Cosán

Framework for Teachers' Learning

An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta
The Teaching Council

March 2016

"Teachers need an outlet to showcase what they have achieved. Schools are good at celebrating the successes of their students, but are still reticent about applauding the successes of teachers … Let us see a celebration of what we have achieved. Let it feel prestigious and let it hold value. Let us find ways to link up research projects across the country and expand the dialogue … Creative professional development deserves to be acknowledged and applauded."[1]

Owen, 2014

1   Owen, L. (2014). "Continuing Professional Development: can it ever be creative?" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.). *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality.* London: RSA Action and Research Centr. p. 62.

Foreword

Teaching is about teaching, but it is also about learning.

Teachers know that teaching does not happen until others learn.

As professionals, teachers also understand that sustained professional practice rests on their own professional learning. It is the hallmark of the teaching profession that its members continue to learn so that they can continue to teach.
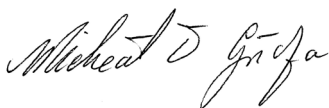
As the statutory professional standards body for teaching, the Teaching Council is mandated in law to both promote and regulate the profession. In this context, since its establishment in 2006 the Council has been building a framework of standards for all stages of teachers' learning, including initial teacher education and induction (*Droichead*). These standards have been designed to reassure both the profession and the wider public that teachers' learning is of high quality and is able to adapt and respond to the evolving learning needs of children, young people and adult learners.

Cosán, the new national framework for teachers' learning, is the next step in this development of professional standards.

In choosing *Cosán* as the title for the first national framework for teachers' learning, the Teaching Council is clarifying that teachers' learning is an ongoing process. Teachers know that they need to continue to learn as professionals so that they can empower students to be the best learners they can be.

Cosán recognises that teachers are already committed to their professional learning. It acknowledges the many ways in which teachers have told us that they learn. It thus provides a clear and accessible framework for that ongoing professional learning to be recognised, in the context of teachers' status as registered professionals. It also provides a clear context for new conversations to happen about teaching and learning, between teachers, parents, students, and all stakeholders.

This publication of *Cosán* now paves the way for a period of research, led by teachers, which will inform national implementation of the framework. The Council looks forward to working with the Department of Education and Skills, and education stakeholders, in working towards this goal.

Micheál Ó Gríofa

Cathaoirleach
Chairperson

Tomás Ó Ruairc

Stiúrthóir
Director

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1 Introduction

The concept of life-long learning in the teaching profession has been endorsed by educationalists and teachers for many years. Wiliam (2011), for example, advocates for an explicit expectation that teaching should be a learning profession:

"Teaching is such a complex craft that one lifetime is not enough to master it…, but by rigorously focusing on their classroom practice, teachers can continue to improve throughout their career. Therefore, we need a commitment from teachers — not one to attend a certain number of hours of professional development per year but a career-long commitment to the continuous improvement of classroom practice, as well as an agreement to develop their practice in ways that are likely to improve outcomes for students".[2]

With the concept of life-long learning in mind, the Council set out its intentions with regard to teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) in 2011, as part of its *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*. In particular, it stated its intention "to work towards a position, following the adoption of a coherent national framework for CPD … where renewal of registration with the Teaching Council will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory evidence in relation to engagement in CPD".[3]

Five years later, based on feedback from teachers and other stakeholders during a comprehensive consultation process, the Council is now publishing this *Cosán* framework for teachers' learning. The name *Cosán*, the Irish word for pathway, has been chosen to reflect the fact that learning is, fundamentally, a journey, and one in which the act of travelling on that journey is more important than the destination. In other words, *Cosán* is about steady and ongoing progress, rather than elusive perfection. It marks the continuation of a journey that all teachers begin in initial teacher education (ITE), and builds on the progress made in *Droichead*, the new model of induction, which will be available to all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) from 2018/2019.

Cosán is a flexible framework, which provides a long-awaited opportunity to affirm the value of teachers' learning and acknowledge the full range of learning activities that teachers undertake for their own benefit and that of their students. It also recognises the fact that professional learning is "part and parcel of a teacher's working life",[4] and that teachers have demonstrated enormous goodwill and flexibility, particularly in recent years, when many of the traditional supports and incentives were no longer available to them. It has been developed having regard to the values that underpin all of the Council's work, i.e., shared professional responsibility, collective professional confidence and professionally-led regulation.

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2   Wiliam, D. (2011). "How do we prepare students for a world we cannot imagine?" *Available at:* http://www.dylanwiliam.org/Dylan_Wiliams_website/Papers_files/Salzburg%20Seminar%20talk.doc. Last accessed: 10 April 2015.

3   The Teaching Council. (2011). *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*. Kildare: The Teaching Council. p. 19.

4   Sherrington, T. (2014). "What's the incentive? Systems and culture in a school context". In: Hallgarten, A., Bamfield, L., & McCarthy, K. (eds.). *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action Research Centre. p. 79.

Through *Cosán*, the Council is seeking to foster a culture of "powerful professional learning" based on teachers' active engagement in their own learning, for their benefit and that of their students. It reflects the Council's understanding of the ways in which teachers learn, based on what teachers have told us. It also reflects our thinking as to how that learning can be acknowledged and quality assured, for the benefit of teachers and their students. It must be remembered, however, that how teachers will engage with it and enhance the public's understanding of the importance of their learning has yet to be worked out. This can be done by teachers, working in partnership with other stakeholders. Therefore, now that *Cosán* has been approved by the Council, a development process will begin, through which teachers can begin to determine what the framework will look like for them, their students, classrooms and schools, in the context of the time and resources available to them, and their personal and professional circumstances. The development phase will also explore how engagement in ongoing learning can be supported by structures, resources and processes at national, regional and local level, and linked with registration in a way that is appropriate and sustainable.

