

Practice-based Research Encompassing Professional Development Project

Revised Final Report (March 2012)

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ACTION RESEARCH SUPPORTED BY THE TEACHING COUNCIL OF
IRELAND

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- The teachers who choose to participate without tangible incentives but who were motivated by deeply held professional values and the desire to improve practice for the benefit of their pupils.

ABSTRACT

This report outlines the rationale for the *Practice-based Research Encompassing Professional Development* Project, its context, methodology, findings with their significance and issues for further consideration with supporting appendices. This project was supported by the Teaching Council and undertaken by four practising teachers/researchers who are convinced of the viability of practice-based research as a form of continuing professional development (CPD) and of the potential of self-study for improving practice and for increasing understanding. This report of the project takes the form of a self-study action research project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **introduction** (pp 8-9) provides an overview of the rationale for and structure of the project.

The **background** (pp 10-11) section explains some of the underpinning philosophical arguments for selecting self-study action research as a methodology. This methodology enabled teachers to acknowledge the core values informing their practice and test how these values were lived daily in their professional practice within their classroom work

We provide our personal **contexts** (pp 12 -13) as well as the policy and research frameworks for this project.

In the **methodology** (pp 14-16) section we outline the four main **stages of an action research plan**, the proposed **timeline** and a section on the **participants**. We discuss **data gathering** and **ethics** and describe the **actions** taken.

In the **findings** section (pp 17-20) we deal with the learning that emerged on two levels: our learning as course leaders and the learning of our teacher colleagues who participated in the programme. We provide samples of our **evidence**.

We discuss the **significance** of the findings (pp 23- 26).

In the final section we outline issues that call for further consideration (pp 27 – 28) where we outline some specifics in relation to:

- Formalising action research as an approach to CPD for teachers
- Postgraduate study as CPD
- Issues to do with remote rural settings
- The ‘throughout-term’ model and ‘week-long courses’
- Literacy and numeracy
- Whole school evaluation
- Concerns regarding professional reading

We conclude the report on p.29

We provide **references** throughout and these are listed on pp 31-34.

The **appendices** (pp 37-51) contain: 1) some relevant extracts from our contact with the Teaching Council; 2) some sample flyers advertising our courses; 3) a sample document for participants; 4) staff values; 5) Teaching Council Codes of Practice; 6) a synopsis of responses from participants in one centre; 7) the numbers of participants in each group; 8) the research topics chosen by participants.

INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

A main objective of the project was to convene groups of educators and introduce the underpinning ideas around self-study action research to them, encourage them to think critically about their practice, and support them in a cycle of self-study. By self-study we refer to the conscious decision a practitioner makes to investigate/research their practice with the aim of improving their practice or their understanding of it. Practitioners generally generate a theory of practice from their learning. Wilcox et al. (2004: 307) explain the self-study process as being ‘vital to professional practice. Self-study allows practitioners to engage in inquiry that contributes to their own capacity for expert and caring professional practice while also contributing to the growth of their profession’.

Mohanty (1997) argues that an important part of knowing about the world involves knowing how to change it. We envisaged that the participating teacher-researchers would be offered opportunities to develop the skills necessary for generating knowledge of practice in their own local contexts, in order ‘to change the world by teaching better’ (Lytle 2008). Teaching better involves much more than professional tinkering (Huberman 1989), or the mere honing of existing instructional practices, although this could well have been part of their initial enquiry. In the pilot study, however, we hoped to encourage the participants to go beyond this in order to generate the data and evidence necessary to enable them to construct and/or modify their theories of practice, in their individual sites of practice, in order to realise their own fuller potential and the potential of their students. We hoped that they, like us, would embrace the notion of ‘enquiry as stance’ (Cochran-Smyth and Lytle 2009), seeing inquiry as a way of being in the world; a way of teaching and learning rather than as an external assessment programme or strategy.

