



**An Roinn Oideachais**  
Department of Education

**An Chomhairle**  
**Mhúinteoireachta**   
The Teaching Council

# The Teaching Council & Department of Education Cosán Stakeholder Event 2021 Summary Report

October 2021

# Introduction

The [Cosán Stakeholder Event](#), 14 October 2021, built upon a similar event held in October 2019. This joint Teaching Council (TC) and Department of Education (DoE) event aimed to highlight the strategic importance of Cosán in the education system and the progress made to date. It also launched the [Cosán Action Plan](#), which details the next steps in the systemic implementation of Cosán.

A recording of this event may be accessed [here](#).

This report comprises of four sections, outlined as follows:

- Section One outlines attendance and participation.
- Section Two summarises key elements of the event programme:
  - opening remarks and welcomes;
  - the launch of the [Cosán Action Plan](#);
  - presentation by Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI) and Cosán facilitators;
  - keynote speaker Professor Copley in conversation with Tomás Ó Ruairc;
  - [‘Cosán in Context’ vignettes](#)
  - teacher and school leader discussion panels;
  - main panel discussion.
- Section Three briefly illustrates attendees’ post-event feedback.
- Section Four provides a brief conclusion.

# 1. Attendance

Figures regarding overall registration, attendance, attendance rate, and number of questions asked are presented in Table 1 below.

<b>Table 1. Attendance &amp; participation</b>	
<b>Registered</b>	<b>n = 135</b>
<b>Attended</b>	<b>n = 114</b>
<b>Attendance rate</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>No. questions asked</b>	<b>15</b>

135 people registered for the Cosán Stakeholder Event, of which 114 attended. An attendance rate of 85% was recorded, evidence of high-level audience engagement throughout the three-hour event. 15 questions were asked via Zoom's Q&A function, with additional audience interaction supported via [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com). See both Menti questions and a link to responses below.

- As a system leader, what are the biggest challenges teachers face in engaging with reflective practice?
- In coming to this event, what questions do you have about supporting teachers in engaging with reflective practice?

Please click [here](#) for a link to responses.

## 2. Event Summary

A summary of the key elements from the event programme are outlined below.

### 2.1 Opening remarks

Carmel Kearns (MC; TC) introduced Martin McLoughlin (DoE) who welcomed attendees and provided an overview of the running order. Mr. McLoughlin stated he was looking forward to the launch of the [Cosán Action Plan](#), and the opportunity to hear more from Cosán facilitators and workshop participants regarding the application of the Cosán Framework.

Seán McMahon (Chair of TC) provided opening remarks, commending the work of all concerned regarding the development of the Cosán workshop series. Mr. McMahon also stated the systemic implementation of Cosán is one of the key strategic goals in the Teaching Council's latest strategic plan.

### 2.2 Launch of Cosán Action Plan

Deirdre Shanley (DoE) launched the [Cosán Action Plan](#), acknowledging the significant level of engagement between the Department of Education and Teaching Council to date. Ms. Shanley referenced the Department of Education's desire to further align Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) programmes with the Cosán Framework and promote the teaching profession's continued engagement with the Framework, while fostering a culture of learning and reflection in schools, for the benefit of all. Ms. Shanley also noted Cosán will be included as a key action in the DoE's 2022 Action Plan.

### 2.3 Overview of Cosán Workshops Series

Catherine Doolan (ESCI) presented an overview of the Cosán Workshop Programme. This included the background to the series; the practicalities involved; and progress to date (series one in 6 education centres; series two in 12 education centres; series three in 18 education centres).

Cosán facilitators and teachers Kieran McTaggart and Evin Devenney provided a high-level overview of the key learning intentions and content delivered during workshop 1, 2 and 3.

Ms. Doolan closed this piece by highlighting key steps moving forward regarding Cosán Workshop Series 3 and the ongoing support and guidance the ESCI will continue to provide teachers and school leaders across the country.

## 2.4 Keynote speaker

Professor Brendan Copley (University of South Wales) engaged in a highly informative and thought-provoking discussion with Tomás Ó Ruairc (TC) regarding the benefits of reflective practice. Several key points were made regarding the concept of reflective practice, some of which are briefly summarised below.