2 Background

2.1. Policy background

Teachers' lifelong learning and career development is a key priority internationally and within the EU. CPD, in particular, is perceived as critical in ensuring that teachers are prepared to meet the challenges of expanding fields of knowledge, diverse student populations, higher social expectations of schools and new types of responsibilities. Sustained opportunities to reflect on the processes of learning, teaching and assessment are seen as central to ensuring quality in the development of a profession that is responsive to emerging needs, and to school improvement. The best systems would appear to tend increasingly towards more teacher-led and less provider-driven CPD, allowing considerable teacher autonomy as regards choice (although this is not unfettered and there is also an expectation that supported CPD should address school and system needs).

There have been significant developments in thinking in relation to learning, assessment and leadership. Key among these beliefs are:

- that opportunities to learn are inseparable from the context, relationships and views of valued knowledge

- that formative assessment is crucial to learning

- that all teachers are leaders and

- that participation by teachers in communities of practice enables them to extend their expertise.

These developments challenge traditional practices, and require shifts in teachers' thinking, which in turn necessitate rich opportunities for teacher learning. It follows, therefore, that teachers should be supported in taking responsibility for their own learning, that individual and collaborative reflection should be encouraged, and that teachers' ongoing learning, individually and collaboratively, should be recognised.

Taking account of all of the above, and informed by research and extensive consultation, a *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* was published in 2011 by the Teaching Council.

The policy provides the important definition for teachers' professional learning: "Continuing professional development (CPD) refers to life-long teacher learning and comprises the full range of educational experiences designed to enrich teachers' professional knowledge, understanding and capabilities throughout their careers".[5] The policy also sets out the Teaching Council's position with regard to the development of a coherent national framework for teachers' ongoing professional learning.

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5   The Teaching Council. (2011). *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*. Kildare: The Teaching Council. p. 19.

The *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* (2012) also provides an important backdrop. The latter sets out high-level standards in relation to teachers' learning. It states that teachers should take personal responsibility for sustaining and improving the quality of their professional practice by:

o   actively maintaining their professional knowledge and understanding to ensure that it is current

o   reflecting on and critically evaluating their professional practice, in light of their professional knowledge base and

o   availing of opportunities for career-long professional development.

Further valuable information on the policy context, and on the provision of CPD in Ireland and internationally, is available in the Council's background document, Teacher Education in Ireland and Internationally (2010).[6]

As the quality of student learning depends as much on teachers' learning as on their teaching, this is a fundamental issue for every teacher, for every school, for every organisation or association with an involvement in education, and for Irish society more broadly.

2.2. Consultation process

In order to find out more about teachers' experiences of professional learning, and to inform the development of a national framework for teachers' learning, a comprehensive consultation process was devised by the Teaching Council. The first phase, which took place in late 2014, was a unique process in that it did not involve the Council consulting on a prepared draft of the framework. Rather, it invited teachers' initial views before the drafting process commenced. In that way, it left the shape and content of the framework in the hands of the profession. This was an entirely new approach for the Council, and for many teachers also, and one which proved to be effective, and which fostered rich professional conversations and generated valuable data. In doing so, the process enabled the voice of teachers to shape the language and structures that will keep learning in its rightful place — at the heart of the teaching profession.

In May 2015, the Council published the first draft of the *Cosán* framework and began the next phase of consultation. That phase concluded in December 2015.

Between them, both phases involved a range of consultation mechanisms, including workshops in Education Centres and at school level, online surveys, stakeholder meetings and feedback by email to a dedicated email address. Full details of the consultation process are available in the background paper on the Council's website.

Having regard to all feedback received, the draft framework was revised and this updated framework was approved by Council on 15 February 2016. During the next phase of policy development, teachers will apply the framework in their particular context, and their feedback from that process will inform the ongoing evolution of the framework.

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6   The Teaching Council. (2010). *Teacher Education in Ireland and Internationally*. Kildare: The Teaching Council.

3 Values and principles underpinning the proposals in this paper

Teachers' practice is underpinned by four ethical values, which are set out in the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*. They are:

o   respect

o   care

o   integrity

o   trust.

As teachers' learning is as fundamental to their practice as their teaching, these values are also of central importance in this framework.

In addition, the work of the Council is underpinned by the values of shared professional responsibility, collective professional confidence and professionally-led regulation. Taking all of these values into account, *Cosán* is rooted in the principles set out below. The Council calls on all stakeholders to build on the spirit of partnership that has underpinned its policy development since its establishment, in ensuring that these principles become a living reality in the ongoing work of teaching and learning that is at the heart of all schools.

3.1   *Cosán* will recognise teachers as autonomous and responsible learning professionals

Adult learning theories conclude that effective learning is an active rather than a passive process, and that professional learning cannot occur if teachers are passive recipients instead of active participants.[7] Central to *Cosán*, therefore, is a vision of teachers as professionals who are intrinsically motivated to take ownership of their professional development and steer the course of their own learning journeys. *Cosán* will respect the professionalism of teachers and allow them to exercise autonomy in identifying, and engaging in, the types of professional learning opportunities that benefit them and their students most. In turn, professional learning should further enhance teachers' professional autonomy.

The concept of professional autonomy is closely related to that of professional responsibility, as both are based on the premise that teachers, as professionals, are trusted and also committed to act in the interests of others. This concept emerged strongly from teachers' feedback and it is clear that they are seeking a framework that will "trust teachers' professionalism" and "allow responsible professional judgement from individual teachers/staff…".

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7   Lieberman, A. (1995). "Practices that support Teacher Development" in: *Phi Delta Kappan*, 00317217, 76 (8), pp. 591–596.

3.2   *Cosán* will be a flexible framework

Teachers' learning should be linked to teachers' needs, students' needs and school needs, and differentiated to suit the culture and context of teachers' work. The teaching profession is not a homogeneous group and the framework for teachers' learning takes account of "teachers' individual career patterns, their priorities and their stage in life",[8] as well as teachers' values, emotions, motivation and professional confidence. *Cosán* has an inherent flexibility to take account of all of these variables, while simultaneously enabling the needs of the students, the school and the system to be met.