Our first organising framework is located in the principles of self-study action research, and self-evaluation, which is most often carried out by teachers involved in an accredited professional development course such as a Diploma, Masters or PhD. The second organising framework is grounded in the principles of teachers participating in ‘professional, authentic, learning conversations’ as outlined in the work of Clark (2001). Many of our participants commented on how nourishing and energising it was to meet and talk on a regular basis with like-minded professionals. As conveners of the professional learning groups, we agree with Clark (op cit) when he says:

Our collective experiences put the lie to the cynical view that when teachers have the freedom to talk together, they waste time on superficial ...matters. On the contrary, the common ground that unites teachers ...are the mysteries of learning, teaching, and life in all its complex relationships.

(Clark 2001:172)

This report outlines both the combined learning of the authors/conveners as they engaged in the process of introducing self-study to educators, and the learning of the participants throughout the different phases of the project (see Appendix 1, ‘Contract’ p. 35 for description of these phases).

This research was undertaken in two interdependent strands:

- (i) The research of the four conveners of the programme and
- (ii) The research undertaken by the participants in the programme.

The participants' research, which was school-based, was grounded in a model of teacher self-evaluation, whereby teachers acknowledged the core values informing their work, and tested how these values were lived out daily in their professional practice. It was also grounded in the principle of providing settings for the participants to engage in 'authentic professional conversations' (Clark 2001). Throughout this action research report, the four author-researchers use the voice of 'we' to indicate their collective learning and insights within the narrative of the development of the project.

BACKGROUND TO 'PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH ENCOMPASSING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT'

A commitment to self-study action research as a methodology for classroom enquiry and self-evaluation informed this project. As we four authors sought to develop better understandings of our practice and to generate educational theory from that process (to PhD level), we developed a collegiate relationship based on support and professional critique. We believe that the self-study model - supported by the idea of teachers engaging in professional conversations - can be an inspiration to colleagues. In this project we sought to provide scaffolding for educators as they interrogated the assumptions underpinning self-study action research.

The background to the ideas for the project began at the Teaching Council Conference (2007) which, among other things, emphasised the ideas of self-study and practitioner research as valid and acceptable forms of continuing professional development (CPD). This appeared to be in direct contrast to the dominant form of CPD which was, and still is, a more skills-based, 'one-shot, knowledge transfer model' (Conway *et al.* 2009: 187). Áine Lawlor (Director, Teaching Council) agreed to meet with us to discuss our ideas further. One of our initial plans was to disseminate our ideas by co-authoring a book on CPD. As this part of our proposal to the Teaching Council was not taken up by the Education Committee, we have published independently (see McDonagh *et al.* 2012). In subsequent conversations and communications with the Teaching Council, the Practice-based Research Encompassing Professional Development Project evolved and Prof. Mark Morgan agreed to support it and act as critical friend.

The 'Practice-based Research Encompassing Professional Development' Project aimed to move away from traditional forms of CPD towards a model which would acknowledge the idea that teachers are capable of making judgements about their own professionalism. Drawing on the notion of 'teacher as theorist' (Whitehead and McNiff 2006; Pockett and Giles 2008; Kadi-Hanifi 2010), the project evolved from a value that teachers' CPD should be run as a form of support that would encourage teachers to develop their own educational theories from their practice. Drawing again on Clark (2001) they would be supported in their research by belonging to a community of teachers sharing in professional conversations.

Our programme was classroom based, focusing on the immediate educational concerns of teachers with the aim initially of improving practice and developing educational theory, and, possibly, of gaining post-graduate accreditation. As outlined earlier, the project was grounded in teacher self-evaluation. Recent approaches to the evaluation of the work of teachers have generally been guided by notions of accountability with an emphasis on the accuracy and precision of how 'good teaching' can be measured, particularly in terms of outcomes with a particular focus on high-stakes testing (Ball 2003, McNamara *et al.* 2011, Shore and Wright 2000). In contrast, this project offered a form of teacher-centred professional development that was firmly grounded in a different understanding of accountability. In this research

project each participating teacher took responsibility for their own professional improvement. They acknowledged the core values informing their practice, and tested how these values are lived out daily in their professional practice within their classroom work

