TPL could include learning from conversations and discussions among teachers, and other learning which may happen in an informal and unstructured way. Lloyd and Davis (2018) categorise informal TPL as activities that have fewer concrete outcomes than formal TPL. At the other end of the spectrum, formal activities typically require more structured engagement from participants and are more likely to have pre-defined, measurable outcomes. The terms formal and informal are not defined in the current research.

TPL framework

As the overarching aim of the present research is to develop a framework for the evaluation of TPL, the Steering Committee agreed a definition of the content and scope of the TPL framework including both the descriptive and evaluative components of the framework.

Descriptive part of the framework

The descriptive component of the framework is defined as a unified, coherent, interlinked, and flexible structure capable of describing and classifying all relevant features of TPL.

Evaluation part of the framework

The evaluation component of the framework is defined as a multi-layered structure capable of supporting both qualitative and quantitative evaluation of TPL to include design, development, facilitation, implementation, and improvement.

Aim of the TPL framework

Taken together, the descriptive and evaluative components of the framework are intended to assist the DoE in:

1. building an evidence-base to support ongoing planning and policy development in relation to TPL at local, regional, and national levels;
2. understanding efficiency, effectiveness, inclusivity, and impact of TPL and enabling continuous improvements in these; and
3. demonstrating value for money.

Impact

The Terms of Reference recognise that evaluating impact is complex and acknowledge that is it particularly challenging in the present study where both the TPL framework and the area of student wellbeing are quite broad and layered. In terms of the assessment of impact, a multi-method approach that includes cross-validation of measures is preferred, with the overall goal of identifying which forms of assessment may be best suited to understanding impact at various levels.

While the five levels of professional development evaluation identified by Guskey (2000, 2002) provide an initial structure for measuring impact and evaluating TPL, it is recognised that limitations and criticisms of 'level approaches' have been advanced in the literature (e.g., Coldwell & Simkins, 2011).⁹ The five levels outlined by Guskey (2000, 2002) are: *participants' reactions*; *participants' learning*; *organisation support and change*; *participants' use of new knowledge and skills*; and *student learning outcomes*. The content of the questionnaire described in the current report was guided by learning from the literature review and input from the Steering Committee.

1.2 Recent developments related to the evaluation of TPL in Ireland

Cosán

Central to TPL in Ireland is the development by the Teaching Council of the *Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning* (The Teaching Council, 2016), which has recently moved from a development phase to a growth phase (DoE, 2021a). This move has been marked by the launch of an action plan setting out short-term and medium-term actions intended to support the further growth and systematic

⁹ The limitations and criticisms of linear 'level approaches' were also discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of Rawdon et al. (2020).

implementation of *Cosán*. The data collection described in the current report was completed prior to this change in phase of *Cosán*.

Design and quality assurance for DoE support services

Another development relevant to the evaluation of TPL in Ireland is the production, by the DoE, of a design framework intended to support the design of TPL facilitated by its support services. The (unpublished) *Design and Quality Assurance Process* document is intended to inform the TPL design and quality assurance process of DoE Teacher Education Section (TES) funded services including, but not limited to, the PDST, JCT, and NIPT (DoE, 2021b). The *Design and Quality Assurance Process* document was developed through a collaborative process that involved these support services. It indicates that most design work is intended to begin with, or stem from, the release of a new or revised curriculum; specifications; curriculum and policy guidelines; or frameworks. The protocols ensure the CPD's fidelity to government policy on educational matters and curriculum specifications and reflect the contributions of all stakeholders. Fundamental to this process is the teacher and student voice representing the needs and bespoke contexts of primary and post-primary schools nationwide. In the design of CPD, support services and teachers will represent the best interests and the voice of students. Three design types are within the scope of the guidelines. These are (DoE, 2021, p. 10):

- Type 1 Core: These are typically undertaken following receipt of new or revised curriculum/specifications/guidelines/framework documents at primary or post-primary levels. 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 engagement, or a series of full day engagements over a specified period, with teachers at a national level.
- Type 2 Supplementary: These emerge and are informed by: feedback from system partners; engagement with school leaders, teachers, students, and/or parents; ongoing reflection within and across support service teams; emerging policy and systemic needs; and the evolution of Type 1 Core designs as they develop in the system. They support system priorities and bespoke aspects of curriculum/specifications/guidelines/frameworks and can also support key aspects of a Type 1 Core design. Type 2 Supplementary designs are generally single events or a series of single professional development events at a local or national level.
- Type 3 Resources: These 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. They are responsive to the needs of teachers as they emerge throughout engagement with system stakeholders.

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 *Design and Quality Assurance Process*, the key tenets of the conceptual framework for design are to:

- 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.

TPL providers designing CPD¹⁰ may be guided by the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* to consider a number of questions under each of the six tenets. For example, under the tenet of 'enhance reflective practice', TPL providers are asked to consider (DoE, 2021b, p. 42):

- Does the material support teacher iterative reflective practice and include learning experiences designed to build capacity for personal and professional reflection?
- Does the design of the CPD 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 CPD 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?

Comparable questions are provided for the other five tenets.

At the time of responding to the questionnaire described in the current report, it is likely that some (but not all) of the TPL providers were in the process of transitioning to the new processes for design outlined in the *Design and Quality Assurance Process*.¹¹

1.3 Conceptual model of TPL evaluation outlined in Phase 2

The Phase 2 report (Rawdon et al., 2021) presented an initial conceptual model for the evaluation of TPL. This was largely based on research by Compen, De Witte, and Schelfhout (2019) (see Figure 1). The conceptual model continues to be refined for the current project, taking into account learning from each phase of the project. Items presented in red text in Figure 1 were added to Compen et al.'s framework for the purposes of the current project. It is likely that the conceptual model will continue to undergo minor changes in light of the project's emerging findings and Steering Committee input and it is anticipated that a final conceptual model underpinning the evaluation of TPL will be presented alongside the TPL evaluation framework. Minor changes have been applied to the model since the previous draft presented in the Phase 2 report (Rawdon et al., 2021).

In brief, the model includes five concentric circles, indicating that the evaluation of TPL is not a linear process. Rather, all the outer layers influence the extent to which TPL is likely to achieve its aims with respect to bringing about change to the centre. The centre of the model features learner experience, outcomes and potentially wellbeing for students, teachers and school leaders. Other levels refer to:

10 As noted earlier, the term TPL is used for the purposes of the development of an evaluation framework for teachers' learning. The term CPD is used in the *Design and Quality Assurance Process*.

11 Following data collection, the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* was adopted by three of the ten organisations that participated in the current research. This may have resulted in updated procedures and/or modifications to the approaches outlined in questionnaire responses.

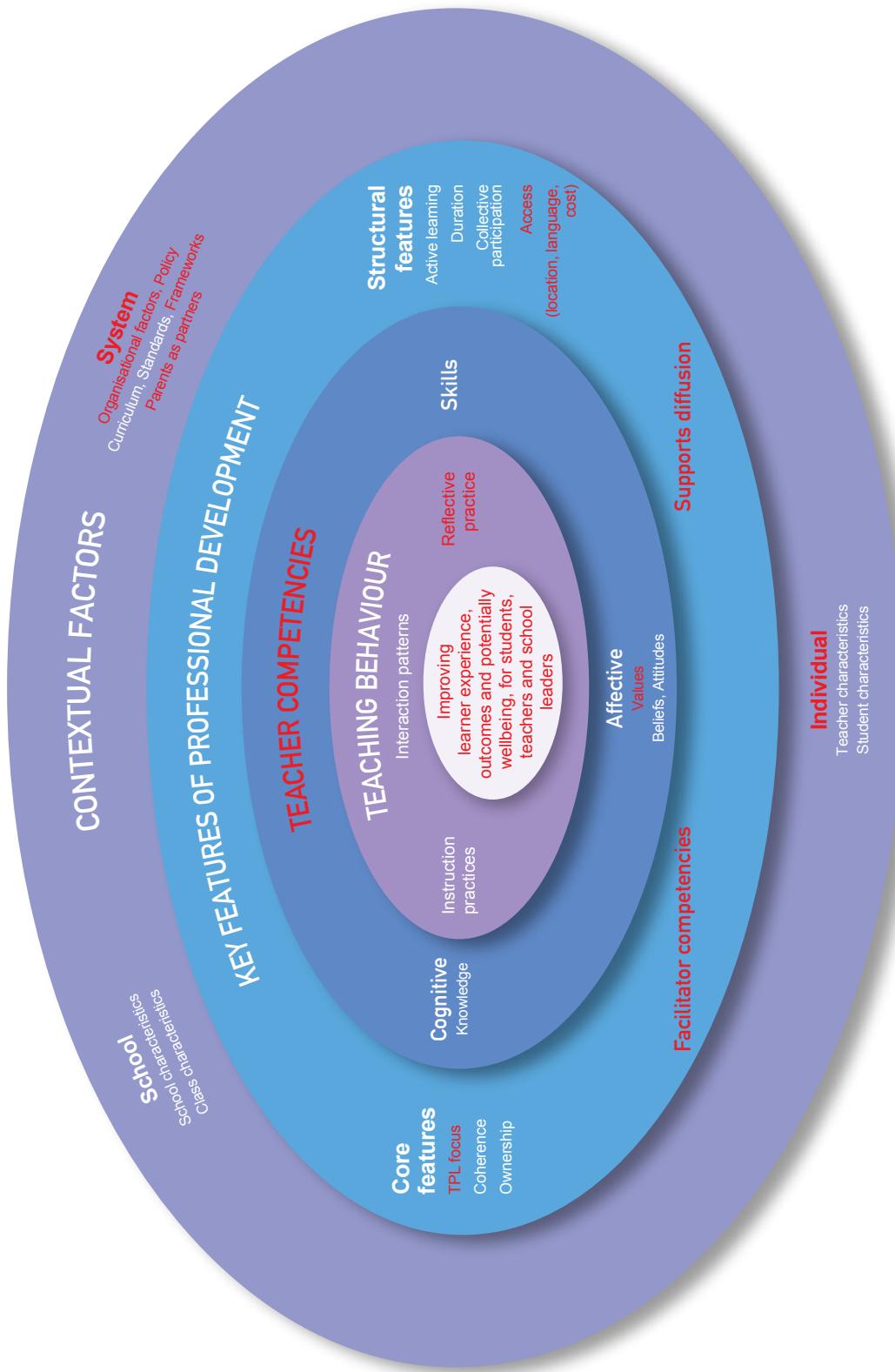
- **Contextual factors** including factors relating to the system, school, and individual teacher and student characteristics;
- **Key features of professional development** including core and structural features, as well as facilitator competencies and support for diffusion;
- **Teacher competencies** including cognition, skills, and affective qualities; and
- **Teaching behaviour** including instruction patterns, interaction patterns, and reflective practice.

1.4 Aims and objectives of the consultation

The aim of Phase 3a was to survey organisations responsible for the provision of TPL in Ireland¹² to gather their views on the identification of need for TPL; TPL design and facilitation; and TPL evaluation and the assessment of impact. Respondents were also asked about the influence of school context and participant diversity in TPL provision and their thoughts on good practice and priorities for improvement in TPL. The findings outlined in the current report may influence the development of a framework for the evaluation of TPL by incorporating the views of a key stakeholder group¹³ to further develop the conceptual framework outlined in section 1.3.

12 A description of the organisations represented in the current report is provided in Appendix 2.

13 Other key stakeholders have been consulted throughout Phase 2 (principals and teachers) and Phase 3b (children and young people). It is recognised that the views of the TPL providers represent a snapshot in March 2021 and may evolve in response to the introduction of new frameworks, guidelines etc., e.g., the *Design and Quality Assurance Process*.

Figure 1: Draft conceptual model for the evaluation of TPL

Note. A conceptual model to underpin the TPL evaluation framework is in development. It will draw heavily on the elements presented in Figure 1. The conceptual model will not be finalised until the publication of the TPL evaluation framework. As such, Figure 1 should be considered as a provisional version of the conceptual model.

Chapter 2: Consultation with TPL providers

2.1 Questionnaire design and development

Questionnaire items were developed based on learning from earlier phases of the current project, and drawing on expertise of Steering Committee members. These were intended to reflect best practice regarding TPL design, facilitation, and evaluation. Steering Committee members whose organisations do *not* directly provide TPL to school leaders and teachers (e.g., representatives from sections of the DoE) were asked to review an early draft of the questionnaire to assess the suitability of the questions included. Minor changes to the content were applied following this review process. The final questionnaire is outlined in Appendix 1.

Questions included in the questionnaire aimed to gather information on TPL providers' perspectives on how their organisations:

- identify TPL needs;
- design and facilitate TPL;
- evaluate and assess the impact of TPL provided; and
- cater for different school contexts and participant diversity in the TPL provided.

TPL providers were also asked to give a detailed description of a specific TPL programme designed and facilitated by their organisation and to identify areas of good practice in TPL in Ireland. They were also asked to suggest areas for improvement with respect to TPL in Ireland (not specifically areas of improvement for their own organisations).

Although TPL providers were asked questions relating to identification of TPL needs, design and facilitation, evaluation and impact assessment, under separate sections in the questionnaire, it is acknowledged that these stages are cyclical in nature rather than representing a linear process. That is, design and evaluation are interdependent, as findings from previous evaluation should be considered during the design phase of subsequent TPL. Furthermore, detailed consideration should be given to evaluating TPL at the design stage, although it is recognised that the scope of TPL evaluation should be commensurate with the scale of the activity or programme. This ensures that appropriate evaluation questions are identified and mechanisms are put in place to gather data during the TPL facilitation which will be necessary for the subsequent evaluation of the TPL.

2.2 Data collection

A summary of organisations represented in the current report and their roles in TPL provision in Ireland is included in Appendix 2.

TPL providers, representing 10 organisations, were emailed a copy of the questionnaire and asked to return their responses to the ERC by email. A period of approximately three weeks was allowed for completion of the questionnaire from March 12th 2021 until April 1st 2021. This was about one year after the introduction of the initial pandemic-related restrictions which resulted in TPL providers adapting their provision considerably and placing a much stronger emphasis than previously on online activities.

TPL providers were advised that the questionnaire could be completed in collaboration with other members of their organisations, and were encouraged to consult with colleagues who may have been in a position to contribute to the submission. TPL providers were advised that they could nominate a colleague in their organisation to lead questionnaire completion, if they wished. Participants were also offered the option of completing a short interview over the phone or having an online meeting with an ERC researcher, if preferred.

Participants were asked to consent to a follow-up phone call from a researcher at the ERC, if necessary to clarify any of their answers. They were also asked to consent to excerpts being published in the report arising from the research and informed that the study was conducted in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) framework.