- The self is key with respect to our growth as educators, particularly through experiential learning, which may be considered very relevant in the context of reflective practice.
- Reflective practice is a nuanced concept, and a level of re-education is required regarding this in all industries or sectors. Effectively communicating what reflective practice can achieve for all is important.
- It is not always positive to focus on problem solving and reflection as this may lead to deficit-based behaviours. We reflect to grow, focusing on the positive as well as the challenges. Linking reflective practice to human flourishing is recommended.
- Reflective practice should be more than simply an evaluation of practice.
- Attendees also engaged during this discussion via [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com). They were asked *“As a system leader, what are the biggest challenges teachers face in engaging with reflective practice?”*
  - Attendee feedback broadly referenced the central challenges as follows: a lack of time and space; cultural barriers in school; insufficient awareness and recognition regarding the benefits of reflective practice.

*The discussion continued, framed in the context of attendee feedback noted in the previous point.*

- Professor Cropley suggested we aim to reflect to protect and support ourselves, proposing that we aim to choose one thing each week to reflect on, rather than casting too wide a net.
- Many meetings are held in organisations which are often unnecessary. These could be shortened or cancelled to provide enhanced time for reflective practice.
- Slow learning is key, so we should look for marginal gains to enhance and grow, consistently and sustainably.
- We need to reassess our interpretation of what performance and progress mean, and what they look like. Identifying inclusive means of recognition regarding formal and informal learning is important, crafting knowledge and professional knowledge is essential, and reflection is key to making sense of all this, which is particularly important when working with people.
- Teachers know what good teaching and learning looks like. We need to provide more opportunities for educators to share their knowledge and skills with each other, which can enhance all educators in what they do.
- Systems leaders must strive to build this further within their programmes of work moving forward.
- There is no one approach to reflective practice; systems leaders need to choose an approach that works best for each context.

## 2.5 Cosán in Context

Two separate teacher and school leader panel discussions were next on the agenda, and four short [vignettes](#) were also played during the segment. These are now briefly summarised below.

### 2.5.1 Teachers' Voice

Kathleen Foley moderated a conversation with fellow Cosán facilitators and teachers Emily Anne Doyle, Martina McNamara and Bernie Tobin. The questions asked, and a summary of responses, are provided below.

*How would you describe your experience of facilitating Cosán workshops?*

- A very satisfying and rewarding experience. Fantastic to see how easily workshop participants map their learning to the Cosán framework, the flexibility of which is key.

- Context is important regarding the implementation of education policy. The Cosán Framework and workshop series provide teachers and leaders with the autonomy to engage in learning relative to their needs, and students' needs.
- A very enriching, empowering, and reaffirming experience.

*What have your key takeaways been from the process regarding impact on participants?*

- Enhancing awareness, recognising, and affirming the learning teachers engage in, and celebrating these facts. Teacher autonomy is a cornerstone of the Cosán framework.
- Online professional learning is a game-changer, and while face-to-face workshops are important, enhanced accessibility via online workshops is essential.
- Curiosity regarding where Cosán is moving toward in the future, and a call for enhanced spread and scale moving forward, as illustrated in the Cosán Action Plan.

### 2.5.2 Cosán in Context vignettes

Four [vignettes](#) recorded in advance with Cosán facilitators and workshop participants were played for the audience. These provided real-life examples of how teachers apply the principles of Cosán in their various contexts. Carmel Kearns (MC; TC) reiterated that these examples portray what Cosán could look like, not should, and interacted with each person after their vignette played. A summary of this interaction is provided below.

- Stephanie Leonard (teacher & facilitator) noted that school cultures which are safe and inclusive are key to developing a reflective, collaborative culture. Leadership plays an important role in building trust.
- Aaron Purcell (teacher & workshop participant) stated the Cosán workshops impacted positively on Rush N.S. and aligned closely with supports ongoing in the system. Authentic reflection is important and online supports can be built upon to further strengthen the impact of reflection in education moving forward.
- Karen Ryan (teacher & facilitator) mentioned the importance of a slow and steady approach to professional learning in Bray Institute of Further Education (BIFE). Being time efficient and moving at the appropriate pace was key to creating the culture of collaboration and reflection which exists in the college.