3.3   *Cosán* will facilitate teachers in identifying and pursuing relevant learning opportunities

A frequent criticism of CPD programmes is that they treat teachers' professional development as an activity distinct from teachers' daily work, which both limits their effectiveness and restricts the opportunities for schools to benefit from teachers' learning.[9] As part of their feedback to the Council, teachers have highlighted the importance of learning opportunities being relevant. Teachers in one Education Centre summed this up by saying that "it must be real". They are seeking opportunities to engage in learning that is relevant to both their needs and those of their pupils, having regard to their sector, career stage and, in the case of post-primary teachers, their subject(s). By allowing for a significant measure of choice and autonomy, *Cosán* will ensure that the learning is relevant to teachers and their learning needs.

3.4   *Cosán* will facilitate teachers in identifying opportunities for quality learning, and will allow for innovative approaches to quality assurance

An extensive research literature shows that professional development is most effective in improving teachers' instructional practice and contributing to student learning when it is continuous and sustained, and closely connected to the work of teachers in the classroom, when it fosters teacher professional collaboration, and when it coherently relates to broader school reform efforts.[10]

By recognising the importance of teachers' role in assuring the quality of their learning, *Cosán* will ensure that that learning is relevant to them in the context of their classrooms and their schools, and effective in meeting their professional and personal learning needs. See section 9 for further details.

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8   Stoll, L., Fink, D., & Earl, L.M. (2003). *It's About Learning (and It's About Time): What's in it for Schools?* London: Routledge Falmer.

9   OECD. (2005). Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers. Paris: OECD.

10   Wei, Darling-Hammond, *et al.*, (2009); Darling-Hammond & Richardson, (2009); Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, (2001); Elmore & Burney, (1997) as referenced in: Burns, D. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2014). *Teaching Around the World: What Can TALIS Tell Us?* California: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. p. 27.

3.5 *Cosán* will recognise the importance of teachers having access to rich and varied learning opportunities

Teaching Council policy states that professional learning (CPD) is a right and a responsibility for all teachers.[11] In that context, it is vital that teachers have access to appropriate opportunities to engage in formal and informal professional learning. In stating this, it is recognised that the concept of access, particularly as it applies to more formal learning opportunities, is complex, and can have cost, time, linguistic and geographical dimensions. The most commonly articulated reason for insufficient engagement in professional learning by teachers is lack of time[12] and this was highlighted by many teachers who engaged in the consultation.

The Council believes that all teachers are entitled to dedicated space and time for individual and collaborative learning and reflection on same. Teachers also have a parallel responsibility to avail of that time for learning when it is made available to them. The Council recognises the value of sabbaticals or other forms of leave, such as those available in New Zealand, whereby teachers might engage in research, exchange programmes or other types of professional learning activities, which would support them as researchers and reflective practitioners.

The Council calls on all stakeholders with a responsibility in this area to work together to carve out a professional space within which teachers' learning is valued by teachers and others. In doing so, the Council restates its policy position that professional learning should be supported by appropriate structures, resources and processes at national, regional and local level, and that it is the primary responsibility and direct role of the State, in co-operation with the Council, to support high-quality teacher education. It also emphasises the importance of effective school leadership and management, in fostering a culture of professional learning and engagement, and actively supporting teachers' engagement in learning at school level.

3.6. *Cosán* will provide a long-awaited opportunity for teachers and stakeholders to formally acknowledge and recognise teachers' learning

More than half of the responses from the consultation workshops with teachers reflected a belief that a lack of recognition or accreditation contributed to a negative experience of CPD. Owen has argued that "teachers need an outlet to showcase what they have achieved. Schools are good at celebrating the successes of their students, but are still reticent about applauding the successes of teachers … Let us see a celebration of what we have achieved. Let it feel prestigious and let it hold value. Let us find ways to link up research projects across the country and expand the dialogue … Creative professional development deserves to be acknowledged and applauded".[13] This was echoed in the call made by teachers in one Education Centre for the Council to "positively promote the excellence and high standards and dedication of teachers".

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11   The Teaching Council. (2011). *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*. Kildare: The Teaching Council. p. 10.

12   Villegas-Reimers, E. (2003). *Teacher Professional Development: an international review of the literature*. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning. p. 125.

13   Owen, L. (2014). "Continuing Professional Development: can it ever be creative?" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.). *Licensed to Create*: *Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre. p. 63.

By developing this framework, the Council is publicly acknowledging the many ways in which teachers already strive to keep their subject knowledge current, and demonstrate their commitment to their learning on an ongoing basis. Through its accreditation role, the Council will play a key role in assuring teachers and the public as to the quality of that ongoing learning. In the words of one teacher, "If the CPD is accredited, then it gains value inwardly and outwardly". It is noteworthy, however, that *Cosán* also recognises teachers' important role in assuring the quality of their own learning. Further details are set out in section 9.

3.7. *Cosán* will facilitate teachers in valuing their learning, and in prioritising learning that benefits them and their pupils

The impact of teachers' learning on their practice, their students, their schools or the wider education system was widely debated during the consultation process. Teachers highlighted the importance of their learning having a practical focus, with one school noting that professional learning "must enhance our teaching and learning in the classrooms". Wiliam echoes this, noting that the extent of participation in professional development alone is not sufficient to determine its effectiveness. Elaborating on this point, he says that while it may seem obvious that teachers should engage in professional development that is focused on aspects of practice that benefit their pupils, many professional development activities "have been focussed on fads with little research evidence in their support".[14] He suggests that educational research can play a significant role in indicating for teachers the directions that are most likely to be impactful in terms of practice.

The Council is fully cognisant of the flexibility needed in considering the impact of teachers' learning, as this is not necessarily something that is readily measurable or limited to observable outcomes. Powell supports this stance in cautioning around impact merely concerned with quantifiable data or exclusively in terms of pupil achievements. "Teachers' judgements, insights, and reflections of what constitute significance and value in relation to their own personal, academic, and professional needs and development are equally important".[15] This broader conceptualisation of impact takes account of the fact that teachers' learning can impact on their levels of engagement, motivation and enjoyment, thereby improving their practice as individuals, and also collectively, by cultivating professional learning communities.