2.3 Data analysis

Descriptive summaries are provided for each item included in the questionnaire. Graphs and tables are provided where appropriate. Tests of statistical significance were not conducted, given the small sample size involved. Rather, priority is given to qualitative analysis which was conducted to identify common themes across providers. Selected excerpts from answers are included to illustrate key findings.

Chapter 3: Findings

A total of 10 respondents returned completed questionnaires. While not every provider answered every item, data quality is very high with rich and detailed responses provided to open-ended items. Typically, all 10 respondents provided answers to multiple choice items. Given the small absolute number of respondents, this section provides the number of responses in each category rather than the percentage of respondents.

3.1 Examples of TPL offered by participating TPL providers

Each respondent provided at least one example of a TPL programme that was designed and facilitated by their organisation.¹⁴ TPL providers were advised: *“This programme can be in any area but ideally it will have been designed within the past 5 years and is a programme which you feel is a good representation of the work of your organisation”*. Respondents were asked to provide the following details of their chosen TPL programme:

- TPL name, TPL objectives¹⁵, target participants, duration (frequency, e.g., once-off, weekly, monthly; intensity, e.g., full day, half day, one to two hours).
- Alignment of this TPL with curriculum or policy.
- How was the need for this TPL identified?
- What form of consultation, if any, with relevant stakeholders took place in designing this TPL?
- Were student outcomes considered at the design stage of this TPL? If yes, how?
- Details of this TPL facilitation (or delivery).
- Details of consideration given to facilitator preparation, qualifications, and experience for this TPL, if any.
- Details of how this TPL was evaluated by the organisation.
- Supports (if any) provided by the organisation to encourage participants in the TPL to reflect on their learning and on the connections between learning and practice in order to determine impact.
- Details of evaluation of applying the learning or skills from the TPL.
- Details of follow-up supports or resources provided to the TPL participants, if any.

These content areas were selected to reflect key aspects for TPL evaluation and features of effective TPL, as identified in the literature review by Rawdon et al. (2020). In particular, responses to these items provide some information on core and structural features of the TPL programme and alignment with national policy, curriculum, standards, or frameworks. Responses about facilitator preparation,

¹⁴ Focusing on TPL that was *designed and facilitated* by an organisation may mean that for at least some organisations, responses may not reflect the full breadth of their provision. This arises where organisations facilitate externally designed evidence-based programmes in addition to TPL that is locally designed.

¹⁵ It is recognised that the terminology used at the design phase by TPL providers is likely to vary depending on the design protocols in use in the organisation. For organisations using the *Design and Quality Assurance Process*, it is likely that the term 'design objectives and intended learning' is used rather than TPL objectives.

qualifications, and experience relate to 'facilitator quality'¹⁶ in the conceptual model outlined in Rawdon et al. (2021). Data were also gathered on the extent to which the TPL supports reflection and how the TPL relates to the outcomes at the centre of the conceptual model (Rawdon et al., 2021).

Details of example TPL outlined by TPL providers

All 10 respondents outlined at least one example of a TPL programme provided by their organisation. Two respondents provided two examples. Two respondents provided examples of mentoring programmes. The remaining examples related to specific or elective programmes of TPL. Respondents clearly outlined the aims and objectives and the target participants for each of the TPL programmes described.

The aims and objectives of the 12 examples outlined by respondents related to the following:

- Mentoring (of school leaders/teachers) (n=2)
- School leadership (n=3)
- Subject curriculum (n=1)
- Participants' knowledge or skills (n=6)
- Participants' teaching practice (n=5)
- Supporting programme implementation (n=3)
- Promoting collaboration (n=1)
- Reflective practice (n=1)
- School environment (incl. school culture, context, ethos, etc.) (n=5)
- SEN (n=1)
- Student focus (n=4).

The duration of each of the examples of TPL varied greatly. The shortest examples pertained to TPL taking place on a single day. These ranged from sessions lasting about 1.5 hours to those lasting a whole day. More extended TPL included those held over multiple sessions, with the longest duration referring to those that stretched over more than one academic year.

Nine out of 10 respondents described how the TPL example(s) they provided related to policy or curriculum. Policies and frameworks identified included:

- *Looking at Our School* (DES, 2016a; DES, 2016b)
- *The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020* (DES, 2015a)
- *The Action Plan for Education 2016-2019* (DES, 2016c)
- *'Education for Sustainability' The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020* (DES, 2014)
- *Action Plan for Education 2019* (DES, 2019)
- *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (DES, 2018b)

¹⁶ 'Facilitator quality' was used in the conceptual model presented in Rawdon et al. (2021). 'Facilitator quality' is updated to 'facilitator competencies' in the draft conceptual model for the evaluation of TPL presented in the current report.

- *Framework for Junior Cycle* (DES, 2015b)
- *DEIS Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools* (DES, 2017).

TPL providers were asked: **How was the need for this TPL identified?** One respondent advised that the mentoring followed the appointment of new school leaders. The need for two of the examples was determined by subject or curriculum changes. In four cases, the need for the example TPL was identified by teachers or other groups and five respondents mentioned that the need for the TPL was identified by the TPL provider themselves. Other responses included “*following a consultation*” and through “*policy documents, research, and the [curriculum] framework... [TPL provider’s] experience, reflection, and relationship with schools provided a further perspective on the needs of schools*”.

TPL providers were asked: **What form of consultation, if any, with relevant stakeholders took place in designing this TPL?** Consultation was reported to have taken place for 10 of the 12 examples. Respondents advised that consultation took place with teachers in three instances. Consultation took place with mentors or current facilitators in two cases. One respondent advised that consultation took place with the TPL organisation’s own staff. For three of the examples of TPL provided, consultation took place with DoE sections, support organisations, or external agencies. The DoE sections, support organisations, and external agencies mentioned were:

- Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (CAP)
- Teacher Education Section (TES)
- ICT Policy Unit
- The Inspectorate
- The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
- The State Examinations Committee (SEC)
- National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- The Teaching Council
- Teacher Unions.

TPL providers were asked: **Were student outcomes considered at the design stage of this TPL? If yes, how?** For all 12 examples provided, respondents stated that student outcomes were considered at the design stage. Respondents outlined a number of ways in which student outcomes were considered, including:

- through alignment with *Looking at Our School (LAOS)*;
- through the Teaching Council standards which support and guide professional learning and practice with learner outcomes central;
- through alignment with the curriculum; and
- a focus on adaptations to enable students with SEN to access the curriculum.

The majority of respondents indicated that student outcomes were considered during the design phase. For organisations following the *Design and Quality Assurance Process* (DoE, 2021b), the core conceptual framework for design has at its centre to “*foster sustained teacher practice to support student learning*”.

Of the 12 TPL examples described, two were facilitated online, three were described as blended¹⁷ facilitation, one took place on-site (i.e., in school), and four took place off-site (but of these, three moved online in response to COVID-19 restrictions). Responses were not provided for the locations of two of the examples described.

TPL providers were asked to provide **details of consideration given to facilitator preparation, qualifications, and experience for this TPL, if any**. For 11 of the 12 TPL described, respondents clearly stated that consideration was given to facilitator preparation, qualifications, and experience. Comments included:

- “Team members who lead the programme have coaching qualifications.”
- Facilitators “are internally trained and inducted”.
- “Facilitators undergo an intense and comprehensive induction training programme upon joining the [organisation’s name]. During induction, they also engage in bespoke facilitation training and workshops around current best practice in relation to PD¹⁸ provision, PD design, and the relevant national and international research that underpins it. Individual facilitators shadow experienced [organisation’s name] advisors and regular national and regional events allow for cross subject and cross sectoral sharing of practice. [Organisation’s name] advisors are observed on site by the team leader who provides professional feedback.”

In response to the prompt to provide **details of how this TPL was evaluated by your organisation (e.g., participant feedback form)**, respondents indicated that all 12 examples of TPL were evaluated. Respondents indicated that participant surveys or feedback forms were used for each of the examples described. For four of the examples of TPL provided, respondents indicated that reflection (on the part of the facilitator), review, or feedback was provided by the facilitator or mentor. For two of the examples of TPL, the respondents explicitly linked the evaluation of the example TPL back to TPL design stating: “webinars and school-based session delivered by [organisation’s name] are evaluated using participant surveys which inform the design of future sessions” and “the design protocols allow for rigorous feedback loops”. For three of the examples given, respondents stated that focus group data were gathered in evaluation, e.g., “action research projects also have built in evaluation, which includes a questionnaire but also a focus group evaluation when the project is completed”.

For some of the TPL examples, more extensive evaluations were described. One of the TPL programmes described was evaluated by an external collaborator. The same respondent stated that “planning for evaluation began at the early stages of the PD design process” and referred to Guskey’s (2000, 2002) five levels of evaluation. Another respondent mentioned the involvement of an external third-level institute in the evaluation of their example TPL noting that: “an external examiner from [name of third level institute] reviews all seminars and provides feedback”. One respondent stated “we routinely collect evaluation (on an agreed pro-forma) from each participant at each session (or series of sessions) and have collated this data nationally” indicating a broader evaluation of their TPL example where data from multiple sessions were collated and analysed.

TPL providers were asked about supports (if any) provided by the organisation to encourage TPL participants to reflect on their learning and on the connections between learning and practice in order to determine impact. Reflective practice is an important best practice component of the *Cosán Framework for Teachers’ Learning* (The Teaching Council, 2016) and resources have been

¹⁷ One respondent noted that face-to-face facilitation ceased after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁸ Professional development.

developed by the Teaching Council for this purpose.¹⁹ For nine of the 12 TPL examples provided, respondents described ways in which participants were encouraged to reflect on their learning. Comments included:

- “*The key message in respect of reflective practice is that reflective practice is central and is embedded in all of our practice not just the NQT's practice.*”
- “*Facilitated individual, pair and group reflection points are provided as integral to each national workshop event. The use of dedicated reflection logs/templates are employed as a priority. Various research-based models, frameworks and lenses for reflection are drawn upon to empower reflection on learning and practice...Further to this, reflection also forms a key aspect of the [subject name] Communities of Practice²⁰...Reflection opportunities in context are also facilitated as part of [organisation's name] School Support...The gathering and facilitation of authentic student voice, as a way of analysing impact and reflecting on practice, is strategically woven in at various points across [subject name] TPL.*”
- “*The TPL had reflection on practice as a major thread throughout the day. TPL participants were provided with a learning log, to record response and reflections. Teachers reflected on their current practice and on the possible impact of the TPL on future practice.*”
- “*During the training seminar participants engage in a 'reflective practice' exercise throughout the day...Collaborative planning and co-creation are built into the seminar...Similarly, Principals/Deputy Principals work collaboratively to explore the whole school opportunities for embedding the [name of TPL].*”
- “[Participant group] are always invited to engage in reflective practice and welcomed to share their experiences/practice at CPD events. Resources are provided to support them to gather data at school level, make plans accordingly, and measure impact.”

One respondent noted that while teachers had expressed a need for support which would allow for reflective practice, the uptake on these courses was low when they were offered:

“We have offered refresher workshops, designed to support teachers with implementation, to reflect on their practice, and get support from other teachers. However, uptake for these refresher sessions has been disappointing, despite teachers expressing the need for this type of support regularly during the TPL itself.”

TPL providers were asked to **provide details of evaluation of applying the learning or skills from this TPL (by your organisation or at school level)**. Details were provided at the organisation level for 10 of the 12 examples and at the school level for six of the 12 examples.

Examples at the organisation level included:

- “*Mostly done through the action research elements – where we gather data, analyse it, feedback to schools, and sometimes publish our findings in professional journals.*”

19 Reflective practice encompasses the other key elements of the Cosán framework. Cosán recognises the importance of both individual and collaborative reflection on learning and notes the impact that both may have. Resources to support reflection are provided by the Teaching Council, see <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/teacher-education/teachers-learning-cpd/cosan-support-materials/reflecting-on-professional-learning/>

20 The respondent indicated that the Communities of Practice (CoP) for this particular curriculum-based TPL included face-to-face cluster meetings; an online platform for communication, collaboration, and sharing of work; and an online repository for publicly sharing work and resources which are suitable for [subject name].

- “In the future, [organisation’s name] will link back with the teachers in 6 months for a community of practice to help embed the strategies they learned at the seminar. At this point the evaluation will discover if the learning from this TPL were applied at a school level.”
- “[Organisation’s name] evaluates the application of learning and skills from [name of TPL] formally through surveys and informally through meetings with school leaders.”
- “Initial evaluation feedback would include projected impact at school level.”

Examples at the school level included:

- “The planned evaluation report will include data from focus groups where school leaders will report on impact of mentor training at school level.”
- “Evaluations here²¹; school support visits; research; focus groups; shared learning events; surveys.”
- “Case studies/stories provided from individual school participation.”
- “Schools evaluate the application of learning and skills from [name of TPL] through reflection sessions at the end of each round of implementation.”

TPL providers were asked to provide **details of follow-up supports or resources provided to the TPL participants, if any**. Respondents provided details of follow-up supports for each of the 12 examples of TPL. Examples provided included:

- “Two one-and-a-half day residential professional learning day seminars to progress the learning of mentors.”
- “Follow up school support, updates and professional development including refreshers and upskilling are also provided.”
- “Teachers were signposted to resources such as the NCCA’s Assessment Toolkit, and to related reading. Workshop discussions were recorded on flipcharts and were left with the school for further reference. Teachers also had their individual workshop logbooks to refer back to.”
- “The visiting [TPL professional] will sometimes reinforce learning or support change as part of their regular school visits. The training is also supported by two on-line resources, which are freely available to schools on the [organisation’s name] website. Some schools will ask for follow-up training in specific areas...and we have generally been able to offer further training, as requested or to direct teachers to other training providers.”
- “A Cluster Group Support session is planned...”
- “School leaders and teachers are provided with a variety of supports throughout their engagement in formal TPL opportunities. Importantly, these supports are considered essential elements of TPL in and of themselves. Supports include materials (e.g., resource lists, lesson ideas, planning templates, PowerPoints, videos etc.) along with email/phone/online check-ins for school leaders and pop-ups/teach meets for...teachers.”

- “[Organisation's name] provides resources online and direct supports to schools where required - which can include phone calls, direct emails, meeting with guidance counsellor and has included - on some occasions where it was deemed vital to meet with principal at school level to support their planning.”
- “These supports²² are on-going and sustained.”

In the context of follow-up supports, one respondent noted that uptake on follow-up was poor stating “participants are given the opportunity to attend a refresher workshop, but uptake on this has been very poor in the past.”

3.2 Identification of TPL needs

This section outlines findings regarding the perspectives of TPL providers on how TPL needs are identified. TPL providers were asked to answer three questions regarding national priorities for TPL, the establishment of priorities for TPL within their organisation, and perceived influences at school-level on decisions to participate in TPL activities. For each question, a list of response options was presented; participants were advised to mark all that applied and to specify ‘others’, where relevant.