- Ciara Ní Dhrisceoil (teacher and workshop participant) stated Cosán workshops had a very positive impact on her and colleagues, supporting the potential for professional learning in the school's context.

### 2.5.3 Leaders' Voice

Sharon Coffey (principal & facilitator) moderated a conversation with fellow school leaders and Cosán facilitators Katrina Guiney (deputy principal), Liz Shinnors (deputy principal), and workshop participant Anne Marie Moylan (principal). The questions asked and a summary of responses provided is provided below.

*“What impact has the Cosán workshop series, and its focus on collaborative reflective practice, had on you and your school community?”*

- Adapting to the school's culture is key. It is essential to recognise the professionalism of teachers and trust them in their own practice.
- Reflective responsibility is truly enriching, with time and trust key ingredients. Cosán started as a ripple, and the ripples became waves.
- Moving from independence toward inter-dependence is an essential point for consideration.

*“How will you continue to support colleagues in sharing their learning, in a way that is sustainable?”*

- Look inwards for expertise before looking outside the school.
- Sustainability is all about systems and supporting pathways for continued growth is essential.
- Providing solutions for teachers is key and collaboration supports this greatly.

## 2.6 Panel Discussion with Q&A

Carmel Kearns (MC) chaired a final panel discussion with Q&A.

Panel members included Tomás Ó Ruairc (TC), Deirdre Shanley (DoE), Prof. Brendan Cropley, Dr Siobhán Kavanagh (ESCI), and Therese Eagers (Post-primary teacher & Cosán Facilitator).

A brief summary of the main points raised during the discussion are outlined below.



- Deirdre Shanley noted the event was significant from the DoE's perspective as it brought Cosán alive in terms of what it means and how it influences practice on the ground. The Cosán Action Plan is a commitment on the part of the DoE and TC, and the next phase of Cosán is a valuable and important stage as Cosán will be a core part of the overall framework for teachers, leaders and stakeholders moving forward. It is clear Cosán has fostered a sense of collaborative learning.
- Therese Eagers noted that there are a lot of actions in the Cosán Action Plan, so we know the 'what', but the detail of the 'how' will be important. She also noted that teachers speaking to teachers is key and she said that she takes away a sense of validation from this event, a sense of having one's voice heard.
- Tomás Ó Ruairc noted the importance of listening to all feedback, to step back, distill the feedback collaboratively and devise the pathway moving forward. Education is people helping people to learn and this is something all stakeholders need to celebrate and embrace, with the Cosán Stakeholder Event a powerful example of this.
- Professor Brendan Cropley noted that reflection is not about adding something new in, it is about adding to our way of being and doing. A sense of connection and belonging is key to what this stakeholder event spoke to.
- Dr Siobhán Kavanagh noted that we need to model the language of Cosán and reflective practice more broadly. Teachers' voice has informed the Cosán development process from the beginning and this event built further on this. Cosán will become part of the climate and culture of all concerned with teachers' learning moving forward.

## 3. Attendee post-event feedback

Attendees were provided an opportunity to submit anonymous feedback post-event. This is summarised below under four key themes: impact; connecting and understanding Cosán; key highlights; and future event development.

Feedback was very positive, providing important points for consideration regarding future Cosán Stakeholder Events.

### 3.1 Impact

Attendees were asked *“Did you find the event to be an enriching learning experience?”*

21 responses were provided, all were positively framed indicating the event provided an enriching learning experience.

A sample of the feedback is outlined below.

*“superb”*

*“Yes, in particular, Brendan was inspiring.”*

*“Absolutely, so much teacher voice and so many wonderful considerations for progressing”*

*“Very empowering and informative to my own school context”*

*“Yes. Great variety of speakers and experience.”*

*“It was an extremely rich learning experience. Prof. Cropley’s perspectives were of particular interest to me as he maintains a focus on the importance and value of RP for human growth and flourishing. This well-being foundation is key.”*

### 3.2 Connecting and understanding Cosán

Attendees were asked *“As a result of the event, do you have a better understanding of the how and where Cosán connects with your work in supporting teachers’ learning?”*

19 responses were provided, once again all positive, indicating enhanced connection with and understanding of Cosán was achieved.

A sample of responses may be reviewed below.