CONTEXTS

PERSONAL AND LOCATIONAL CONTEXTS

The authors - Máirín Glenn, Caitriona McDonagh, Bernie Sullivan, Mary Roche, and - are four practising teachers. Máirín is a teaching principal in Inver National School in Co. Mayo and has a keen interest in holistic educational practice and ICT. Caitriona teaches in Rush National School in Co. Dublin and her focal area is special educational needs and personalised learning. Bernie is the principal of St. Brigid's Girls' Senior School, Dublin and is interested in social justice and inclusive educational practice. A primary teacher for many years, Mary is currently Senior Lecturer in Education, St Patrick's College, Thurles. Her research interests are in action research, critical thinking and dialogical pedagogy.. An exploration of action research and our subsequent PhD studies brought us together.

POLICY AND RESEARCH CONTEXTS

The provision of continuing professional development to date in Ireland has been very much on an ad-hoc and fragmented basis (Conway *et al.* 2009). Much CPD was skills-based and curriculum based, provided by external specialists, mainly during summer courses and 'one-shot' deficit mastery models of learning (Banks and Smyth (2011: 4). Other forms of CPD were - and continue to be - provided through Diploma/Masters programmes through the universities and outreach programmes. This model has now evolved into a more active and constructive process where according to Banks and Smyth (2011: 5) teacher learning is 'seen as an active and constructive process that is problem-oriented, grounded in social settings and circumstances and takes place throughout teachers' lives'. We would argue that while this is a laudable ambition, there is little evidence of it in current CPD provision, in Ireland, as yet. While it is widely acknowledged that CPD is most productive when teachers are involved in its design and take ownership of their own learning (Burke 2004), Banks and Smyth (2011: 32) recognise 'the persistence of "topdown" rather than teacher-led models of provision, at least in some contexts'. The current consensus according to Conway *et al.* (2009) is that there is little cohesion in the myriad of different programmes that are currently on offer. They outline the need for a greater system of programme coherence; mentoring and assisted practice; vibrant university and college partnerships, and promoting research and enquiry.

It is interesting to note that Circular 0056/2011, *Initial Steps in the Implementation of The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy*, (DES 2011) emphasises the importance of reflection and self-evaluation, but appears currently to focus more on standardised testing and the reporting of results than on using reflective practice to improve teaching and learning.

The Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education (Teaching Council 2011) is underpinned by principles of innovation, integration and improvement at all stages of the continuum. The following are included among the principles for good teacher education in the area of CPD

- *Effective CPD, which is participative in nature, should encourage teachers to evaluate their pedagogical beliefs and practices, to critically reflect on their professional practice and working environments and to engage in professional collaboration.*
- *Individual teachers should actively shape their own professional development, in the context of a professional development portfolio commenced during initial teacher education and retained throughout the teaching career. (Teaching Council 2011: 20)*

The self-study action research we conducted resonates most clearly with these innovative aspects of the policy.

METHODOLOGY

Our action research approach, and that of the participants in our programme, involved the identification, naming and scrutiny of our personal educational values:

*Throughout ask yourself if your action research project is helping you (and those with whom you work) and the extent to which you are **living your educational values** (emphasis in original)*

(Kemmis and McTaggart (1992) cited in Cohen et al. 2007: 309)

The methodology presented to the participants incorporated four main stages of an action research plan for Continuing Professional Development. These stages were:

- a) Thinking professionally and reflecting on how we, as teachers, inform our practice
- b) Critically questioning why we teach as we do and identifying areas of concern, or areas of practice - or of understanding of practice - that we felt could be explored
- c) Deciding what we can do about the questions we identify - making a plan and carrying it out, collecting data to describe what we have done
- d) Interpreting data and understanding the significance of what we have found out. This final section included practical strategies to enable us to disseminate the new ideas developed to others involved in education (see also McDonagh *et al.* 2012).