Groups involved in determining national priorities for TPL

TPL providers were asked: *In your experience, which of the following groups play a key role in determining national priorities for TPL?* Respondents were advised to select all answers that applied. All 10 respondents indicated that the DoE or other Government Departments play a key role in determining national priorities for TPL (see Table 1).

The majority of respondents also endorsed their own organisation as a group which plays a key role in determining national TPL priorities (n=8); school principals/leaders or school management bodies (n=7); teachers or teaching bodies (n=7); and the Teaching Council (n=6). Half of the respondents indicated that other TPL providers play a key role in determining national priorities for TPL, while less than half indicated that Education Centres (n=3); students or student bodies (n=2); or union representatives (n=2) play a key role in determining national TPL priorities.

Table 1: Groups which play a key role in determining national priorities for TPL (ordered in descending order of response frequency)

Person/Group/Agency/Organisation	Number of ‘yes’ responses
The Department of Education/Other Government Department	10
This TPL provider (<i>i.e., the organisation I represent</i>)	8
School principals/leaders or school management bodies	7
Teachers or teaching bodies	7
The Teaching Council (<i>i.e., Cosán</i>)	6
Other TPL providers	5
Education Centres	3
Students or student bodies	2
Union representatives	2

Other persons/groups/agencies/organisations identified in free text responses included:

- “*Teachers and school leaders channelling their needs through [organisation's name].*”
- “*Educationalist/academic researchers.*”
- “*...taking an exosystemic approach, we identify needs in the system and target our TPL interventions at key adults in the school system to bring about change for all children. Our practice and experience working in schools highlights areas of local and national need.*”
- “*NCCA, higher education-research led, international policy and research.*”
- “*...the professional bodies – e.g., [name of professional body] represent the CPD needs of their members.*”

TPL providers were also asked: ***Which of the following are the most important influences on establishing the TPL priorities for your organisation?*** Respondents were asked to mark all factors that applied to their organisation. Nine out of 10 TPL providers indicated that the following factors are the most important influences on establishing TPL priorities for their organisations: introduction or change in educational policy; demand from schools arising from needs identified at school-level; and the DoE or other Government Departments (see Table 2).

Eight out of 10 respondents indicated that school leadership, i.e., school principals/leaders or school management bodies, is an important influence on establishing TPL priorities for their organisations. The same number reported that research findings are an important influence. Six out of 10 respondents identified curriculum change. Similarly, six out of 10 considered teachers or teaching bodies to be an important influence on establishing priorities for their organisation. Important influences identified by half the respondents were the Teaching Council and expertise and skills of facilitators in their organisation. It was less common for respondents to identify the following as important influences: the Education Centres; students or student bodies; or union representatives.

Table 2: Influences on establishing TPL priorities for organisations (ordered in descending order of response frequency)

Factors	Number of 'yes' responses
Introduction or change in educational policy	9
Demand from schools arising from needs identified at school-level	9
The Department of Education/Other Government Department	9
School principals/leaders or school management bodies	8
Research findings	8
Curriculum change	6
Teachers or teaching bodies	6
Expertise and skills of facilitators in your organisation	5
The Teaching Council (i.e., Cosán)	5
Students or student bodies	4
Education Centres	3
Union representatives	2

Other important influences on establishing organisations' TPL priorities which were identified included:

- “TPNs²³, HEIs²⁴, other CPD providers and stakeholder agencies, certification bodies.”
- “International developments in the field of educational psychology.”
- “NCCA, third-level institutes.”
- Professional bodies.

TPL providers were also asked: ***In your experience, which of the following factors are key influences at school level on decisions on the part of school staff to participate in TPL?*** and presented with a list of influences to select from. Each of the options was endorsed as a key influence by a majority of respondents (see Table 3). For example, all respondents recognised *introduction or change in education policy* as a key influence on school-level decisions about TPL participation. Nine out of 10 respondents identified school planning processes (e.g., SSE or DEIS planning) as a key influence. The same number selected *staff interest and motivation at an individual level*.

Table 3: Influences at school level on decisions on the part of school staff to participate in TPL (ordered in descending order of response frequency)

Factors	Number of 'yes' responses
Introduction or change in educational policy	10
School planning processes (e.g., SSE or DEIS planning)	9
Staff interest and motivation at an individual level	9
Curriculum change	7
Practical factors such as availability of substitute cover	6

Respondents also identified other school level influences on decisions about TPL participation such as:

- “Community and local initiatives as school support is context-based; Inspectorate evaluations; of most significance is the value placed on TPL by the school leader and the culture created to facilitate it.”
- “Whether TPL is core or elective; expectations of school leadership; timing of TPL; perceived relevance of TPL.”
- “The TPL provided addresses teacher’s concerns about best practice in meeting the needs of children/young people in their classrooms.”
- “Needs of children; recommendation from the Inspectorate (WSE), i.e., Inspectorate may recommend that a school engages in TPL in a particular area.”
- “Staff interest and motivation at an individual level is the strongest influence, in my experience. In terms of teachers choosing which TPL, word of mouth and recommendations from colleagues, is a strong influence.”

23 Teacher Professional Networks.

24 Higher Education Institutes.

- “*Specific context priorities, SSE priorities, change in role, leadership and middle management, school based projects, Inspectorate evaluations, research, culture and climate of school.”*
- “*Influence of unions and professional bodies...*”

3.3 TPL design and facilitation

As noted in the introduction, some of the organisations responding to the questionnaire were transitioning to using design processes outlined in the DoE *Design and Quality Assurance Process* (DoE, 2021b). It is anticipated that this development will have an important influence on design processes in these organisations. This section outlines findings relating to TPL providers' accounts of the design and facilitation of TPL provided by their organisations. TPL providers were asked to provide a description of the steps taken by their organisations in the design of TPL; how the duration of TPL is determined by each organisation; whether teachers' and school leaders' preferences are taken into account when deciding the format of TPL; if organisations check that TPL is aligned with the needs of the education system; if TPL is designed to encourage a whole-school approach to the application of learning; and whether their organisation typically follows up with teachers and school leaders after TPL.

TPL providers' accounts of design and facilitation of TPL by their organisation

TPL providers were asked: ***Please provide a description of the steps typically used in your organisation in the design of TPL. Refer to any planning tools or frameworks, such as a logic model, that you use.*** Eight respondents indicated that their organisation uses a planning tool or framework in the design of TPL. The planning tools and frameworks referenced were ones created by the organisations themselves.

TPL providers were asked: ***In general, how is the duration of the TPL programme determined.*** Three respondents indicated that the duration is pre-determined, e.g., as part of the establishment of the TPL programme and through agreement with the DoE. One of these respondents stated “*almost all TPL offered as one day workshops. Based on experience, this seemed to suit the participants best*”. Another respondent indicated that the duration of their (curriculum-based) TPL was also pre-determined by DoE policy and funding arrangements. Three respondents indicated that the duration of TPL was determined based on needs or context or the nature of supports and needs of the school. Along with the needs of participants, one of these respondents stated that the duration of TPL is also determined by the “*learning intentions or aims of programme. Understanding of the change process and the time required to support the embedding of the learning.*”

TPL providers were asked: ***Do you take teacher and school preferences for different TPL formats into account in the design or facilitation of TPL? If so, could you provide examples of how this is done?*** Seven of the 10 respondents indicated that their organisation takes teacher and school preferences for different TPL formats into account in the design or facilitation of TPL. One respondent stated that their organisation's preference is for “*interactive and experiential TPLs which model approaches to enacting curriculum reform at whole-school/department/individual teacher levels. At times, depending on the phase of the roll-out of reform teachers will request 'information drops' which may be integrated into a broader experiential approach.*”

TPL providers were asked: ***Do you have a process to check that TPL is aligned with the needs of the education system? If so, could you provide a brief description of this process?*** Nine respondents indicated that their organisation's TPL is aligned with the needs of the education system. Examples of processes to ensure alignment with the needs of the education system included:

- “TPL is quality assured with DoE Inspectorate, having gone through a rigorous internal Quality Assurance process. In addition, ‘Critical Friends’ days allow for the input of other stakeholders including NCCA, SEC, teacher associates and other teachers.”
- “Our TPL is cross referenced with, and reviewed regularly, against the Department’s strategic priorities and action plans.”
- “We sit on a DoE Wellbeing Interagency group, one of the aims of this group is to ensure that our work is aligned with the needs of the education system, and to identify synergy, gaps, or duplication in provision of wellbeing supports in schools.”

TPL providers were asked: ***Is TPL designed to encourage a whole-school approach to the application of learning from TPL? If yes, how?*** Eight of the 10 respondents indicated that their organisation’s TPL is designed to encourage a whole-school approach to the application of learning from TPL. Examples of how included:

- “Whole school involvement and cooperation is crucial if PD is to embed in practice and is an expectation of all engagement with [organisation’s name]. School leadership attendance and support at PD is optimal if whole school approaches are to be adopted successfully.”
- “A key objective of the design process is that all TPL provisions will encourage a shared practice approach to school improvement and development. It is encouraged that TPL will influence whole school teaching and learning approaches. Much TPL delivery includes whole school development and capacity building, reflective practice and collaboration modules.”
- “Yes, our continuum of support model is integrated into all TPL training programmes with the starting focus placed on whole school practice. All trainings also take account of the needs of the most vulnerable children/young people, having particular regard for those presenting with additional and complex needs in schools.”

Finally, TPL providers were asked: ***Does your organisation typically follow up with schools/teachers after a TPL programme?*** TPL providers were asked to provide details of any follow up activities designed to support the application/embedding of learning and/or reflection on the connections between learning from TPL and practice? Nine of the 10 respondents indicated that their organisation follows up with schools/teachers after TPL. Comments included:

- “Follow up school support (typically by phone/email), updates and professional development including refreshers and upskilling are also provided.”
- “TPL events builds on previous events, checking-in and reinforcing learning is always an important aspect of design.”
- “This varies. In some cases, after a seminar, visiting teachers will follow up to support learning and development of practice.”
- “While we don’t specifically follow up with schools, we do provide opportunities for schools to follow up with us by providing: a dedicated email address and contact name; use a Twitter hash tag to share practice and direction to additional resources; dedicated website or a space on the [organisation’s name] website.”

One respondent noted, “We would really value a mechanism for effectively following up with teachers, as we know this feedback and follow up could help us ensure the quality of our TPL and reassure us that we are meeting the needs of teachers and schools effectively”.

3.4 Evaluating and assessing the impact of TPL provided

This section outlines findings relating to TPL providers' perspectives on evaluating and assessing the impact of TPL provided by their organisations. TPL providers were asked to answer three open-ended questions relating to the roles of TPL providers, TPL participants, and school leaders in assessing impact. In addition, respondents were asked *if* their organisation collects evidence of the impact of TPL provision across various levels (whole-school, principal/teacher, student levels). Respondents were also asked to indicate *when* their organisation collects evidence of TPL impact, from which stakeholders evidence is gathered, and the extent to which evaluation helps with planning and impact assessment. This section is of central importance to the development of the overall framework, given its focus on impact assessment.

Role of TPL providers in assessing impact

TPL providers were asked: *In your opinion, what (ideally) should be the role of TPL providers in assessing impact?*²⁵ In answering this question, respondents outlined a number of key roles for TPL providers in assessing the impact of TPL provided. Nine out of 10 respondents submitted a response to this question. All endorsed the role of TPL providers in assessing the impact of TPL in some way. Two respondents indicated that the TPL provider has a “*fundamental*” or “*substantial*” role in assessing the impact of TPL, whilst recognising the important role of other stakeholders (e.g., participants and school leaders) in this process. Five respondents indicated that the TPL provider should select the measures or “*appropriate evaluation models*” to be used or noted that the provider should build impact assessment into TPL activities.

One respondent indicated that assessing impact on student outcomes is somewhat beyond the role of the TPL provider, stating that “*ideally, measurement of the impact would require a longitudinal study in association with a research faculty in a university or Institute of Education that would take place in advance of, alongside, and after the TPL*”. Other respondents indicated that TPL providers should analyse data and record and report results or gather data and draw conclusions. Some mentioned gathering data at specific time points, e.g., pre-TPL, post-TPL, and follow-up data.

Three TPL providers gave responses which linked the assessment of impact back to the TPL design phase. Relevant comments from TPL providers include:

- TPL providers “*should have a vision for the TPL, communicate and evaluate learning outcomes*”.
- TPL providers have a role to play in the “*design of trustworthy and reliable evaluation instruments suited to measuring the intended outcomes set out at design stage*”.
- TPL providers should “*ideally, gather the data based on the aims of the programme, drawing conclusions, adjusting the programme as required and determining the level of additional support/resources that may be required*”.

Another respondent indicated that “*TPL providers should consider students' learning and competence development*” as well as “*the impact on the teacher's approaches, attitudes and development of competence and skills*”, thereby linking TPL impact assessment to learning outcomes.

Two respondents stated that TPL providers have a role to play in linking TPL evaluation to policy, specifically SSE, while one respondent suggested a role for the Inspectorate in assessing the impact of TPL. Four respondents mentioned the role of contextual factors and flexibility in impact assessment. Specifically, one respondent noted the challenges of gathering data at the school level:

25 In this section, TPL providers were asked to focus on impact assessment rather than evaluation more generally.

“TPL providers do not always have direct access to schools to assess the impact at local level. Schools are busy places and do not have the resources to respond to the demands of providers to provide data in a particular way or at a particular time”.

Role of TPL participants in assessing impact

TPL providers were asked: ***In your opinion, what (ideally) should be the role of TPL participants in assessing impact?*** Nine out of 10 TPL providers gave a response to this question.

Six respondents noted that TPL participants should provide feedback to the TPL provider. One respondent noted that TPL participants should *“collaborate with TPL providers in evaluating school-based outcomes post engagement”*. Other comments indicated that TPL participants should be involved in evaluating impacts at school level and monitoring implementation of practice.

Half of the respondents noted the importance of TPL participants engaging in reflective practice, including reflection on learning outcomes and impact on cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains. One respondent stated that TPL participants should *“have a professional vision and desired outcome from the TPL”*.

One respondent remarked that TPL participants have a greater role *“as the impact can be measured in a particular context, at teacher- or school-level and at their own pace”* while another stated that *“TPL participants have a role in assessing impact but evaluation needs to include other stakeholders from the school community such as students, parents, other school staff”*. Other respondents suggested that schools should be enabled to self-evaluate TPL and feed back to providers or stated that TPL participants should *“collaborate with TPL providers in evaluating school-based outcomes post engagement”*. One respondent linked assessment of impact to policy, i.e., SSE.