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14   Wiliam, D. (2014). "Teacher expertise: Why it matters, and how to get more of it" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.). *Licensed to Create*: *Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre. p. 32.

15   Powell, E., Terrell, I., Furey, S., & Scott-Evans, A. (2003). Teachers' perceptions of the impact of CPD: An institutional case study. *Journal of In-service Education, 29* (Number 3), p.399.

It is therefore intended that the development of *Cosán* will create opportunities whereby teachers can "think clearly and in an evidence-based way about the contribution of professional learning to teachers' effectiveness individually and, more importantly, collectively".[16] Such reflective processes will also facilitate teachers in considering the complex ways in which their learning can benefit their students (not just in terms of student learning outcomes, but more broadly in terms of their levels of motivation, interest, engagement, and enjoyment, etc.), school culture, and the wider school community.

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16   Cordingley, P. (2014). "Teacher licensing and collaboration: a model for developing the confidence of the profession as a whole" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.). *Licensed to Create*: *Ten essays on improving teacher quality.* London: RSA Action and Research Centre. p. 45.

4 Dimensions of teachers' learning

Based on feedback received from teachers and other stakeholders, together with a review of relevant literature, the Council considers that teachers' learning can be viewed as having many dimensions, and four key dimensions have been included in the framework:

o formal/informal

o personal/professional

o collaborative/individual

o school-based/external to the school or workplace.

It should be noted that the four dimensions are not mutually exclusive and, as illustrated in Figure 1, can combine and overlap to create an array of different learning opportunities. For example, formal learning can be either collaborative or individual, and learning opportunities often incorporate collaborative and individual elements, such as a workshop involving an individual reflection piece. Equally, collaborative learning can be formal and informal, while school-based and external learning can each be simultaneously personal and professional.

4.1. Formal and informal

Professional learning occurs at both a formal and an informal level. As part of the first phase of consultation, teachers' feedback emphasised informal learning processes as being particularly valuable, with many teachers highlighting examples such as "the learning conversations and phonecalls", and requesting that the framework would recognise "all forms of educationally enriched discussions". This is echoed by Owen who says "teachers share insights with their colleagues when they can, often in brief exchanges in the corridor, at the coffee machine or in the staff room. But formal training sessions are not always the best place for meaningful collaboration, which depends on regular networking, sharing and interrogating our ideas and finding creative solutions to collective challenges".[17]

4.2. Personal and professional

Allied to their deep interest in professional learning, teachers who participated in the Council's consultation process have expressed a strong interest in personal development. A review of relevant literature suggests that the two are inextricably linked.[18] *Cosán* has been developed in a way that recognises the interconnectedness of the two concepts, and the way in which they are mutually beneficial.

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17   Owen, L. (2014). "Continuing Professional Development: can it ever be creative?" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.). *Licensed to Create*: *Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre. p. 60.

18   Livingston, K. (2012). "Quality in teachers' professional career long development". In: Harford, Hudson & Niemi (eds.). *Quality Assurance and Teacher Education: International Challenges and expectations.* Oxford: Lang. p. 37.

4.3. Collaborative and individual

Based on feedback from teachers who attended workshops in Education Centres, collaborative teacher learning is considered to be the most important aspect of successful, positive CPD. Teachers valued the sharing of new ideas, methodologies and resources, and the support they received from colleagues. This is reflected in the work of many theorists who have argued that all learning is social and that teachers' learning should be socially constructed in an environment that supports teacher interdependency.[19]

While emphasising the importance of teachers' collaboration with other teachers, Wiliam notes that "currently, the available evidence does not support the idea that collaboration with other teachers will always be the best way for every teacher to improve his or her practice".[20] For that reason, the Council, while emphasising the importance of purposeful collaboration, recognises that individual learning also has benefits and should be recognised in *Cosán*.

Furthermore, *Cosán* is based on the premise that while teachers involved in collaboration are working towards shared professional learning goals, each will likely have identified a personalised learning pathway towards those goals.[21] These pathways will inevitably overlap from time to time (e.g., school-based professional learning, attendance at the same professional learning event), and it is at these points of intersection that teachers can strike an appropriate balance between the enhancement of their own practice as individuals on the one hand, and the creation of a responsive and dynamic community of practice on the other.

4.4. School-based and external

Much educational research has found that "…learning that is embedded in the work itself is far more powerful than de-contextualised in-service".[22]

By way of contrast, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, in its analysis of innovative professional development practices, recognised the benefits of immersive learning opportunities, which "…take people out of their normal environments and create new realities that challenge existing thinking and practice".[23]

Based on the feedback from teachers during the first phase of consultation, it is evident that they see value in both school-based learning opportunities and those which are external to the school. For that reason, *Cosán* acknowledges the value of both.

19   Stoll, Fink & Earl, (2003); Sawyer, (2006); Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, (1995).

20   Wiliam, D. (2014). "Teacher expertise: Why it matters, and how to get more of it" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.). *Licensed to Create*: *Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre. p. 33.

21   Lowrie, T. (2014). An educational practices framework: the potential for empowerment of the teaching profession. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International research and pedagogy,* 40(1), pp. 34–46 DOI: 10.1080/02607476.2013.864016.

22   Harris, A. & Lambert, L. (2003). *Building Leadership Capacity for School Improvement*. Berkshire: Open University Press. p. 92.

23   Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2014). *Global trends in professional learning and performance & development: Some implications and ideas for the Australian education system*. Melbourne: AITSL. p. 19.