We considered this methodology to have the potential to contribute to the empowerment of teachers by indicating to them that they have the potential to become educationally influential in their own professional settings (Carr and Kemmis 1986, Schön 1995, McNiff and Whitehead 2005). We believed that it could enable teachers to engage in a process of enquiry through the development of a critical and questioning disposition. Self study action research is founded on the researcher's educational values. The values that informed this project include the idea of collaboration because self-study is undertaken by people who are working on their own, but who are always in company with others. So, while the focus of an action research project is on the person who is doing the research, that research is always about their relationship and connection with others. We authors were concerned about how we worked with the participating teacher-researchers in our study groups, and our participants were concerned about the relationships or connections *they* had with various students and classes.

PLANNED TIMELINE

1. July 2010: Summer Course
2. Autumn/Winter 2010: Approach Education Centres and other groups to establish study groups
3. Winter/Summer 2011: Commence programme of work and collate data

4. July 2011: Assess data and outcomes
5. August 2011: Summer Course
6. November 2011: Interim Report to Teaching Council and presentation at Teaching Council Conference
7. December 2011: Final Report

PARTICIPANTS

Our various groups consisted of over 60 participants from the primary, post-primary and further education sectors although the contract required that we should support only 30 teachers. The breakdown of the number of these participants is available at Appendix 7. While there were more female participants than male, there was a good gender balance, which reflected the demographics of the teaching profession. We also had one participant with special requirements in relation to a hearing impairment. The teaching experience of the participants ranged from three to thirty years. (In our original proposal we had hoped to include a report from each participant, but this aspect of the project was dropped in the more curtailed final project at the request of the Education Committee of The Teaching Council).

DATA GATHERING AND ETHICS

The study groups were informed at the outset that the project was going to form part of a report to the Teaching Council. They were aware that their opinions counted and that they would be added to this report. Data in the form of verbal comments; email; formal feedback; transcripts of recorded conversation; extracts from journals and video clips was collated. At each session, participants were asked to reflect on their learning, to problematise it and to share their ideas. Their written reflections on this process provide much of the data for this report (see Appendix 6).

ACTION

Action research implies action and for us four researchers, the action took the form of establishing groups of educators who were willing to learn about self-study action research and self-evaluation and to try it out for themselves with our support.

Throughout the duration of the project, we, author-researchers, met at regular intervals in various locations to plan the project and to discuss progress, and to evaluate the work. Our first attempt at establishing a group was for our summer 2010 programme which we had hoped to run in Thurles, Co. Tipperary as part of the programme of Summer Courses for primary teachers (See Appendix 2). Thurles was selected as the venue because of its central geographical location and also because we had negotiated education facilities in a college there. Our decision to run the course was made after Tipperary Education Centre had finalised their summer course programme and so we chose to run the

course independently of the usual summer course providers (Education Centres, INTO and NCTE). The course was ratified by the DES as meeting with all necessary criteria. Despite personally notifying all schools in the Mid Western area by mail shot, the course did not run due to the lack of the required number of interested participants. Though disappointed, our general feeling was that we might have been more successful had we had the help and support of an Education Centre to publicise our course, and we were not disheartened.

We planned term-time programmes to run in Autumn 2010 in our local Education Centres: in the Drumcondra Education Centre in Dublin (DEC), Thurles Education Centre, Cork Education Support Centre (CESC) and in Mayo Education Centre. A series of evening sessions was planned to run throughout the winter and spring on a monthly basis beginning with introductory information evenings in each venue. The committee members of Thurles Education Centre declined to run the course. They felt that it would be difficult to attract teachers to it. Both the Cork and Dublin groups got the required number of interested people to run the initial information evening and the subsequent project. In the Mayo Education Centre, not enough participants subscribed for the initial information session and therefore it was cancelled.