Role of school leaders in assessing impact

TPL providers were asked: ***In your opinion, what (ideally) should be the role of school leaders in assessing impact?*** Nine out of 10 TPL providers gave a response to this question. Three respondents mentioned the role of the school leader in linking TPL to SSE by leading and monitoring the SSE process and linking to identified improvements/targets. Two respondents mentioned *Looking at Our School (LAOS)*, with one respondent noting that the *“LAOS framework references the key role of school leaders in promoting teacher and student learning - CPD is a key feature of this”*.

Four respondents indicated that school leaders have a key role to play in measuring the impact of TPL or gathering data to assess impact, including impact on teachers, impact at school level, and identifying school-based metrics to measure outcomes. One respondent noted that school leaders should empower other stakeholders to have their voices heard in the assessment of TPL impact. Others stated that school leaders’ *“attitude”* is important and that school leaders should *“value TPL”*.

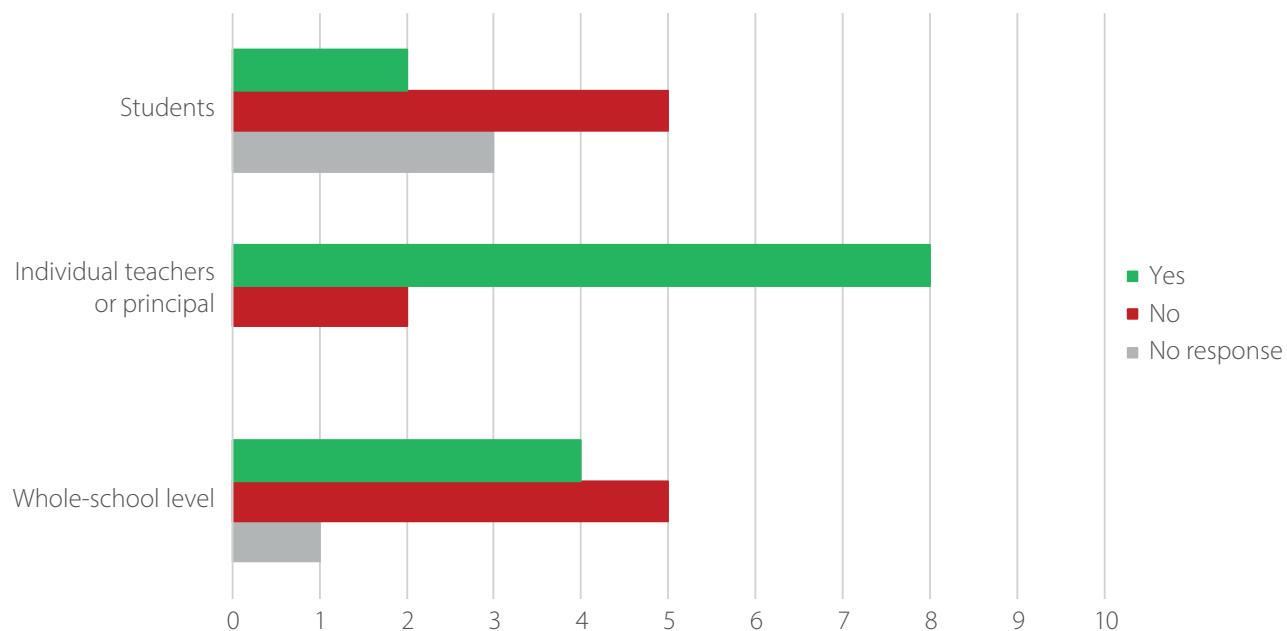
Three respondents highlighted a role for school leaders in ensuring implementation/application of learning from TPL. Three respondents noted that school leaders have a key role to play in facilitating time and space for teachers to engage in reflection, while one of these respondents stated that school leaders should *“allow time and space for peer learning and collaborative practice opportunities in their schools”*.

Collection of evidence about the impact of TPL provision at the whole-school, principal/teacher, or student levels

TPL providers were asked: ***Does your organisation currently collect evidence about the impact of your TPL provision at the whole-school, principal/teacher, or student levels? If so, what are the main mechanisms that you use to collect this evidence?*** The majority of respondents indicated that their organisation collects evidence about the impact of TPL provision from *principals/teachers* (8 out of 10 respondents, see Figure 2). Less than half of the respondents indicated that their organisation collects evidence about the impact of TPL provision at the *whole-school level* (4 out of 10 respondents). Only two respondents indicated that their organisations collect evidence about the impact of TPL provision from *students*.²⁶

Respondents highlighted a wide range of instruments that their organisations use to gather evidence on the impact of TPL provision. Examples of instruments used to gather evidence on the impact of TPL provision at *whole-school level* included: evaluation forms, surveys, focus groups, interviews, reflection logs, informal and formal conversations, meeting forums, and other feedback mechanisms. Examples of instruments used to gather evidence about the impact of TPL provision on *principals/teachers* included: evaluation forms, surveys, focus groups, interviews, reflection logs, verbal check-ins, formal and informal conversations, observations, self-reports, meeting platforms, peer learning sessions, feedback from CoP support forums, and other feedback. One respondent provided examples of instruments used to gather data on the impact of TPL provision on *students* and these instruments included: self-reports, standardised measures, and teacher observations. Another respondent indicated that their organisation gathers data indirectly from students stating that their organisation “*responds to requests from parents and from schools for specific student supports*”.

Figure 2: Collection of evidence about the impact of TPL provision at whole-school, principal/teacher, and student levels (number of TPL providers)



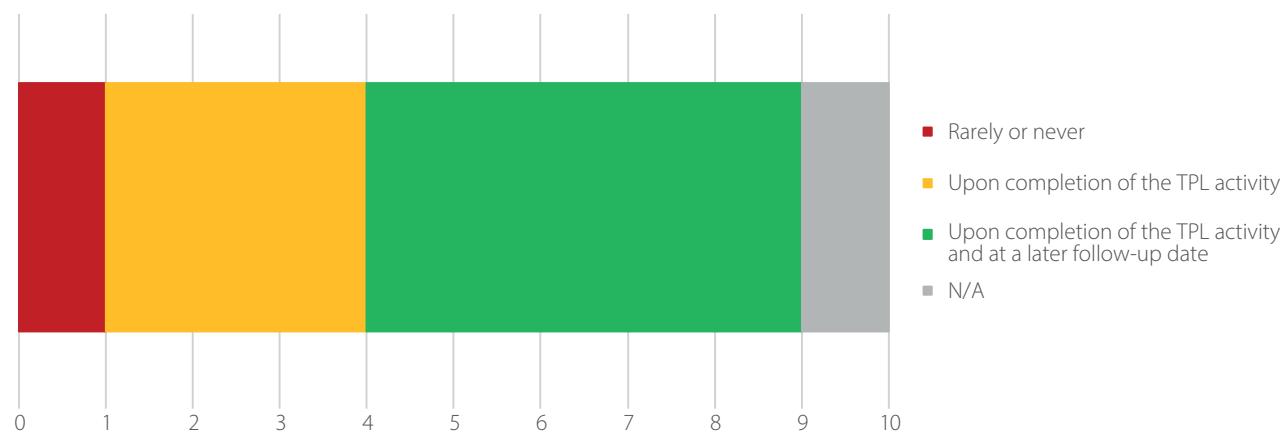
Note. TPL providers were asked to provide one response in relation to each level (students; individual teachers or principal; whole-school level).

²⁶ One TPL provider noted that their response in relation to collection of evidence about the impact of TPL from students was related to a specific research project and that this would not be routinely done for all TPL activities provided by the organisation. The other TPL provider noted that evidence was gathered from students indirectly.

When organisations collect evidence about the impact of a TPL activity

TPL providers were asked: *When does your organisation collect evidence about the impact of a TPL activity?* Eight out of 10 TPL providers indicated that their organisation collects evidence about the impact of TPL upon completion of the TPL activity or at a later follow-up date (see Figure 3). Five respondents indicated that their organisation gathers evidence to assess the impact *upon completion of the TPL activity and at a later follow-up date*. Three respondents indicated that their organisation collects evidence of impact of TPL activities *upon completion of the TPL activity* only. Only one TPL provider indicated that their organisation *rarely or never* collects evidence of the impact of TPL activities.

Figure 3: When organisations collect evidence of the impact of TPL activities (number of TPL providers)

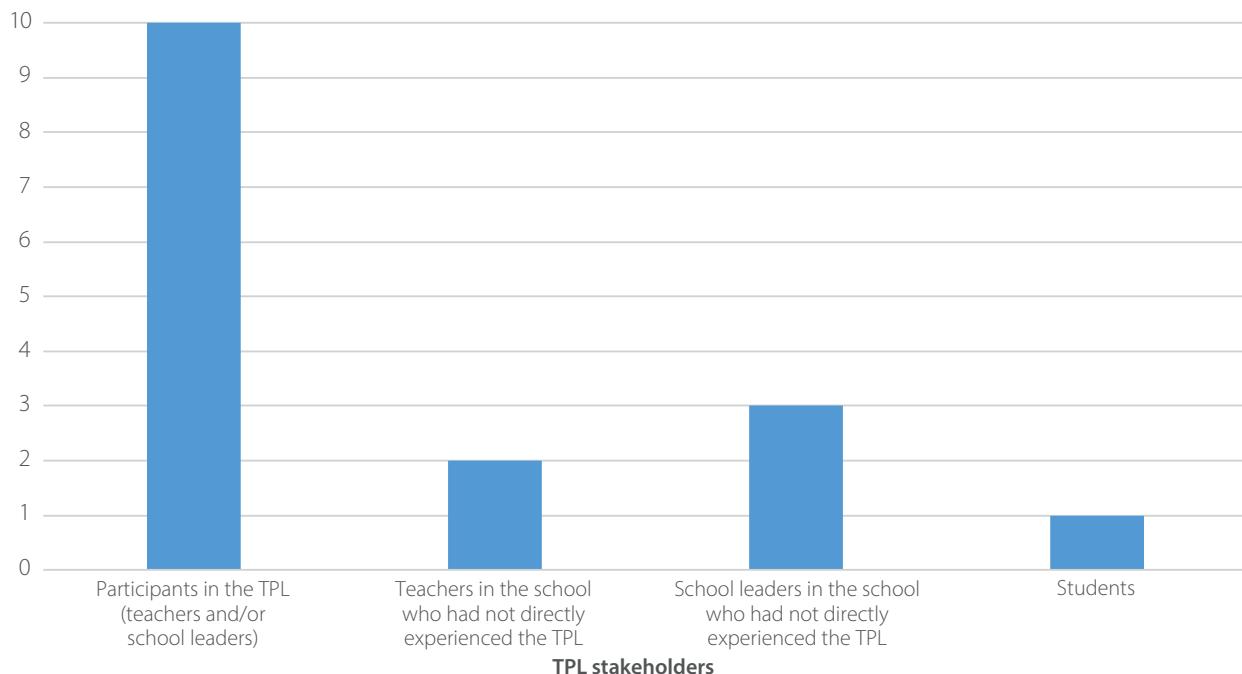


Note. TPL providers selected one response only.

Stakeholders from whom feedback is sought

TPL providers were asked: *When gathering feedback on the impact of TPL, from which of the following groups is feedback sought?* All respondents indicated that their organisation seeks feedback from TPL participants (i.e., teachers and/or school leaders, see Figure 4). Two respondents indicated that their organisation gathers feedback from teachers in the school who had not directly experienced the TPL activity, with one respondent specifying that their organisation only gathers these data if the TPL is facilitated via a cascade model.²⁷ Three respondents indicated that their organisation gathers feedback from school leaders who have not directly experienced the TPL programme. One respondent noted that their organisation seeks feedback from students, with another noting that their organisation gathers feedback from students indirectly via schools and parents.

²⁷ A cascade model of TPL involves some teachers completing a professional learning activity or training event and then passing this learning on to other colleagues.

Figure 4: TPL stakeholders from whom feedback is sought (number of TPL providers)

Note. TPL providers could select more than one response. The response option 'teachers in the school who had not directly experienced the TPL' would not apply in instances where all teachers in the school completed the TPL.

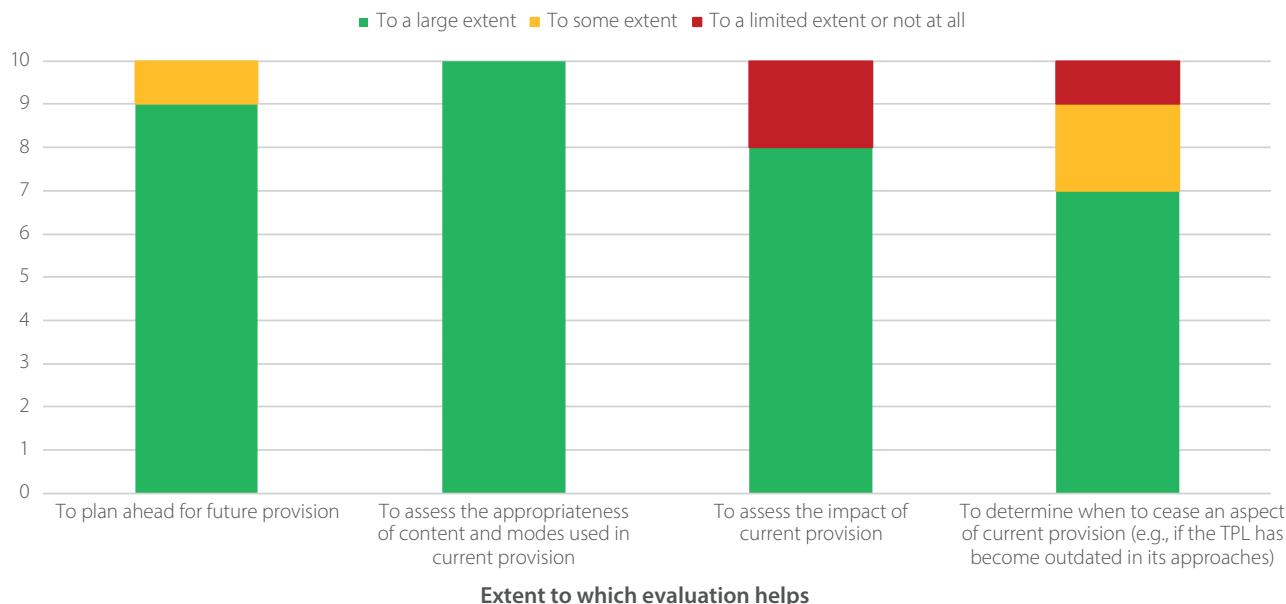
Extent to which TPL evaluation plays a role in organisational planning and impact assessment

TPL providers were asked: ***For each of the following areas, please indicate the extent to which TPL evaluation plays a role in your organisation.*** All TPL providers submitted a response to this question, with most or all indicating that TPL evaluation plays a role *to a large extent* in each of the areas presented. For example, for the purposes of planning ahead for future provision, nine out of 10 TPL providers indicated that TPL evaluation plays a role *to a large extent* (see Figure 5). This finding emphasises the circular relationship between design and evaluation.