Figure 1 - Dimensions of teachers' learning

Individual - Collaborative

Personal - Professional

TEACHERS' LEARNING

Formal - Informal

School-based - External

Figure 1 - Dimensions of teachers' learning

5 Teachers' learning processes

The *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* states that teachers should "take personal responsibility for sustaining and improving the quality of their professional practice by:

- actively maintaining their professional knowledge and understanding to ensure that it is current

- reflecting on and critically evaluating their professional practice, in light of their professional knowledge base and

- availing of opportunities for career-long professional development".[24]

Based on the feedback from the first phase of consultation, it is clear that teachers see value in a range of learning processes. This reflects the complexity of teaching as a profession and the findings of many educational theorists who have concluded that all individuals learn in different ways.[25]

Figure 2 highlights the types of learning processes in which teachers currently engage, drawing on a review of the literature and the feedback from the consultation process. Figure 3 provides sample learning processes under each heading. The framework will allow teachers to select a range of learning activities, which take account of their needs and personal circumstances. This approach is in line with the views of many authors, including Lowrie, who supports the concept of personalised professional learning, and Wiliam, who advocates for a greater role for teachers in determining what works well for them: "Novice teachers will, of course, need clear direction from their supervisors about which aspects of their practice should be priorities for development, but once teachers are established in their classrooms, it seems reasonable to assume that each teacher has a better idea of what will improve the learning of their students, in their classroom, in the context of what they are teaching them, than anyone else".[26]

This approach is also in line with the one of the values that underpins all of the Council's work, i.e., professionally-led regulation, and the principles relating to professional autonomy and flexibility as outlined earlier, since it allows teachers autonomy to plan their professional learning to take account of their changing needs and the changing needs of their students.

24   The Teaching Council. (2012). *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*. Kildare: The Teaching Council. p. 8.

25   Rogers, C.R. & Freiberg, H.J. (1994). *Freedom to learn.* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan College Publishing Company.

26   Wiliam, D. (2014). "Teacher expertise: Why it matters, and how to get more of it" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.). *Licensed to Create*: *Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre. p. 32.
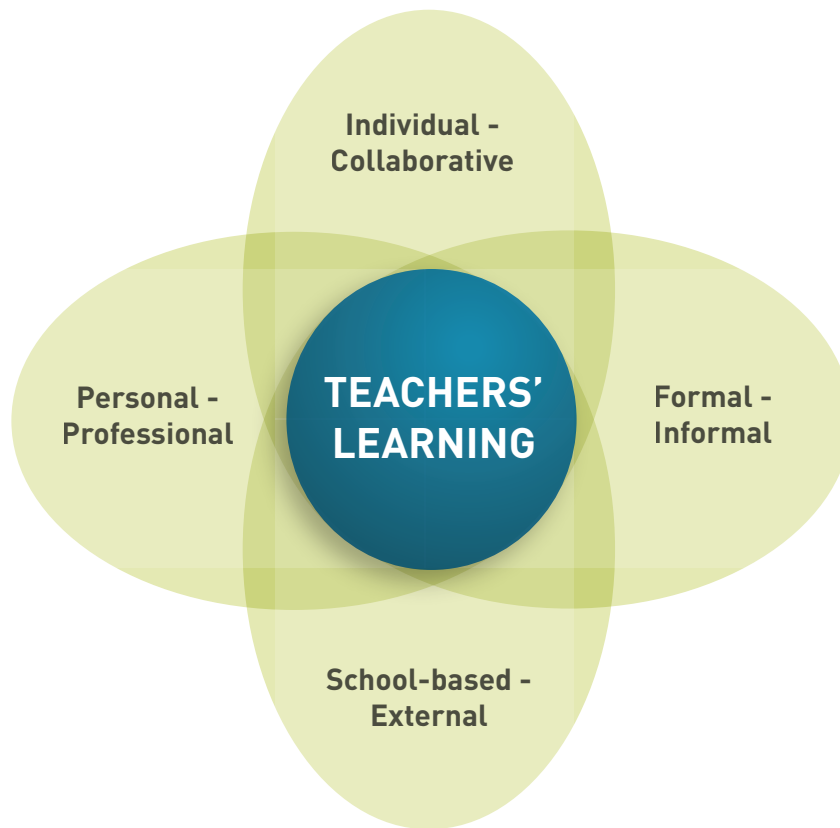
Figure 2 - Learning processes by category

Figure 2 - Learning processes by category

Figure 3 - Learning processes detailed

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Working as a Cooperating Teacher

Supporting colleagues to develop their teaching

Mentoring/ Coaching

Engaging in coaching activities

Working as a mentor or member of a professional support team

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Writing an article based on teaching or research, or otherwise contributing to a professional publication

Delivering a lecture or facilitating a workshop or other professional learning activity

Reading and professional contributions

Contributing to curriculum development, e.g., by engaging in NCCA consultative processes

Reading web-based information on teaching, learning and assessment

Reading books / articles/ research on teaching, learning and assessment

Participating in online educational debates, (eg: Twitter/EdChat.ie)

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Practice and collaboration

Developing and implementing curriculm materials

Piloting new initiatives

Action research projects

Sharing experiences with colleagues through making presentations or otherwise contributing to the knowledge base of teaching and learning

Learning through assessment

Engagement in State examination work

Engaging in team teaching

Immersive professional activities

Engaging in an externship in an industry or other external setting which is relevant to my role as a teacher

Engaging in a study visit

Overseas volunteering

Availing of a secondment opportunity with a teacher education provider, support service, etc.

Research

Participation in a researchmeet or other research event

Research carried out as part of an academic programme

Action research

Membership of a research engagement group

Courses, programmes, workshops and other events

Engaging in courses, both internal and external to the school

Participating at a conference or workshop, researchmeet, etc.

Attending lectures or seminars

Engaging in post-graduate academic studies

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

6 Learning areas

Because teaching is complex, the breadth of teachers' learning is extensive. The Council has sought to capture that breadth in the six headings below. It is intended that, in planning their learning pathways, teachers will choose a combination of learning processes that best meet their learning needs under each of these headings.

Leading learning - This heading would include, for example, teachers' learning related to subject knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, assessment, leadership, etc.