Three groups were established as follows in

- Cork Education Support Centre –CESC-
- Drumcondra Education Centre, Dublin –DEC-
- A whole school project -WSP-
- Note: Further groups, including a whole school group, are now developing at the request of participants in these original groups.

In CESC and DEC, participants in the Education Centres chose their own focus for the project. A list of the the specific areas researched by participant teachers is available at Appendix 8. In WSP, the overall aim was to produce a whole school action plan for self-evaluation on teaching as recommended by DES Inspectorate (2003); TALIS-OECD report (2009) and DES (2010). Within the WSP structure, in addition to the whole school level work, individual teachers also drew up their own personal action plans.

Sessions were run on a one session per month basis, in the evenings and outside of school time, supported by email and/or face to face dialogue throughout. Included in all sessions were:

- time for feedback on how the project was progressing for each of the participants
- time for input by the group leader
- time for exploring the next stage of the action research model, usually with the help of a written supporting guide/template and time for reflecting on the events of the session.

The final aspect to our programme was to be a summer course ratified by the DES for teachers which was planned for Mayo Education Centre in August 2011. Again, it was cancelled because it did not attract the required number of participants.

FINDINGS

In this section, we will deal with the learning that emerged on two levels: our learning as course leaders and the learning of our teacher colleagues who participated in the programme. The learning from one level influenced the other.

In our research we looked for indicators that demonstrate that we are living and working in the direction of our values. Our collective values are around offering a form of teacher-centred professional development which enables teachers to acknowledge the core values informing their practice. Drawing on the work of Whitehead and McNiff (2006), we tested how these values are lived out in our work. Using our values, we established specific criteria which we would use to ascertain that we were offering a form of non-coercive or 'bottom-up' CPD which enabled teachers to develop their core values as they seek to improve their practice or their understanding of their work. The criteria we established were as follows:

Our aim was for participants to

1. find the process enabling and empowering as well as enjoyable
2. establish what their core educational values are and demonstrate an ability to engage critically with the ideas underpinning their area of interest
3. draw up an action plan and implement it, presenting evidence to support their claim that they are improving their practice or their understanding of it and begin to theorise their work
4. perceive that self-study, reflection and action research can be viable forms of CPD

In general, feedback was of a very positive nature. Participants spoke clearly about the empowering nature of the programme and how they - and their students - benefitted greatly from it at several levels.

As group conveners we witnessed the many ways in which teachers transformed themselves and their practice, and we can attest to the fact that they often attributed the changes - or the origins of the changes - to having opportunities to come together to share 'learning conversations'. Like Clark (op cit) we can also claim that 'we have learned about our [own] work as teachers and about ourselves in the context of that work'. We hope to convince the Teaching Council that 'teacher self-study action research conversation groups' constitute a sustainable, low-cost, professionally satisfying and potentially transformative form of teacher professional development. We are convinced of the power of 'authentic conversation for teacher learning' (Clark 2001). We witnessed groups of teachers - who shared common ground in caring and trusting environments - finding support in learning-oriented conversations. We saw that *sustained* teacher conversation groups (Clandinin 2001: viii), focused on self-study action research approaches, are a viable form of professional development.

Throughout the project, we collated data in many forms (see Appendix 3 for samples of questionnaires and support sheets). We now present these data as evidence to show that we are working in the direction of our values around CPD, using the criteria outlined above. In this report, we will draw directly on examples from our project to support our claim for each criterion.