Additional comments on the use of evaluation by organisations included:

- “*To develop research reports and key papers for policy.*”
- “*Feedback may inform us regarding the need to provide additional resources in the format of elective/online/written resources before the next core TPL event. To assess impact of inter-agency working and to evaluate the feedback from the presenters.*”
- “*To gather evaluations to assess impact of interagency working*” and “*to evaluate the feedback from the presenters*”.
- “*To identify additional resources that schools require for the purpose of implementation.*”
- “*All provisions include the voice of the school as a foundation for supports. We create our provision based on the contextual and emerging needs of our schools, informed also by contemporary policy & curriculum. Evaluation and feedback are essential components of all TPL provisions.*”
- “*Good practice...requires evaluation and planning processes. [Organisation’s name] mirrors and models this practice in the development of our CPD programmes for schools.*”

Figure 5: Extent to which evaluation helps planning and impact assessment (number of TPL providers)



Note. TPL providers selected one response in relation to each category.

3.5 Influence of school context and participant diversity on TPL provided

TPL providers were asked a series of questions regarding the influence of school context and participant diversity on TPL facilitation. The findings relating to these questions are presented below.

Contextual differences and TPL facilitation

Respondents were presented with a list of nine characteristics/factors and asked, for each, to indicate if they take this into consideration in TPL facilitation. For factors they take into account, they were asked to give examples of how they have done this. Contextual factors have been identified in the literature as important influences on TPL, for example, influencing how learning from TPL subsequently impacts on teaching and learning in the classroom (e.g., Buczynski & Hansen, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Tschanen-Moran, 2009).

Of the nine TPL providers that submitted responses, all indicated that their organisation takes *some* contextual differences into account when facilitating TPL (see Figure 6). Organisations most commonly take into account school enrolment size, language of instruction, school location, and/or school socioeconomic composition. Nine out of 10 TPL providers indicated that their organisations take school enrolment size into account for TPL facilitation. Eight out of 10 respondents indicated that their organisations take into account: schools serving high numbers of students at risk of educational disadvantage; schools in rural locations; or language of instruction, i.e., language needs for Irish-medium schools. Seven out of 10 indicated that their organisation takes account of: students' ethnic or cultural background, e.g., students from Traveller or Roma communities or students living in direct provision accommodation; students for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL); or students with SEN.

Figure 6: Contextual differences taken into account when organisations facilitate TPL (number of TPL providers)

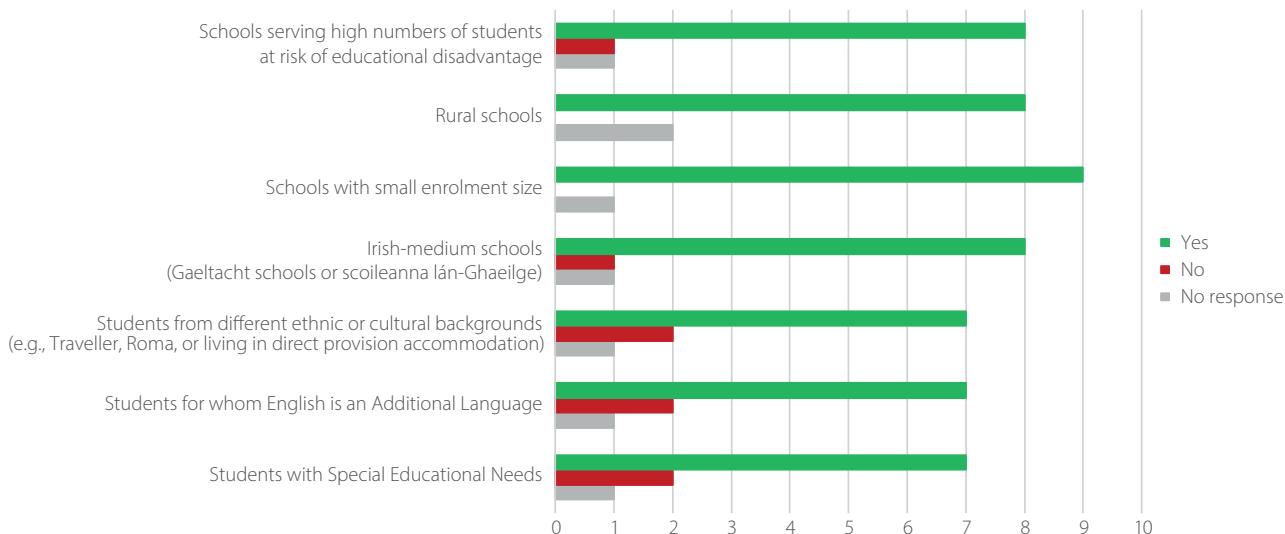


Table 4 outlines the types of considerations given to, or adaptions made for, each group or context. One respondent noted that specific workshops are available to the provider's specific target audience, i.e., Newly Qualified Teacher (NQTs). Another respondent stated that in their organisation “*all TPL are directed to the teaching and learning of all students including students with SEN*”. One respondent remarked throughout that “*school support by nature is contextual and individual schools are supported directly in relation to the specific needs of students*”.

Table 4: Examples of the types of considerations given to, or adaptations made for, specific groups by TPL providers when facilitating TPL

Group/Context	Examples of the types of considerations given to, or adaptations made for, this group
Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TPL design and delivery modified for SEN in collaboration with the NCSE who co-design and co-present. National leadership supports have specific modules for school leaders in SEN contexts. Team Teaching professional development is designed to embed inclusive classroom practices to cater for differentiated approaches for SEN. - Supports provided specifically for teachers of students with AEN²⁸/SEN and the majority of TPL events promote approaches for differentiation and inclusion, including UDL.²⁹ - All TPL are directed to the teaching and learning of all students including students with SEN. - TPL programmes are developed to be as inclusive as possible. They are designed based on the core values including Excellence in education, Care, Equality, Community, and Respect. - Organisation offers bespoke supports in line with the contextual needs of our specific demographics.
Students for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team Teaching PD is designed to embed inclusive classroom practices to cater for differentiated approaches for EAL. - A TPL on the UDL principles in design, in particular multiple means of engagement, illustrated for teachers how they can support learning for all students including students with EAL.

28 Additional Educational Needs.

29 Universal Design for Learning.

Students from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds (e.g., Traveller or Roma or living in direct provision accommodation)	<p>Including EAL above, [organisation's name] supports all schools in the SPHE programme which at its core promotes diversity and difference. Team Teaching PD is designed to embed inclusive classroom practices to cater for differentiated approaches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting teacher agency and self-efficacy in unpacking learning outcomes allows them to sculpt the specification to their context, and to their students. Inclusion is a principle of [policy name] which underpins all our TPL.
Irish-medium schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials and events facilitated. - All TPL (workshops, school support, webinars etc.) and related resources are designed and delivered <i>as Gaeilge</i>. There is provision on each team for delivery <i>as Gaeilge</i> where capacity and recruitment results allow. - Core and elective TPLs are provided for and delivered through Irish for teachers in Irish-medium schools, including Gaeltacht schools and Gaelcholáistí. All core TPL resources are translated, and our webpage is available in the Irish language. - [Organisation's name] provide TPL and support for Irish-medium schools. - ...we: employ a dedicated Education Policy and Development Officer to support the range of Irish-medium education settings...; provide specific TPL opportunities for Irish-medium schools; ensure our resources are translated to Irish as much as possible.
Schools with small enrolment size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elements of the training contextualised for Teaching Principals of small schools. - Online events for maximum geographical reach. - [Organisation's name] provides unique supports for the multi-grade setting and for principals who are teaching. Small schools are clustered for TPL where common needs apply. - Small schools, including island schools, are given the same TPL opportunities as all schools. Our facilitators have fostered relationships with these schools and emphasis can shift to suit the context. - [Name of TPL] differentiates for small schools through the provision of recorded webinars for those unable to attend live sessions. In addition, online cluster meetings for planning and reflection are facilitated to enable teachers in small schools to benefit from the experiences of a larger cohort of teachers...
Rural schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online events for maximum geographical reach. - [Organisation's name] provides unique supports for the multi-grade setting and for principals who are teaching. Leadership Programmes have specific modules for school leaders in these settings as they are teaching principals. - While WiFi can be poor in rural areas, our facilitators work around any issues that may arise. - Regional.
Schools serving high numbers of students at risk of educational disadvantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elements of the training contextualised for principals of DEIS small schools. - [Organisation's name] has a comprehensive work plan specifically for DEIS settings with a range of seminars, workshops, and cluster groups designed to address needs re literacy, numeracy, DEIS planning. [Organisation's name] design and deliver the national programmes...targeted at DEIS schools. DEIS schools are prioritised for school support. National Leadership Programmes have specific modules for school leaders in DEIS schools. - Many staff have a background in DEIS schools, and this is reflected in design. By adopting a UDL approach many contextual issues have little, if any, impact. - Core Value.

Factors that enable high impact of TPL provision in school communities

Respondents provided several suggestions in response to an open-ended item asking about the main factors that enable TPL to have a high impact in school communities. Data analysis of these responses involved considering which (if any) of the layers of the conceptual model (see Figure 1), these responses might be deemed most closely aligned with. As shown in Figure 1, the layers of the conceptual model which is proposed to underpin the evaluation framework for TPL in Ireland are: contextual factors; key features of professional development; teacher competencies; teaching behaviour; and learning experience, outcomes and potentially wellbeing for students, teachers and school leaders.

Several responses were coded as *contextual factors*. These included references to school leadership, collaboration within the school, school culture or climate, and availability of time and resources. The full range of responses coded as contextual factors is illustrated in Figure 7. School leadership (n=9) was the most common response coded under this heading, followed by collaboration within school (n=5), school culture/climate (n=3), and time and resources (n=3). The size of the individual rectangles in Figure 7 reflects the number of responses coded under each subtheme.

Figure 7: Contextual factors which enable high impact of TPL provision in school communities



Comments relating to school leadership included:

- “Value placed by school leader on TPL and the environment they are willing to create for it to happen.”
- “Strong school leadership with support for attendance, resources, reflective practice development.”
- “The top down and bottom up approach has the biggest influence on the impact of TPL activities. For example; Leadership - if the management of a school has a clear understanding and commitment to the development of TPL in the school this will have a huge impact on the TPL attended and cascaded through the school environment.”
- “The engagement of the principal or deputy, as member of the school team attending the TPL activity.”

- “School leadership and school management commitment to TPL which has been identified as a priority need within a school.”

Collaboration within school was also identified as an important contextual factor with comments including:

- “Levels of internal collaboration and diffusion of learning. TPL is of low impact if confined to single classrooms. School culture and leadership central to this.”
- “Peer learning opportunities - Communities of practice, support forums, team teaching and collaborative practice.”

Other responses in this category included link to policy/curriculum; school engagement; school context and needs; understanding change process; elective TPL/trends in learning; inclusion of students’ and parents’ voices; and effective student support and SEN teams.

TPL providers identified those *key features of professional development* which are most impactful. These features included: support from the TPL provider/sustained support (n=4) and quality and content of TPL (n=3). Other responses included high quality facilitation³⁰; mentoring/supervision; diffusion; active learning; and having a cyclical approach to the development of TPL (see Figure 8).

Comments relating to support from the TPL provider/sustained support and quality and content of TPL included:

- “Sustained support by school champions and TPL providers.”
- “Sustained supports - long term initiatives and programmes.”
- “The provision of follow-up support.”
- “The content of the programmes is informed by theory.”
- “Innovative facilitation, presentation, content, and follow up – involving the voice of participants.”

Figure 8: Key features of professional development which are most impactful in school communities



³⁰ While the quality of facilitation may be considered to be a specific aspect of quality TPL, these are presented as separate subthemes as some responses referred specifically to quality of facilitation while others referred to quality of TPL content more broadly.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of reflective practice (n=3) which was categorised under the heading *teaching behaviour*. Their comments included:

- “*Strong school leadership with support for attendance, resources, reflective practice development.*”
- “*Facilitation of reflective practice.*”
- “*Quality teaching demands ongoing critical reflection and willingness to adapt and adjust approaches.*”

Four responses were categorised under the heading *outcomes for teachers or students*. These included understanding the link between teaching and student learning and having a focus on improving teaching and learning:

- “*Class/subject teacher understand the centrality of their role in achieving outcomes for all children/young people in their classrooms.*”
- “*Understanding of the direct link between quality of teaching and quality of student learning.*”
- “*A strong focus on improving teaching and learning combined with an open mindset.*”

3.6 Identification of good practice and priorities for improvement

TPL providers were presented with a series of open-ended items and asked to comment on what is working well, what could be improved, and the supports or actions required to bring about the desired improvements in TPL, at a system-level, in their organisation, and at the school-level. They were advised to respond with respect to one of the four phases of TPL, which were defined as:

- Phase 1: identification of need;
- Phase 2: the design of the TPL;
- Phase 3: facilitation and follow-up of TPL; and
- Phase 4: evaluation of TPL.

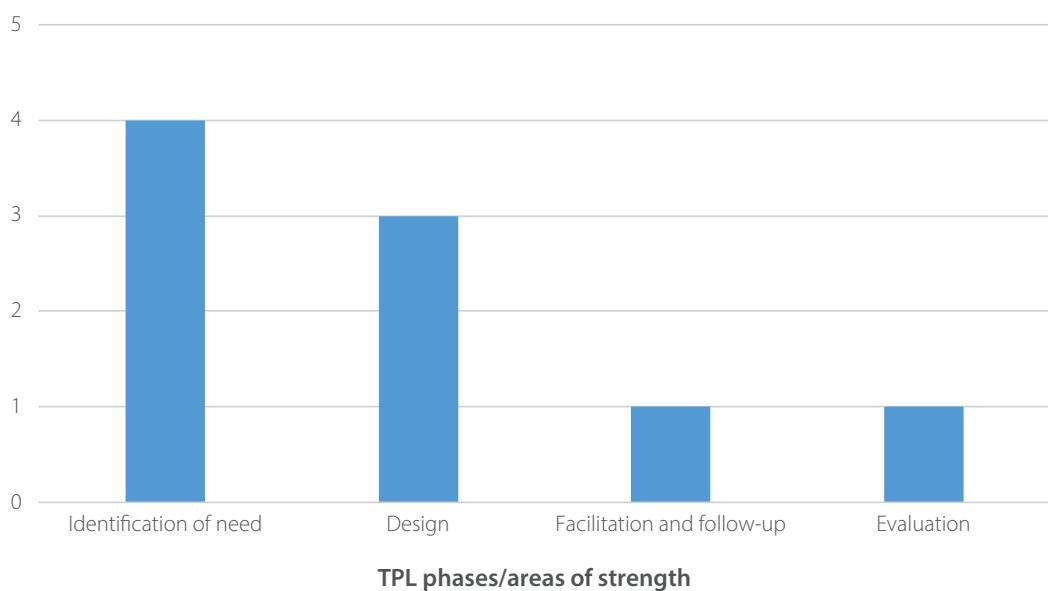
Respondents from nine TPL organisations provided responses to questions in this section.