Inclusion - This heading would include learning related to any aspect of inclusion. The Council interprets inclusion in broad terms and, in that context, this heading could include any aspect of teachers' learning aimed at improving their capacity to address and respond to the diversity of students' needs; enable participation in learning, cultures and communities; and, remove barriers within and to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements to enable each student to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school.[27]

Well-being - The Council interprets well-being in broad terms, which encompass student well-being as well as teachers' own well-being. Students' well-being is at the heart of every school community, and is vital for their ability to access teaching and learning. Equally, the Council recognises the importance of care of self so as to be able to care for others and, in that context, teachers' well-being is vital if they are to effectively lead learning, and support and facilitate students in this endeavour. Taking all of this into account, this heading could include any aspect of teachers' learning, individually or in collaboration with other teachers or co-professionals, aimed at improving their capacity to foster a culture, ethos and environment that promote dynamic, optimal development and flourishing, for all in the school community. It can incorporate cultural, academic, social, emotional, physical or technological dimensions, with a particular focus on resilience.

ICT - This heading would include learning that develops teachers' capacity to use ICT for enhancing teaching and learning. It would include learning related to the use of ICT to develop learners' key skills, as a tool across the curriculum, and as a tool for accessing and engaging in research.

Literacy and numeracy - In keeping with national learning priorities, this heading would include learning related to expanded considerations of literacy and numeracy. In this respect literacy can be interpreted as "the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication, including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media. Numeracy is not limited to the ability to use numbers … (as) … it (further) encompasses the ability to use mathematical understanding and skills to solve problems and meet the demands of day-to-day living in complex social settings".[28]

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27   Winter, E. & O'Raw, P. (2010). *Literature review on the principles and practices relating to inclusive education for children with special educational needs.* Meath: NCSE. p. 39.

28   Department of Education and Skills. (2011b). *Literacy and numeracy for learning and life: The national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people 2011–2020.* Dublin. p.8.

Supporting Teachers' Learning - This heading would include, for example, teachers' learning through supporting student teachers on school placement as co-operating teachers, or through supporting NQTs during their induction phase as a member of a Professional Support Team. It would also include teachers' learning through facilitating a workshop or otherwise contributing to an ITE programme, and through contributing at a staff meeting, sharing research findings, or otherwise supporting colleagues' learning.

These learning areas are set out in Figure 4. They will be reviewed once during the lifetime of each Council (once every four years), in consultation with the profession and other stakeholders.

Figure 4 - Learning areas

7 Planning for learning and reflecting on its impact

7.1. Planning for learning

Like all journeys, teachers' learning journeys require planning, based on ongoing reflection on learning and its impact on practice. In that context, it is acknowledged that, in working together as part of existing school planning processes, many teachers identify their own professional development needs and plan for learning opportunities to meet those needs. This process also takes account of the needs of the system.

7.2. Individual reflection on learning and its impact

One of the key principles underpinning *Cosán* is that it will recognise teachers as autonomous and responsible professionals. Another is that it will facilitate teachers in prioritising learning that benefits them and their pupils, i.e., learning that has real impact.

These principles were reflected in the comment by one school that "CPD must be verifiable in terms of quantity and quality - but there is a real need to trust schools to report this in an agreed and structured way…".

These principles are also reflected in Wiliam's argument that, as well as deciding what to improve, every teacher should be responsible for deciding what evidence they need to collect in order to demonstrate that their practice has improved.[29] Cordingley points out that "working with evidence is central to professional learning" and provides a means for teachers to demonstrate "their professional growth".[30]

In line with that, it is proposed that teachers would identify, from their own practice, examples of their teaching that will help them to determine the impact on practice. This process would also support their reflection on the standards and on their learning in light of those standards. Relevant aspects may be shared (at the teacher's discretion), to inform and support professional conversations with others.

29   Wiliam, D. (2014). "Teacher expertise: Why it matters, and how to get more of it" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.). *Licensed to Create*: *Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre. p. 33.

30   Cordingley, P. (2014). "Teacher licensing and collaboration: a model for developing the confidence of the profession as a whole" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.). *Licensed to Create*: *Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. *Licensed to Create*: *Ten essays on improving teacher quality.* London: RSA Action and Research Centre. p. 46.

This process is sometimes referred to as portfolio-based learning (Snadden et al, 2009).[31] With an emphasis on process, Hicks (2005) states that "the point of the journey is not necessarily to arrive, but to make the most of getting there". With that in mind, the Council believes that these cycles of planning, evidence gathering, reflection and ongoing learning are career-long processes, and it is proposed that this would be explored further with the profession during the development phase (see section 10) to find out what the most effective, sustainable and helpful models of portfolio-based learning might be. This process of strategic exploration will build on the learning from *Taisce* in *Droichead*, and will examine the potential for ICT-based solutions to facilitate reflection and ongoing learning. In line with the flexible approach that underpins all aspects of *Cosán*, it is acknowledged that there will be no "one size fits all" model for reflection on learning, and teachers will be encouraged to develop approaches that work best for them, having regard to their individual preferences, learning styles, circumstances and school contexts.

7.3. Collaborative reflection on learning and its impact

As well as providing a framework for individual reflection on learning and its impact, *Cosán* will provide the framework for collective reflection on the contribution of teacher learning to teacher effectiveness. To that end, it is proposed that the Council will develop a series of resources to support professional conversations between teachers, similar to that which has been done in respect of the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers.*

Whatever ICT-based solutions emerge for facilitating portfolio-based learning, they should also allow for groups of teachers to collaborate and to share with others those aspects of their teaching and their learning that they feel comfortable in sharing. Such an approach would be very much in line with the Council's underpinning principles of shared professional responsibility and collective professional confidence, and would, according to Cordingley, "capture evidence about what makes a difference and reinforce the importance of teachers' collective contributions to each other's and pupils' learning".[31] As outlined earlier, the solutions that emerge should be flexible enough to be adapted for use in a variety of contexts.

The detail of how this would operate in practice would be developed with the profession, based on the development phase described in section 10.

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31   Cordingley, P. (2014). "Teacher licensing and collaboration: a model for developing the confidence of the profession as a whole" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds). *Licensed to Create*: Ten essays on improving teacher quality. London: RSA Action and Research Centre. p. 46.