Evidence that demonstrate that the project was teacher-centred professional development which enabled teachers to acknowledge the core values informing their practice

(I) PARTICIPANTS FIND THE PROCESS TO BE ENABLING AND EMPOWERING

With all groups, we prepared handouts with structured tasks and focal areas for reflection so as to enable participants to engage in the various aspects of self-study (See Appendix 3). We were then able to use this as data to establish the validity of our findings. The most frequently repeated sentiment that participants expressed was that they rarely got the kinds of opportunities to engage in professional dialogue in either previous forms of CPD, or in their school settings, that were available to them through being involved in this programme. They expressed surprise that they did not engage in such dialogue prior to this programme and extolled its virtues: 'It helped me to focus more', 'It was great to be able to bring something to the table and get feedback on it' and 'It was fascinating to hear other people's interests and try out their ideas' (feedback DEC 2011). Participants commented that they had never undertaken CPD to deepen their understanding of their practice but that now that they had tried it, they were hooked. One participant commented: "I felt very much part of a group and took energy and joy from the group. We all celebrated each other's successes however small, and I think this gave us the courage to persevere in our endeavours" (feedback CESC 2011). People felt that participating in the professional dialogue that is a key feature of self-study action research was empowering: "This model of CPD truly elevates professional development to a site of professional empowerment and fulfilment where we teachers are afforded the opportunity to analyse and improve our practice in a supportive environment and become reflective practitioners" (feedback CESC 2011). A member of the WSP group commented: '... it's great to see the staff interacting on a professional level - sharing expertise, learning how to improve teaching and learning'. Somekh and Noffke (2009) agree, explaining how, when the practice of education becomes action research-based, it becomes more 'wholly oriented towards learners through a transformational shift in relationships' (p. 522).

The Principal from the whole-school project commented that the biggest change she could see was the increased level of communication in the school (feedback WSP 2011). The participants here learned whole new methodologies for teaching, improving administration, pedagogy and curriculum through their dialogue with one another and they blossomed in the sharing process (Validation meeting, 12 July 2011).

Participants expressed a positive attitude to the project and all commented on how they found the project to be empowering and enjoyable.

(II) PARTICIPANTS ESTABLISH WHAT THEIR CORE EDUCATIONAL VALUES ARE AND DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO ENGAGE CRITICALLY WITH THE IDEAS UNDERPINNING THEIR AREA OF INTEREST

Some participants found it difficult initially to establish or articulate what their core educational values were. This is often a feature of engaging with self-study action research. However, in all three centres, the participants found that through collaboration, dialogue, and engagement in critical thinking, everyone was eventually able to establish such values. For some, the nature of their values changed as they talked through their ideas, listened to others and gained clarity around their values. For others, they had a clear picture of the values from the outset. In the WSP group, while they tried to gain clarity around their values, the question 'What is education about?' arose. For many participants, this was the first time such a topic came up for discussion since they had attended teacher-education college.

One participant, Teacher Y, wanted to examine her school's enrolment policy as she had concerns about how inclusive the policy was. As they examined the policy and engaged with literature around social inclusion, the participant began to question her own attitude and preconceptions around inclusion. Teacher Y said 'It is only through developing my own knowledge about cultural diversity and difference that I have the courage to move forward and hope that we, as a school, can provide a supportive environment for all our children so that each one can achieve his or her full potential.' (Feedback DEC 2011).

Many participants felt that they gained more clarity about their educational values through engaging in meaningful professional dialogue in the group meetings. One participant commented: '...Often in the telling comes something previously not articulated. It was fascinating to watch the others speak aloud their concerns and then speak their way into possible solutions to their own concerns. This is a powerful message to other teachers and researchers....The answers may come – from within you or from the group' (Feedback CESC 2011).

Some participants felt that while they enjoyed the opportunity to engage critically with their educational values through dialogue with others, they would have preferred longer sessions (CESC 2011). Some of the WSP group suggested that future models of the project should devote even more time to the practice of establishing one's educational values and exploring epistemological questions (Feedback WSP 2011).

(III) PARTICIPANTS HAVE TAKEN ACTION, THAT THEY ARE IMPROVING THEIR PRACTICE OR THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF IT AND ARE BEGINNING TO THEORISE THEIR WORK

One of the underpinning ideas of self-study action research is that the practitioner takes action towards improving their practice or improving their understanding of their practice. They then begin to generate a theory from the learning process. All participants took steps towards improving their practice while some began to take the first steps towards generating their own theory.