TPL providers' views on areas of strength and areas for improvement in the Irish education system

TPL providers were asked to: ***Please select one of the four phases that you consider to represent an area of strength for the Irish education system. Provide one example of good practice in this area of strength on the part of the education system.***

Responses to this question are presented in Figure 9, with four out of nine respondents selecting ‘identification of need’ as an area of strength for the Irish education system. Three out of nine respondents selected ‘design of the TPL’ as an area of strength. Respondents were much less likely to identify ‘facilitation and follow-up’ or ‘evaluation’ as areas of perceived strength in the system.

Figure 9: TPL providers' views on areas of strength in the Irish education system (number of TPL providers)



In the context of 'identification of need', respondents provided the following examples of good practice:

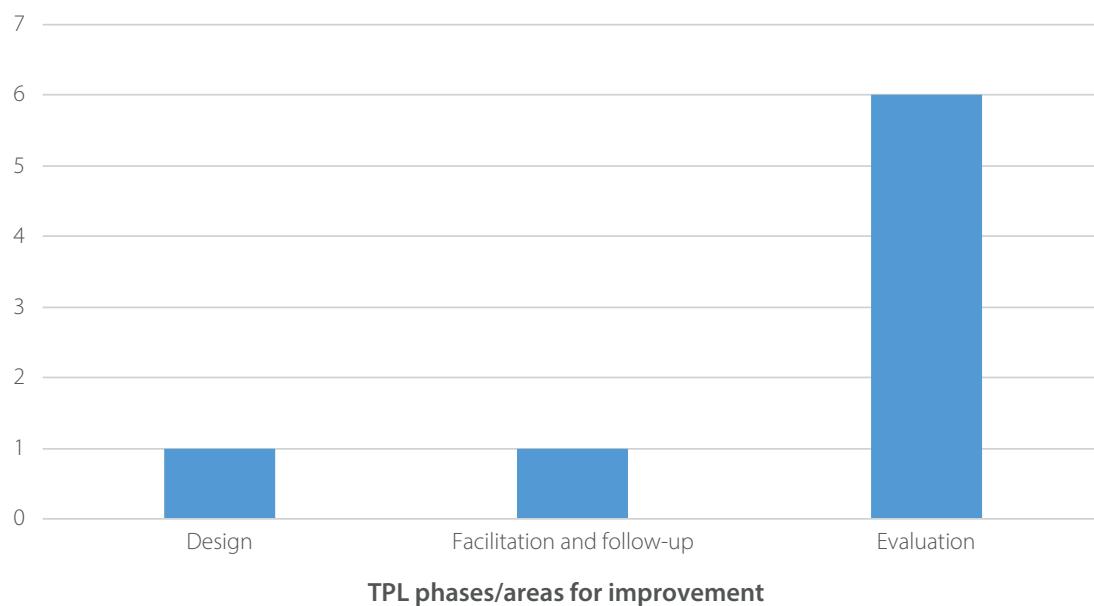
- *"The benefits of living in a small country like Ireland results in a connected education sector, allowing for collaboration when identifying need, and a space for all voices."*
- *"There [is] an acknowledgement that the quality of teaching is the single most important aspect that impacts on student learning. The Irish education system values this and invests in TPL."*
- *"The system does understand the need for support when there is a change in policy or curriculum e.g., JCT supporting Junior Cycle reform, Training on the new Child Protection Guidelines, Training on SSE/DEIS planning."*
- *"LAOS Quality Framework."*

One respondent qualified their selection of 'design of the TPL' as a key area of strength in the Irish education system with the following response:

"We can only comment on our own work...but our robust design structures and longitudinal TPL Frameworks such as..., apply to every aspect of TPL."

TPL providers were also asked to: ***Please select one of the four phases which, in your opinion, may most benefit from improvement in the Irish education system. Identify the supports or actions that are required to bring about the desired improvements.*** Six out of nine respondents selected 'evaluation of TPL' as an area which could benefit from improvement in the Irish education system (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: TPL providers' views on areas for improvement for the Irish education system (number of TPL providers)



Respondents provided suggestions of supports or actions required as follows:

- *“The development of a relevant framework for their specific provisions, stakeholders and niche within the continuum. Resources to facilitate meaningful focus groups, communities of practice, shared learning etc. again relevant to the specific niche on the continuum.”*
- *“The purpose of TPL is to improve teaching and learning. For most providers of TPL, it is very difficult to ascertain the impact in the classroom. Many teachers associate evaluation with inspection. However, there needs to be a broader understanding of evaluation, anchored in reflection and professional discussion. The SSE process can be used to support the implementation of areas of focus in TPL which the school has identified as being of particular relevance to them.”*
- *“An established framework for planning and evaluation of all TPL.”*
- *“Different processes happen across different providers. The impact on students' learning is not measured. This could be facilitated by research.”*
- *“Training on the use of the tools and the analysis of the data.”*

One respondent who identified “facilitation” as an area for improvement stated the following:

“Too much reliance still on transmission and cascade models...expensive, capacity heavy and low impact on change. Need to recognise the value of school based support...tailored, contextual and on a sustained basis...indisputably proven across the literature and repeatedly in reports. Supports for this include capacity but more fundamentally a change of policy mindset: an appreciation that educational change takes time and that there is no room for catch all roll outs if change is to be embedded. Capacity would not be an issue if it was accepted that this is a process which takes many years.”

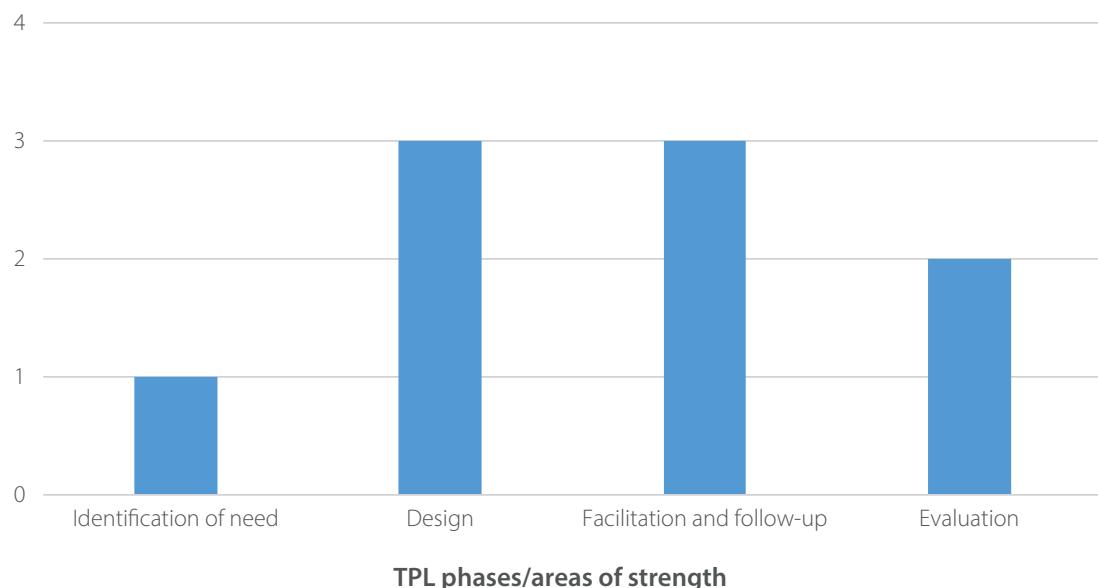
Another respondent, who identified 'design of the TPL' as an area for improvement, noted the importance of teacher voice in TPL design as follows: "*Teacher voice should be elevated in TPL design at every stage from design to implementation*". No respondent selected 'identification of need' as an area in need of improvement in the Irish education system.

TPL providers' views on areas of strength and areas for improvement within their organisations

TPL providers were asked to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement within their organisations. In relation to areas of strength, the following question was posed: ***Please select one of the four phases that you consider to represent an area of strength for your organisation. Provide one example of good practice in this area of strength on the part of your organisation.***

Figure 11 presents respondents' choices in relation to areas of strength for their organisations. Responses to this question varied with three out of nine respondents selecting 'design of the TPL' and three respondents also selecting 'facilitation and follow-up of TPL'.

Figure 11: TPL providers' views on areas of strength in their organisations (number of TPL providers)



From those who selected 'design of the TPL', the following statements were submitted:

- "*The TPL follows an internal design framework. Designers are classroom teachers, who draw on their experience to ensure TPL is relevant, but also challenging. The collaborative approach to design, from conception to realisation creates important cognitive diversity into the development of TPL and also undergoes an internal Quality Assurance process before being presented as a draft TPL. A focus group of educational stakeholders, including practicing classroom teachers, Inspectorate, NCCA, and SEC, engages in the draft TPL and their feedback is incorporated into final design. The design then undergoes further Quality Assurance with the DoE inspectorate. After an initial period of delivery, a further review is undertaken and the TPL can be further 'tweaked' at that point prior to mass national roll-out as necessary.*"
- "*[Organisation's name] has a design and development process that is led by a policy and practice development team. This team collaborates internally and externally.*"

- “Our structure and procedures provide us with opportunities to identify needs promptly and design programmes to respond to the needs within the context of the sector, by providing bespoke opportunities...”

In relation to ‘facilitation and follow-up of TPL’ respondents stated the following:

- “Facilitation of [group name] (99% positive evaluations consistently) and trust post training that once a school engages with [organisation’s name] they will continue to receive support including contextual professional development as appropriate. Events such as [event name] promote professional relationships; facilitate classroom observations to enhance teaching, learning and assessment of pupils’ work; action planning; supports in relation to planning, preparation and effective classroom management practices; reflective practice on professionalism and professional vision; deepen commitment to ongoing professional development; [participants] as evident from evaluations and [other source] indicate that they feel confident, capable and empowered...”
- “[Organisation’s name] model of sustained school support had repeatedly proven itself as a success in enabling schools to become independent communities of learners. It attends directly to the complex needs of schools, allows for effective goal setting as part of deliberate improvement process. Ultimately it builds internal leadership capacity thereby drawing less and less on system resources.”
- “Our TPL is based on experiential learning, the feedback we receive from teachers is that this is a very useful approach as it allows them to access their own learnings, build on them and apply the learnings with their own unique context in mind.”

One respondent stated the following in relation to ‘evaluation of TPL’: “research evaluations and publication of key findings.”

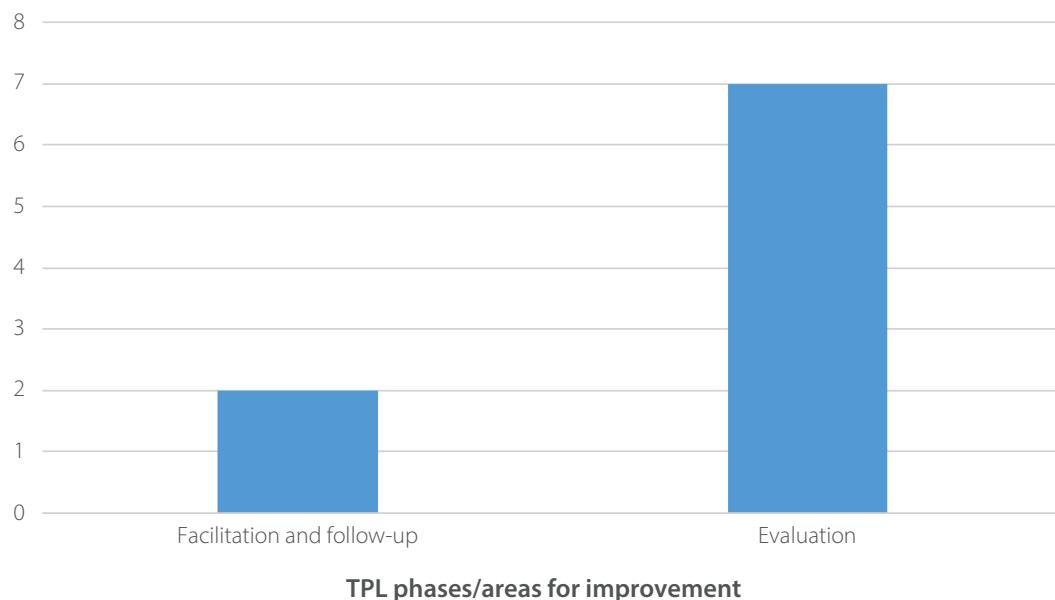
TPL providers were also asked to identify areas for improvement: ***Please select one of the four phases which, in your opinion, may most benefit from improvement in your organisation. Identify the supports or actions that are required to bring about the desired improvements.***

Evaluation emerged as the key area in need of improvement from the perspective of TPL providers. Seven out of nine respondents identified ‘evaluation’ as an area for improvement (Figure 12). Detailed examples of quotes are provided below.

Two providers identified ‘facilitation and follow-up of TPL’ as an area for improvement. Comments relating to supports or actions required for ‘facilitation and follow-up of TPL’ included:

- “Facilitation training.”
- “Planning and accounting for the human and financial resources required for sustained support at school level.”

Figure 12: TPL providers' views on areas for improvement for their organisations (number of TPL providers)



In relation to 'evaluation of TPL', respondents' comments relating to supports or actions required stated:

- *"From [organisation's name] perspective, it can be challenging to measure impact in terms of quantitative data."*
- *"More follow up longitudinal evaluation...not always possible to ascertain the longer term influence. Time and capacity are the barriers."*
- *"While we currently gather written feedback at the end of each TPL, and verbal feedback throughout the TPL we have no means of further evaluation apart from whether a teacher/school chooses to engage with us themselves on an individual level. Our internal [group name], and feedback forms are useful to this end, although how representative their feedback is needs to be considered. In order to capture additional meaningful evaluation our capacity as a TPL provider would need to be taken into account."*
- *"Standardised evaluation process across all the support services. An evaluation that accounts for the imbedded learning of teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies. [Organisation's name] would also welcome a mechanism for evaluating the impact on students' learning from their teacher attending TPL."*
- *"The development of this framework will support this, although we try to follow up with teachers to assess the impact of the TPL, even informally through phone calls or questionnaires, we find it difficult to connect with the teachers. Having a standardised framework will help to develop a culture of providing feedback on TPL in schools, they will expect to be asked to give feedback and see themselves as being it as part of the process of continuously improving TPL."*
- *"Training on the use of the tools and the analysis of the data."*
- *"The evaluation of TPL is presently under review within our organisation. An evaluations committee have engaged in a consultative process and conducted surveys across the network and identified needs and areas for improvement. This committee have engaged*

with contemporary research in the field with a view to presenting a report for the continued improvement of evaluation of TPL across the network.”