*“Yes, from listening to so many teachers in other school contexts, it deepens my understanding of the framework and how it is flexible to various schools”*

*“Yes. Very well explained.”*

*“It was spot on, perfect.”*

*“Yes - the links with the approach to teaching and learning in the Framework for JC are very clear and also with our tenets for design of JCT CPD.”*

*“Yes, it was really interesting to hear how it empowers schools and teachers, to have autonomy over the type of CPD they engage...”*

*“Yes it was a very informative 3 hours. Great to see all the different perspectives”*

### **3.3 Key highlights**

Attendees were asked to *“Please tell us what you most liked about the event?”*

22 responses were provided reference the wide variety of highlights enjoyed by many attendees.

These include: the Cosán in Context vignettes and teacher/school leader panel discussions; Professor Brendan Cropley’s contributions; enhanced understanding of the power of reflective practice; and the value the event provided to support services in attendance.

A sample of the comments provided are outlined below.

*“Hearing from the schools/teachers that have used Cosán to drive their schools forward”*

*“Perhaps those parts of today could be shared on the various websites \*TC, ESCI, PDST, NIPT etc.) under a Cosán tab to get to a wider audience”*

*“The importance of ‘acting on reflection’ in order to make it worthwhile and valuable”*

*“Prof. Brendan Cropley’s contribution and the sharing of practice especially from the teacher in Killorglin.” “The variety of speakers was also interesting and all the contributions added to the richness of the event.” “There was an honesty evident in the information shared.”*

*“The film examples and feedback from teachers and facilitators”*

*“Everything! It was excellent; guest speaker was really good; stories from schools gave a wonderful insight; panel discussion was good too. Great to see the key role of the various stakeholders highlighted.”*

*“While Brendan was inspiring, I loved the reality of teachers endeavours and experiences.”*

*“I enjoyed hearing the different perspectives from the stakeholders. I found the four personal reflective journeys presented so clearly and honestly very rich.”*

*“The variety of voices from teachers, principals and co-ordinators, the DE and the expert guest and the corresponding range of perspectives contributed to providing a comprehensive vision of reflection. It was good, I think, that while the voice of the support services was missing from the day, the listening role of the support services at the event was valued by teachers and was empowering for them - and that is as it should be. It also provided insights for us in our role.”*

*“I really enjoyed listening to Prof. Brendan Cropley and to the Cosán facilitators, to the practicing teaching talking about the what, how and why”.*

### **3.4 Future event development**

Attendees were asked to *“Please share your ideas as to how we could improve future Cosán Stakeholder Events.”*

22 responses were provided which will be considered in advance of future events.

Feedback referred to a desire for enhanced teacher and school involvement; enhanced time for the keynote speaker; a move to face-to-face events; enhanced connectivity with attendees via the chat function and breakout rooms; a suggestion to reduce the content and break the event into two smaller, separate events; and improved gender balance across discussion panels.

A sample of the feedback is outlined below.

*“I would have liked to hear more from the keynote speaker. I thought the 'in conversation with' mode of presentation worked well with the facilitators and Principals but not so well with Tomas and the Professor as I would rather have heard more from the research underpinning the approach.”*

*“Reverting to face-to-face will be great although clear benefits too from the online platform!*

*More input from the schools!”*

*“Breakout rooms for deeper conversations and integration of the content ”*

*“Keep developing workshops working on the graphics such as the overall framework as teachers can identify and relate to Cosán better that way,”*

*“I thought the real-life experience of teachers was so impactful so I would like to see more of that”*

*“You really can't! This was excellent. Maybe consider enabling the chat more to enable participants to be more involved.”*

*“Everyone who spoke added value to the event - but perhaps slightly less is more?”*

*“Better gender balance please across different sections of conversation.”*

## 4. Conclusion

Carmel Kearns delivered closing remarks, thanking all contributors and attendees for their engagement and time, noting the Cosán Action Plan will act as a springboard for the transition of Cosán from development phase to growth phase. The action points are key to the further growth of Cosán and Ms. Kearns called on stakeholders to collectively take ownership of the Cosán Action Plan and reflect on how and where these actions can be integrated into their work. To that end, the Teaching Council would be happy to engage with support services and discuss any ideas and suggestions they might have.