Many participants discussed their 'action' in terms of practical classroom solutions, saying for example 'I have become more focused on all areas of the curriculum not just the core subjects' and 'I will have more planning done' (Feedback WSP 2011). Others moved onto a level of critically engaging with their ideas, stating for example 'the project has encouraged me to think more about myself as a teacher' and 'I am evaluating myself as a teacher and my teaching more honestly' (Feedback WSP 2011). Another participant said 'it is important to reflect on my teaching style as in time we can become set in our ways and that by changing one aspect of my teaching, the quality of my deliverance and improvement in the children's learning and achievements has greatly improved' (Feedback DEC 2011).

Others began to generate the beginnings of their own educational theories from their learning. One participant commented that "I put into effect the idea of dialoguing with my senior students in my English as a Second Language classes. The effect was just amazing ...They started burrowing through the books and picking out a selection of activities they would like to tackle. It was a fabulous feeling for me and I imagine for them to be masters of their own learning (Feedback CESC 2011).

There was a certain reluctance among many of the participants to define their professional concerns as being worthy of being researched. One participant was reluctant to share their area of concern because they felt it was not academic enough or 'highbrow enough' to warrant the term 'research'. Their concern was about a child who seemed withdrawn and sad and never seemed to respond to school in a joyous manner. The participant was reassured that this was a very valid focus for her research with her class and she began to work towards developing a better understanding of the child's needs and strengths. Over the months that followed, and seeking help from other professionals in the child's life, several interventions were put in place to help the child and her parents. The teacher shared with the group her observation that eventually the child 'smiled'. In time, the teacher reported that 'she chuckled' and eventually the group heard 'she laughed'. The participant felt that these interventions were timely and crucial to the child's confidence in learning, and commented that she could not believe that research could be so transformational and worthwhile. The teacher felt that such learning would never be recognised in traditional transmission models of CPD (Feedback CESC 2011).

In general, the participants were enabled to articulate their values with clarity. They saw how these values shaped their professional lives and guided their approach to their work.

(IV) PARTICIPANTS PERCEIVE THAT SELF-STUDY, REFLECTION AND ACTION RESEARCH ARE VIABLE FORMS OF CPD

There was an overwhelming response from participants to the idea of self-study as viable means of CPD. One teacher said 'In this way, you are empowered to approach areas that are of concern to you. It allows teachers to take control of their profession.' (Feedback DEC 2011). Many participants found the project to be life changing. Teacher K commented: 'This programme has given me the courage to act in a professional manner to facilitate change. I feel that I have taken a journey through what could have been a very complex and sometimes controversial path. Meeting and talking with like-minded, committed professionals in a 'safe' environment provided a context for widening my knowledge and understanding about the broader issues and the group acted as a sounding board for my fledgling thoughts and ideas' (Feedback DEC 2011). Many liked the 'grass-roots' and 'bottom-up' approach of the self-study project: '...is truly a 'bottom-up' approach that is rooted in the individual needs of each teacher. I believe that this type of CPD would be fantastic for all teachers who are interested in improving their teaching and understanding of teaching...' (Feedback CESC 2011). Others appreciated the way in which each participant could fine tune the research to their own specific needs as opposed to 'attending a course where only a portion of the content is suited to your needs' (Feedback DEC 2011). Some in the whole-school group lamented the fact that their session was a little short but all of them felt that the project was a viable and productive means of CPD. They appreciated the opportunity to reflect professionally and enter into dialogue with colleagues: 'The project encourages teachers to reflect on their teaching and therefore try to improve it. It can only be a positive.' (Feedback WSP 2011).

Many of the participants commented on the fact that the groups were made up of teachers from mixed levels; some were primary, some were secondary and some were from the further education sector. While most participants liked the mixed nature of the groups, there was a very small minority who would have preferred if the group was from one level. While all teachers in the whole-school group were from the same school level, a small minority suggested that they would prefer if future projects would divide the participants into class groupings.