TPL providers' views on areas of strength and areas for improvement within schools

TPL providers were asked to: ***Please select one of the four phases that you consider to represent an area of strength for the schools you work with. Provide one example of good practice in this area of strength on the part of schools.***

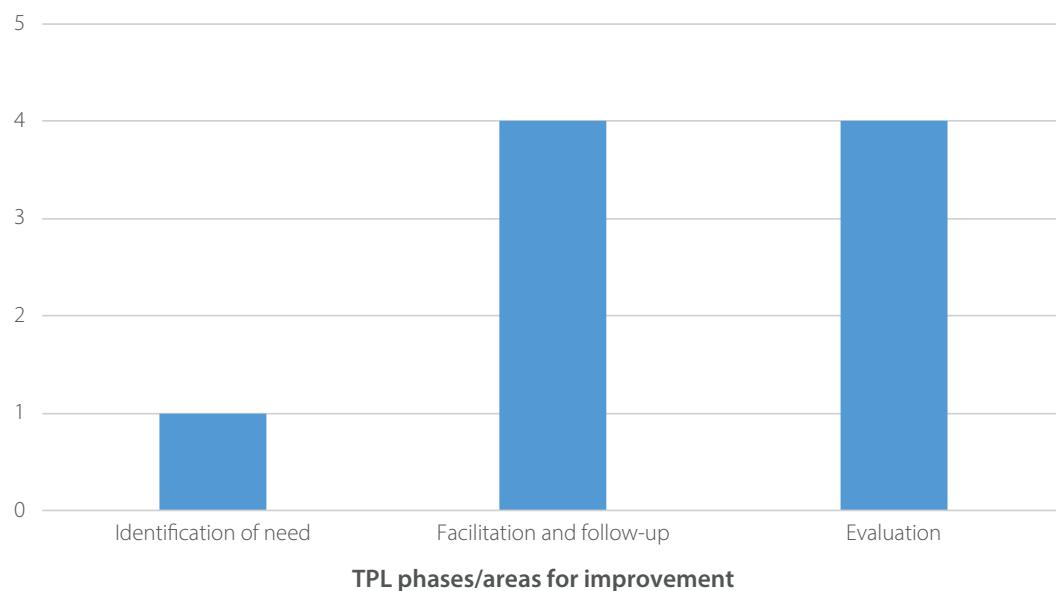
In response to this question, all nine TPL providers selected 'identification of need'. Their comments on good practice included:

- “Use of SSE process.”
- “Schools, knowing their unique context can provide good signposting through school self-evaluation in identifying need.”
- “Our experience in providing bespoke school support for many years now has told us that schools are best placed to know and identify what their CPD needs are. Policy needs are not always aligned to school needs. Top down provision decided by policy is often rooted in national imperatives and typically take the form of large scale roll outs meaning that they are not context sensitive anyway. School needs emanating from policy needs are often compliance/accountability driven which again does not always match what schools want to priorities themselves.”
- “Where school leadership have allocated management resources to planning for whole-school TPL. Often staff are encouraged to identify gaps in their practice/knowledge, allowing needs to be identified. An awareness of external factors, including curriculum change, is very important too.”
- “Good use of school based metrics and standardised tests.”
- “Schools apply for support from the [organisation’s name], they provide feedback. They contribute to discussions on their needs. This all takes place in a non-mandatory context for the [organisation’s name].”
- “The schools are progressive organisations, aiming to provide the best opportunities to enhance student achievement, as a result they are proactive in identifying TPL needs, through professional conversations internally to the school or across the family of schools in an [organisation’s name] (Communities of Practice). They actively engage with SSE/DEIS planning, which supports the identification of needs.”

TPL providers were also asked to identify areas which may most benefit from improvement in schools. i.e., ***please select one of the four phases which, in your opinion, may most benefit from improvement in the schools you work with. Identify the supports or actions that are required to bring about the desired improvements.*** 'Facilitation and follow-up' and 'evaluation' were most commonly identified as phases that may benefit from improvement at school-level (see Figure 13). Comments relating to supports or actions needed to support 'facilitation and follow-up of TPL' included:

- “*Facilitation training.*”
- “*This is explained...in terms of the internal responsibility of the school to ensure that structures are in place for TPL to be applied and practiced. Our school support for example includes a caveat that schools are expected to engage fully in the process as expected and in as far as they can have optimum conditions in place during and after the TPL.*”
- “*Community of practice at school level.*”

Figure 13: TPL providers' views on areas for improvement for schools (number of TPL providers)



Respondents also provided the following suggestions in relation to supports or actions needed to improve evaluation of TPL at school level:

- “*Evaluation framework; focus groups; communities of practice; professional networks.*”
- “*When we try to evaluate TPL we find that teachers just don't have the time to engage with us on this.*”
- “*Training on the use of the tools and the analysis of the data.*”
- “*Continued improvement and development of resources and tools for evaluating professional development across a range of modalities: face-to-face, blended, online, sustained supports, support groupings, communities of practices, in-school supports.*”

One respondent selected ‘identification of need’ as an area for improvement in schools stating, “*not all schools have engaged with [organisation's name] TPL to date and given the [organisation's name] TPL is not mandatory there is no obligation to participate in TPL...The Inspectorate may have a role in identifying and supporting these schools.*”

Chapter 4: Conclusions

4.1 Key findings and implications for the TPL evaluation framework

The findings presented in the current report provide an important insight into the perspectives of TPL providers on how their organisations:

- identify TPL needs;
- design and facilitate TPL;
- evaluate and assess the impact of TPL provided; and
- cater for different school contexts and participant diversity in the provision of TPL.

In line with any cross-sectional study, responses represent a snapshot at a particular point in time and approaches may have been modified since data collection took place.

Alignment with system priorities was highlighted in the responses from TPL providers. Nine respondents indicated that introduction or change in educational policy is a key influence on their priorities, emphasising the role of system priorities in determining TPL in Ireland. The TPL evaluation framework will allow TPL providers to illustrate linkages between TPL provision and system priorities.

While the alignment with system priorities is very welcome, it is important that this is balanced by having TPL which is responsive to teacher needs and interests. With respect to influencing TPL priorities for TPL providers, six respondents reported that teachers are an important influence in this regard. Whilst recognising the importance of coherence of TPL with system priorities, **the TPL evaluation framework also needs to take into account the role of teachers' needs and interests when selecting priorities as this will support a more balanced and responsive approach to TPL provision.**

TPL providers showed an awareness of the need to take into account school characteristics when designing and facilitating TPL. Respondents indicated that their organisations take into account school enrolment size, language of instruction, school location, and/or school socioeconomic composition. **The TPL evaluation framework will allow TPL providers to evidence how such contextual factors are taken into account in the provision of TPL.** In this way, TPL evaluation will support the identification and implementation of best practice with respect to adapting TPL provision for different contexts.

The recognised importance of 'facilitator competencies' is seen in the responses from TPL providers with respondents indicating that facilitators of their TPL examples had qualifications relevant to the TPL or engaged in induction or training with the organisation itself before facilitating the TPL. *Cosán* (The Teaching Council, 2016) also recognises the importance of facilitator skills and knowledge as part of TPL quality assurance. **In keeping with best practice facilitator competencies will feature in the TPL evaluation framework.**

Six out of nine respondents selected 'evaluation of TPL' as an area which could benefit from improvement in the Irish education system. This shows a **high degree of awareness on the part of TPL providers of the need for an improved approach to the evaluation of TPL** – at system-level, provider-level, and school-level. This further underscores the need for the current research project and the development of a framework for the evaluation of TPL. At system level, evaluation can take

consideration of the SSE process/DEIS planning, and inspection reports. Inspections provide an opportunity to connect TPL and the SSE process/DEIS planning.

As identified in previous phases of this research (e.g., Rawdon et al., 2020), successful evaluation is contingent on gathering appropriate data. The issue of a lack of time on the part of participants in TPL was highlighted in responses from TPL providers, e.g., *“When we try to evaluate TPL, we find that teachers just don’t have the time to engage with us on this”*. In their contributions to the current project through participation in a survey, limited time and resources was highlighted by teachers and school leaders as a key barrier to TPL (Rawdon et al., 2021). **The limited time that teachers and school leaders have to engage with TPL, the implementation of learning from TPL, and TPL evaluation poses a challenge to the successful implementation of the evaluation framework arising from this project.**

Research was identified as playing a role in informing the priorities of eight out of ten TPL providers. Engagement of teachers and principals with research findings was less evident in their survey responses (Rawdon et al., 2021). **This may suggest a need for TPL providers to make more explicit reference to how current research informs TPL at the facilitation stage.**

A need for capacity building in relation to data analysis was highlighted by some TPL providers, e.g., *“training on the use of the tools and the analysis of the data”*. It is recognised that impact evaluation is a complex area requiring technical expertise, as well as considerable investment of time and resources. Implementation of the TPL evaluation framework would likely need to be accompanied by opportunities for some TPL providers to build capacity in methods of evaluation and data analysis whilst recognising that shorter or less intensive TPL provision will likely not warrant evaluation on the scale of more intensive programmes.

While the evaluation framework being developed is targeted primarily at TPL providers in the first instance, responses from TPL providers show a recognition of the need for schools to eventually play a greater role in the evaluation of TPL through the SSE process (or DEIS planning process where applicable). TPL providers indicated support and encouragement for reflective practice in line with the Cosán framework (The Teaching Council, 2016). For nine of the 12 TPL examples provided, respondents described ways in which participants were encouraged to reflect on their learning. **The role and importance of reflective practice will be evident in the TPL evaluation framework.** The Teaching Council has developed materials to support teacher reflection on TPL and **it may be worth considering how data from individual teacher reflection can contribute to the evaluation of TPL.**

Duration of TPL appears to often be outside of the direct control of the organisations providing TPL; i.e., a specified number of days is often externally determined as part of the roll-out of a new curriculum. In this context, a TPL provider may have limited opportunity to provide TPL of a more sustained duration. While ‘sufficient’ duration has been identified as a core feature of effective TPL (Desimone, 2009), **the TPL evaluation framework should recognise that duration of TPL activities may not be determined exclusively by the TPL provider.**

For all 12 examples provided, respondents also indicated that student outcomes were considered at the TPL design stage. A separate strand of this project considers how student perspectives on teaching and learning can inform TPL. **The TPL evaluation framework will endeavour to give appropriate consideration to how teacher learning benefits student outcomes.**

4.2 Limitations and next steps

Limitations

The current report includes findings on the perspectives of TPL providers. The participant group is limited to respondents from 10 organisations which offer TPL for school leaders and teachers in Ireland. It is unknown how much consultation was carried out within organisations as respondents completed their questionnaires or how representative it is of their work in this area. Questionnaires were also completed by respondents over a relatively short time frame. Nonetheless, this is a key stakeholder group (along with school leaders, teachers, students, and DoE representatives) given that organisations providing TPL will likely be the first group to use the evaluation framework for TPL.

All respondents gave at least one example of a programme of TPL provided by their organisations. Two respondents outlined two examples of TPL offered by the organisations they represent. These examples varied greatly in terms of the duration (e.g., single sessions carried out in one day to longer term sustained support carried out over an academic year), purpose (curriculum reform, introduction of new subject matter, whole-school support, mentoring), facilitation methods or modes of TPL (webinars, seminars, sustained support, etc.), and evaluation carried out (participant feedback forms, focus groups, etc.). While the variation in responses reflects the breadth of TPL on offer, making comparisons or generalisations across organisations is difficult. As the TPL providers were asked to share details of TPL that they had designed and facilitated, the responses may not reflect the depth of TPL on offer from these organisations. That is, some TPL providers facilitate TPL in evidence-based programmes that were externally designed and these were not included in their responses, given the questionnaire focus on TPL designed (and facilitated) by the organisation.

Respondents completed their questionnaires during a time when schools and TPL provision were disrupted by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, there was increased facilitation of online TPL while some TPL had been postponed as a result of restrictions in schools and more generally. It is therefore possible that some aspects of the examples provided by TPL providers were a result of adaptations associated with pandemic restrictions rather than a feature of typical provision. However, this is not expected to represent a major limitation as organisations were advised that the example selected should be 'a good representation of the work of your organisation'.

Next steps

In Phase 4 of the current project, a case study will be carried out, focusing on the evaluation of a programme of TPL for Restorative Practice. This work provides an opportunity to follow the evaluation of TPL in practice and for learning from that evaluation to inform the emerging TPL evaluation framework. Findings of this work are anticipated in early 2023. The final output from this project will be the framework for the evaluation of TPL with anticipated publication in early 2023.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire for TPL providers



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Development of a Framework for the Evaluation of Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) – Perspectives of TPL providers

This submission template is intended to support you (and your colleagues/organisation) in developing a written submission for the third strand of this research study. Your views will be key in guiding the development of the TPL evaluation framework.

- *In line with good practice and data protection regulations, please do **not** include names of schools, teachers, students, or individual TPL facilitators when providing examples.*
- Please e-mail your completed submission to tpl@erc.ie on or before April 1, 2021 if possible. If you have any queries about this submission, please email caroline.rawdon@erc.ie (Dr Caroline Rawdon).
- Section 1 invites you to describe a particular TPL activity while Section 2 onwards asks about your organisation's provision more generally.
- If the TPL programme you describe in Section 1 is highly representative of your organisation's activities, you do not need to provide detailed answers for Section 2 onwards for items that you have already described in Section 1.
- If there is a lot of variety in the TPL offered by your organisation, you may wish to provide more detail to questions in Section 2 onwards.

Organisation details

Name of contact person	
Position or role of contact person	
Organisation name	
Date	
Email	
Phone number	

Consent for using extracts from this submission and for follow-up

The Educational Research Centre (ERC) will publish a report based on the written submissions from TPL providers. Excerpts from written submissions may be published in the report or other publications arising from the research. Individual and organisation names will not accompany any excerpts used in publications.

Do you consent to extracts from your submission being published?

Yes, excerpts from my submission may be published

No, excerpts from my submission should not be published

Do you agree to a follow-up call from the ERC (if required) to clarify any elements of your submission?