8 Standards to guide learning and reflection

Professional standards are central to all of the Council's work. The Council envisages that teachers' learning journeys will be guided by standards that will facilitate them, as individuals or collectively, in:

o   reflecting critically on their teaching and their learning, and the relationship between them

o   identifying areas for further professional learning

o   planning for their learning

o   celebrating their learning experiences and accomplishments, and

o   demonstrating their ongoing commitments as learning professionals.

The *Cosán* standards are as follows:

As learning professionals, teachers demonstrate a commitment to:

o   quality teaching and learning for their students and themselves, and

o   continued professional growth for enhanced professional practice, to support that quality teaching and learning in a sustainable way.

The Council recognises that teachers' professional learning journeys are not linear, whereby one set of standards is attained and the teacher then progresses to the next set. *Cosán* is based on a richer understanding of standards, which sees them less as goals to be reached and left behind, and more as providing a focus for ongoing and dynamic teacher learning processes. In other words, standards should be "growth-based" rather than "threshold-based".[32]

Figure 5 - *Cosán* standards

32   Hargreaves, A. *et al.* (2012). *Leading for All: A research report on the development, design, implementation and impact of Ontario's 'Essential for Some, Good for All' initiative: Executive Summary.* Toronto: Council of Directors of Education. p. 24.

9 Quality assurance processes

Through *Cosán*, the Teaching Council, as the professional standards body for teaching in Ireland, is seeking to provide reassurance to the profession and the public that teachers are engaging in life-long learning. The Teaching Council must also give reassurance, through the national framework, about the quality of that learning. Its accreditation role will be a key element in that regard.

Guskey states that, historically, professional developers have not paid much attention to evaluation, and suggests that evaluation often takes the form of feedback questionnaires that gauge participant enjoyment of the activity or reaction to the experience, rather than impact or outcome.[33] He further argues that this type of evaluation does not capture the effectiveness of the activities undertaken in terms of participant or student outcomes, or whether there were any gains in knowledge or changes in practice as a result of the intervention.

When Section 39 of the Teaching Council Act is commenced, the Council will have the statutory power to review and accredit "programmes relating to the continuing education and training of teachers".[34]

It is anticipated that, in advance of this section being commenced, the Council will develop criteria and procedures, in consultation with all stakeholders. It is likely that any such criteria will cover areas such as:

Conceptual framework

o   this relates to the extent to which a learning programme or activity is underpinned by a clearly-defined conceptual framework, which is informed by research and rooted in good practice.

Design and evaluation

o   participant involvement in design and evaluation

o   extent to which design allows for best practice to be modelled

o   duration/continuity, allowing for follow-up support, experimentation and consolidation, and progressive and sustained learning over time, and

o   extent to which it draws on and utilises existing structures and resources, thereby resulting in efficiencies and shared learning among different providers and agencies.

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33   Guskey, T.R. (2002). Does it make a difference? Evaluating Professional Development? Educational Leadership, 59 (6), p.45.

34   Teaching Council Act (2001). Section 39 2(c). p. 26.

Methodologies

- the extent to which it provides opportunities for:
  - critical thinking and engagement with evidence
  - individual and collective reflection on practice and on learning
  - active/interactive participation
  - purposeful collaboration
  - the innovative use of ICT, etc.,

- the extent to which it promotes:
  - action research and inquiry
  - creativity and innovation
  - inclusive teaching methodologies and approaches
  - advancement of professional learning communities.

Content

- relevance of content, and impact on teachers' learning, confidence and practice.

Facilitators

- skills and knowledge of facilitators.

It is also envisaged that the Council will develop a strategy for implementing its accreditation role. Subject to legal advice, this may involve the accreditation of approved providers, and/or approved third parties who will review and accredit programmes on the Council's behalf. The strategy is also likely to involve innovative approaches to accreditation, particularly if it is to apply in the case of less formal learning processes. This may involve opportunities for teachers to share feedback with each other, perhaps via a mediated online forum, in relation to their experience of particular learning processes, and the impact of these on their learning.

10 Next steps in the development of *Cosán*

The Council is mindful of the fact that the introduction of a framework for teachers' professional learning, while firmly rooted in and acknowledging the learning that teachers already do, will by its very existence represent a degree of cultural change for registered teachers and for the education system. For that reason, the Council believes that it is important to allow time and space for different approaches to be trialled and developed, and adapted to individual and school contexts. To that end, the next phase will be a development phase, based on teacher-led research. Participation will be on a voluntary basis by teachers, groups of teachers, or schools. Such teachers will engage in a cyclical process of reflection, planning, action and further reflection on key features of the framework, so that they can see what Cosán could mean for them in practice. This process will generate findings to inform the Council's thinking.

Based on the feedback from the consultation on the Cosán draft framework, it is envisaged that the five aims for the development process will be as follows:

Standards

○ to explore the use of the standards in guiding teachers' learning, their reflection on learning, and the relationship between their learning and their practice. Specifically, the development process would: (a) seek to determine if the standards are appropriate and effective in guiding learning and reflection, and facilitating teachers in demonstrating their ongoing commitment to learning; and,
(b) consider how the standards could be applied to, or tailored for, different cohorts of teachers.

Mechanisms for recording and reflecting on teachers' learning

○ to identify appropriate and sustainable mechanisms for supporting teachers' reflection on their learning and professional conversations about that learning. In doing so, particular attention will be given to the ways in which teachers might reflect on informal and prior learning, and on the potential for an ICT-based solution to support true reflection and meaningful engagement.

Programme accreditation

○ to explore and identify the mechanisms by which programmes of learning might be accredited, and to identify criteria pertaining to quality in accrediting teachers' learning.

Link to registration

○ to explore how an appropriate and sustainable link to registration would be developed, which would reflect the values of the framework and not result in unnecessary paperwork.

Scalability

- to trial all aspects of the *Cosán* framework, including the accreditation procedures, and the structures, supports and solutions for individual and collective reflection, with specific emphasis on exploring scalability issues, including the opportunities and challenges in moving from development to implementation.