Yes, I agree to a follow-up call if required

No, I do not agree to a follow-up call

Section 1: Example of TPL provided by your organisation

Please provide details in this section of a specific TPL programme that was designed and facilitated by your organisation. This programme can be in any area but ideally it will have been designed within the past 5 years and is a programme which you feel is a good representation of the work of your organisation.

1a) TPL name:

1b) TPL objectives:

1c) Target participants:

1d) Duration (Frequency, e.g., once-off, weekly, monthly; Intensity, e.g., full day, half day, one to two hours):

1e) Alignment of this TPL with curriculum or policy (explain how this TPL links to curriculum or policy):

1f) How was the need for this TPL identified?

1g) What form of consultation, if any, with relevant stakeholders took place in designing this TPL?

(write 'none' if this did not occur)

1h) Were student outcomes considered at the design stage of this TPL? If yes, how?

Yes / No (Delete as appropriate)

1i) Details of this TPL facilitation or delivery (give details of location, e.g., online, blended, on-site in schools, or off-site, and mode, e.g., workshop, lecture, modelling of skills, experiential learning):

1j) Details of consideration given to facilitator preparation, qualifications, and experience for this TPL, if any:

1k) Details of how this TPL was evaluated by your organisation (e.g., participant feedback form): (write 'none' if not evaluated)

1l) Supports (if any) provided by your organisation to encourage participants in this TPL to reflect on their learning and on the connections between learning and practice in order to determine impact: (write 'none' if not provided)

1m) Details of evaluation of applying the learning or skills from this TPL (by your organisation or at school level): (write 'unknown' if not known, or 'none' if none)

By your organisation:

By schools:

1n) Details of follow-up supports or resources provided to the TPL participants, if any: (write 'none' if none)

Section 2: Identifying TPL needs

From Section 2 onwards, please refer to approaches and practices generally used in your organisation in the facilitation of TPL. In addition to the TPL outlined in Section 1, also consider other TPL offered by your organisation.

2a) In your experience, which of the following groups play a key role in determining national priorities for TPL? (Mark an X for all that apply)

Person/Group/Agency/Organisation	Mark an X for all that apply
The Department of Education/Other Government Department	
The Teaching Council (i.e., Cosán)	
Education Centres	
School principals/leaders or school management bodies	
Teachers or teaching bodies	
Students or student bodies	
Union representatives	
This TPL provider (i.e., the organisation I represent)	
Other TPL providers	
Other (please specify):	

2b) Which of the following are the most important influences on establishing the TPL priorities for your organisation? (Mark an X for all that apply)

Factors	Mark an X for all that apply
Curriculum change	
Introduction or change in educational policy	
Demand from schools arising from needs identified at school-level	
Expertise and skills of facilitators in your organisation	
Research findings	
The Department of Education/Other Government Department	
The Teaching Council (i.e., Cosán)	
Education Centres	
School principals/leaders or school management bodies	
Teachers or teaching bodies	
Students or student bodies	
Union representatives	
Other (please specify):	

2c) In your experience, which of the following factors are key influences at school level on decisions on the part of school staff to participate in TPL? (Mark an X for all that apply)

Factors	Mark an X for all that apply
Curriculum change	
Introduction or change in educational policy	
School planning processes (e.g., School Self-Evaluation or DEIS planning)	
Staff interest and motivation at an individual level	
Practical factors such as availability of substitute cover	
Other (please specify):	

Section 3: TPL design and facilitation

3a) Please provide a description of the steps typically used in your organisation in the design of TPL. Refer to any planning tools or frameworks, such as a logic model, that you use.

3b) In general, how is the duration of the TPL programme determined?

3c) Do you take teacher and school preferences for different TPL formats into account in the design or facilitation of TPL? If so, could you provide examples of how this is done?

3d) Do you have a process to check that TPL is aligned with the needs of the education system? If so, could you provide a brief description of this process?

3e) Is TPL designed to encourage a whole-school approach to the application of learning from TPL? If yes, how?

3f) Does your organisation *typically* follow up with schools/teachers after a TPL programme? If yes, please describe any follow up activities designed to support the application/embedding of learning and/or reflection on the connections between learning from TPL and practice?

Section 4: Evaluating and assessing the impact of TPL

In your responses to the following questions, you may consider impact across any level (e.g., teachers' learning, student outcomes, teacher attitudes, changes in practice, etc.)

4a) In your opinion, what (ideally) should be the role of TPL providers in assessing impact?

4b) In your opinion, what (ideally) should be the role of TPL participants in assessing impact?

4c) In your opinion, what (ideally) should be the role of school leaders in assessing impact (for example as part of Whole School Evaluation [WSE])?

4d) Does your organisation currently collect evidence about the impact of your TPL provision at the whole-school, principal/teacher, or student levels? If so, what are the main mechanisms that you use to collect this evidence?

	No	Yes	If yes, what are the main mechanisms used to collect evidence at this level?
Whole-school level			
Individual teachers or principal			
Students			

4e) When does your organisation collect evidence about the impact of a TPL activity?

	Mark <u>one</u> answer
Rarely or never	
Upon completion of the TPL activity	
Upon completion of the TPL activity and at a later follow-up date	
At a later follow-up date only	

4f) When gathering feedback on the impact of TPL, from which of the following groups is feedback sought? (Mark an X for all that apply)

	Mark an X for all that apply
Participants in the TPL (teachers and/or school leaders)	
Teachers in the school who had <u>not</u> directly experienced the TPL	
School leaders in the school who had <u>not</u> directly experienced the TPL	
Students	

4g) For each of the following areas, please indicate the extent to which TPL evaluation plays a role in your organisation. (Mark an X in each row)

	Evaluation helps ...		
	To a large extent	To some extent	To a limited extent or not at all
To plan ahead for future provision			
To assess the appropriateness of content and modes used in current provision			
To assess the impact of current provision			
To determine when to cease an aspect of current provision (e.g., if the TPL has become outdated in its approaches)			

Additional comments on uses of evaluation by your organisation:

Section 5: Influence of school context and participant diversity on TPL

5a) In general, when your organisation facilitates TPL, does this take into account contextual differences relating to...

	No	Yes	If yes, give examples of the types of considerations given to, or adaptations made for, this group
students with Special Educational Needs			
students for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL)			
students from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds (e.g., Traveller, Roma, or living in direct provision accommodation)			
Irish-medium schools (Gaeltacht schools or scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge)			
schools with small enrolment size			
rural schools			
schools serving high numbers of students at risk of educational disadvantage			
Other circumstances, please specify:			

5b) In your organisation's experience, what are the main factors that enable high impact of TPL activities in school communities?

Section 6: Identification of good practice and priorities for improvement

In this final section you are asked to consider four phases of TPL –

- Phase 1: identification of need;
- Phase 2: the design of the TPL;
- Phase 3: facilitation and follow-up of TPL; and
- Phase 4: evaluation of TPL

– and consider from the perspective of the education system, your organisation, and the schools you work with what is working well, what could be improved, and the supports or actions required to bring about desired improvements.

6a) Please select one of the four phases that you consider to represent an area of strength for the Irish education system. Provide one example of good practice in this area of strength on the part of the education system.

Phase seen as an area of strength:

Example of good practice:

6b) Please select one of the four phases which, in your opinion, may most benefit from improvement in the Irish education system. Identify the supports or actions that are required to bring about the desired improvements.

Phase seen as an area for improvement:

Supports or actions required:

6c) Please select one of the four phases that you consider to represent an area of strength for your organisation. Provide one example of good practice in this area of strength on the part of your organisation.

Phase seen as an area of strength:

Example of good practice:

6d) Please select one of the four phases which, in your opinion, may most benefit from improvement in your organisation. Identify the supports or actions that are required to bring about the desired improvements.

Phase seen as an area for improvement:

Supports or actions required:

6e) Please select one of the four phases that you consider to represent an area of strength for the schools you work with. Provide one example of good practice in this area of strength on the part of schools.

Phase seen as an area of strength:

Example of good practice:

6f) Please select one of the four phases which, in your opinion, may most benefit from improvement in the schools you work with. Identify the supports or actions that are required to bring about the desired improvements.

Phase seen as an area for improvement:

Supports or actions required:

6g) From your organisation's perspective, what are the main system-level priorities to bring about improvements to the identification, design, facilitation, and/or evaluation of TPL in Ireland?

6h) Please add any further information that you consider to be relevant:

Thank you very much for your input. Please email your completed submission to tpl@erc.ie

Appendix 2: Participating TPL providers

Centre for School Leadership (CSL)

The CSL (www.cslireland.ie), established in 2014, was developed on a partnership basis by the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN), the National Association for Principals and Deputies (NAPD), and the DoE, with the aim of providing a coherent continuum of professional development for school leaders. The CSL exists to “*ensure the provision of high quality professional development opportunities for aspiring and serving school leaders, thus improving the learning outcomes for school communities*”. The responsibility of the CSL has now extended across the continuum of leadership development as a whole. The CSL provides professional development opportunities and support at the pre-appointment stage of training and during the induction of newly appointed principals. The CSL also provides a multitude of professional development opportunities throughout the school leaders’ career. The DoE is also advised on policy in this area by the CSL.

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)

ETBI (www.etbi.ie), established in 2013, represents Ireland’s 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and promotes the interests of ETBs. On behalf of government agencies, it promotes the development and implementation of appropriate education and training policy for the ETB sector. The 16 ETBs lead and manage 27 community national schools, one of which provides oideachais trí mheán na Gaeilge. In addition, ETBs lead and manage 245 post-primary schools, 47 of which provide oideachais trí mheán na Gaeilge.

Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI)

The ESCI is the umbrella organisation for the National Network of Education (Support) Centres. The ESCI is the policy-making body for the Network and general ESCI policy is decided upon at the Annual General Meeting. There are 21 full-time and 7 part-time Education Centres across the country. Each Education Centre serves the needs of local teachers and school leaders by hosting and administering numerous TPL courses run by many different organisations including some of the TPL providers included in this report, as well as other local agencies and national bodies (listed in the *ESCI Statement of Strategy 2020-2023* (ESCI, 2020) but including for example, Mental Health Association of Ireland, the Arts Council, and Concern).

Health Service Executive (HSE)

The work of the Health and Wellbeing Division of the HSE is focused on helping people to stay healthy and well, reducing health inequalities, and protecting people from threats to their health and wellbeing. The HSE has a regional structure, consisting of nine Community Health Organisations (CHO). TPL is delivered by Health Promotion and Improvement Teams based in each CHO. The HSE provides TPL for both primary and post-primary level. Until 2018, TPL provided by the HSE was underpinned by the WHO Health Promoting Schools Framework, but after the launch of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023* (DES, 2018b), the service was aligned to support this framework. The work continues the partnership approach between the HSE, the DoE, and the Department of Health with regard to supporting health, SPHE, and RSE in schools.

Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)

JCT (www.jct.ie) is a dedicated support service of the DoE for the continuing professional development of Junior Cycle teachers in post-primary schools. JCT exists to *“inspire, support and empower teachers in the transformation of Junior Cycle education in Ireland”* (JCT Development Strategy, Building on our Achievements 2018-2021). It aims to provide high-quality and appropriate TPL to school leaders and teachers alongside high-quality teaching and learning resources. The TPL and resources provided support schools during their implementation of the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (DES, 2015b). The *Framework for Junior Cycle* was developed to allow schools and teachers to plan quality, relevant, and inclusive educational programmes for their students. It aims to improve the learning experiences of all students, especially those with SEN.

National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)

The NCGE, which was established in 1995, aims to support, develop and influence guidance policy in Ireland and to ensure quality guidance provision in both the education and training sector as part of lifelong learning for guidance professionals. The NCGE is an agency of the DoE, and informs the policy of the Department in the area of guidance. In order to support the work of guidance counsellors in both the education and FET sectors the NCGE develops and organises professional development programmes, supports innovation and pilot projects, carries out surveys and related research on guidance practice and needs, and disseminates this information to practitioners. To ensure the promotion of quality guidance practice in Ireland the NCGE work with all stakeholders in guidance and represents Ireland at meetings of the EU Commission.

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

The NCSE (www.ncse.ie) is an independent statutory body established under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 with a wide range of statutory functions. The NCSE promotes a continuum of educational provision which is inclusive and responsive, and provides an appropriate education for children, young people, and adults with SEN. The NCSE does this by providing supports to schools by building schools' capacity to support the needs of students; professional learning and support to school personnel; advice to educators, parents, and guardians; undertaking and disseminating research into special education; and by providing policy advice to the Minister for Education on special education issues. Recent initiatives have included the School Inclusion Model, developing online resources and materials that include supports for the Summer Programme, and a role in relation to supporting the development of Irish Sign Language in schools.

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

NEPS is the psychological service of the DoE, providing a range of psychological services to primary, post-primary, and special schools. NEPS psychologists work in partnership with teachers, parents, and children in identifying educational needs and they offer a range of services aimed at meeting these needs. They work with the whole school community and are concerned with learning, behaviour, social, and emotional development. In common with psychological services in other countries and in keeping with best practice, NEPS has a key role in empowering teachers to intervene effectively with all students, in particular with students who present with SEN and concerns in relation to well-being, ranging from mild to severe and transient to enduring. NEPS works closely with schools to bring about systemic change and to engage in preventative work to reduce the numbers of students who may experience barriers to education. NEPS offer a range of TPL programmes in a multitude of areas, including wellbeing. Psychologists deliver a range of evidence-based training programmes and short workshops to teachers in both primary and post-primary schools. As part of commitments under the

Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 (DES, 2016c), NEPS are delivering four TPL programmes (FRIENDS, Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management, Responding to Critical Incidents, and Student Support Teams).

National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT)

The NIPT (www.teacherinduction.ie) is a dedicated support service managed by Dublin West Education Centre and funded by the DoE Teacher Education Section.

NIPT aims to support the induction of primary and post-primary NQTs into the teaching profession in line with the requirements of the DoE and the policies of the Teaching Council on induction and the continuum of teacher education including *Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework* (The Teaching Council, 2017). Droichead builds on the foundations set down during the ITE phase of the continuum, and paves the way for teachers' subsequent professional development and growth. The work of NIPT is directed by the Droichead Induction Planning Group which is convened by the Teaching Council.

Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)

Similar to the NIPT, the PDST (www.pdst.ie) is also funded by the Teacher Education Section of the DoE and managed by Dublin West Education Centre. The PDST is the largest single support service in Ireland offering professional development opportunities to school leaders and teachers in a wide range of educational, pedagogical, and curricular areas. The PDST aims to support school improvement by fostering reflective practice through the SSE process. The PDST also aims to assist the professional development of teachers and school leaders through a range of professional development models.



www.erc.ie