By working together to seek answers to these questions, teachers will inform the ways in which the framework will evolve and be adapted to meet the varied needs and contexts of teachers, schools and the wider educational system.

This view is very much aligned with one of the Council's core values, professionally-led regulation, and, for that reason, the Council believes that participation by teachers in a development phase is the best way to inform and support the emergence of a national framework for teachers' professional learning.

It is envisaged that the development phase will begin in April 2016, and conclude in 2019 in advance of national implementation in 2020. During 2019, the focus will shift from experimentation and exploration, to planning for implementation, when the findings from the action research process will be considered, with a particular emphasis on resourcing and other systemic considerations.
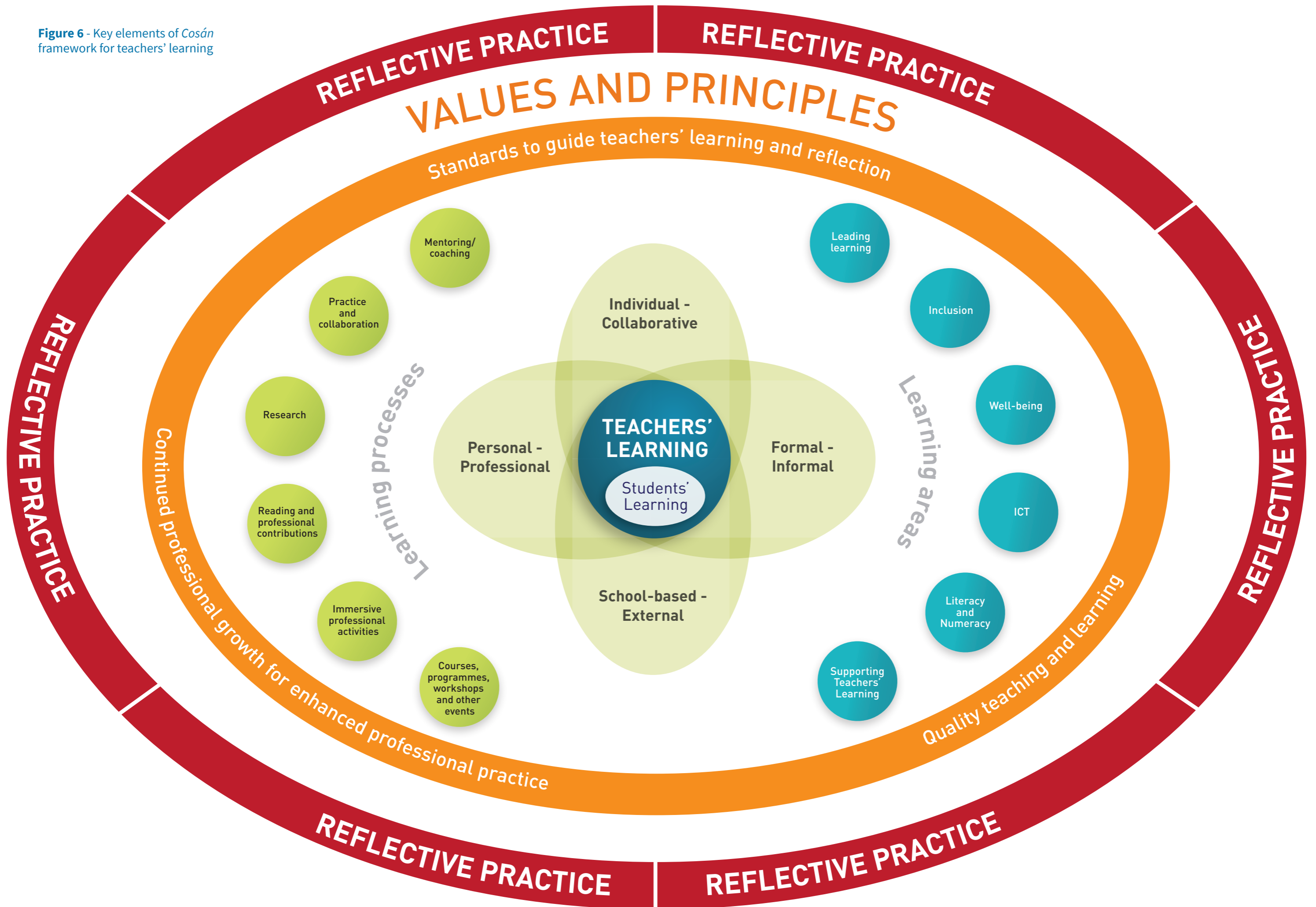
11 Summary

Based on all of the foregoing, Figure 6 provides a graphic representation of the key elements of *Cosán*. It is noteworthy that student learning is at the heart of the diagram.

The outer oval shapes represent the values, principles and standards that guide teachers' learning and reflection. *Cosán* is a flexible framework, which affirms the value of teachers' learning and acknowledges the full range of learning activities that teachers undertake for their benefit and that of their students. In order to reflect that, the outer oval shapes contain a wide range of learning processes and learning areas, which the Council has identified. Near the centre of the diagram are four key dimensions of teachers' learning which, as is illustrated in Figure 1, can combine and overlap to create an array of different learning opportunities.

It is intended that a range of quality assurance processes will underpin all of the above and, through them, the profession and the public can be assured as to the quality of teachers' learning.

Figure 6 - Key elements of *Cosán* framework for teachers' learning

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Standards to guide teachers' learning and reflection

Continued professional growth for enhanced professional practice

Quality teaching and learning

Learning processes

Learning areas

Mentoring/coaching

Practice and collaboration

Research

Reading and professional contributions

Immersive professional activities

Courses, programmes, workshops and other events

Leading learning

Inclusion

Well-being

ICT

Literacy and Numeracy

Supporting Teachers' Learning

Individual - Collaborative

Personal - Professional

TEACHERS' LEARNING
Students' Learning

Formal - Informal

School-based - External