Many suggested that the programme should be held over a year-long period and wanted to know if the programme would continue in Autumn 2011 (Feedback CESC and DEC 2011). They also suggested that such programmes should be run from September to facilitate planning for the school year. (Feedback DEC and WSP 2011).

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

As we remind ourselves of the *raison d'être* of this project we remember that our collective values are around offering a form of teacher-centred professional development which enables teachers to acknowledge the core values informing their practice and to create personal theories of practice that lead to improvement. We examine the significance of our work under three headings: (i) Significance for ourselves, (ii) Significance for others and (iii) Significance in terms of policy and research.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE AUTHORS

As we authors were both tutors and learners in this project, we found our learning to be as inspirational as that of the participants. Even though we had planned a highly structured programme, we found the learning experience itself to be living, cumulative and developmental. The programme was structured around the pace of development in participants' thinking and in the articulation of that thinking at both a conceptual level and at a practical level. For example, we saw how the selection of a research topic became a developmental process in one's thinking rather than the naming of an object or a question to be rigorously examined. Ideas emerged during the process and participants often changed their minds about the topic during the process. This is congruent with Wood and Millichamp's (2000) ideas on the emergent nature of professional learning, as they note how the focus may change in the process of the research.

Our own learning also grew in tandem with that of the participants. We developed new personal understandings about the significance of collaborative self-evaluation, using a self-study action research approach, in empowering teachers to build on their professional strengths. We became more convinced of the viability of the project and the value of self-study action research as a way of researching and improving practice. Like Wood and Millichamp (2000), we found that our own personal and professional strengths contributed greatly to the learning for participants as we worked towards weaving a safe and collaborative environment for all.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR OUR PARTICIPANTS

We believe that our research shows that self-study is an extremely viable and low cost form of CPD that enhances practice and develops educational theory. Throughout the sessions, and in their evaluations, the participants expressed enthusiasm about their work and were very passionate about the project. In particular, they liked the opportunity for educational dialogue and the nourishment they received from the programme both at a personal and professional level. In one of our own validation sessions (July

2011), we noted that in other CPD programmes, we would regularly see participants filling in crosswords or reading the paper, yet there was no such disrespect or disengagement during any meeting in any of our venues. In fact, such was the enthusiasm that many participants have expressed a wish for the programme to continue in the new school year. One participant said that she had already her focus for her self-study research lined up for the new school year and that she was going to engage in the project herself even if the programme did not run in the education centre (Validation session July 2011). Many participants commented on the positive aspect of professional learning alongside teachers from different levels of education and hearing the perspective of primary, secondary and further education teachers. They also commented on how interesting it was to dialogue with teachers with differing amounts of teaching experience to theirs and with people whose research focus was different to theirs. Many participants suggested that some form of accreditation for the work would be appropriate. We agree and we feel that not only should participants be awarded Extra Personal Vacation (EPV) days but that this form of sustained engagement in CPD might form part of, or be considered for credit transfers in an accredited post graduate programme.

We found that there was an enormous richness of experience in the three groups, from newly qualified teachers, to teachers in mid-career, to teachers who were coming towards the end of their career. While no two participants were focused on the same research topic, they all engaged in the common exercise of trying to improve their understanding. All appeared excited and engaged by the process of education in general. It followed that in the process of their collaboration there was a sharing of huge collective expertise, which was complex and nuanced by professional experience, the participants' own personalities and their life experiences.

We need to query why we could not generate more interest in the more rural areas specifically. Our intuition suggests that for now (contrary to the findings of Banks and Smyth 2011), we need to target initially the more densely populated areas.

SIGNIFICANCE IN TERMS OF POLICY AND RESEARCH

This project, which researched a sustainable and cost effective approach for individual teachers as well as whole school professional development, has implications for policy makers. Its sustainability lies in the development of the practice 'inquiry as stance' (Cochran Smith 2011) by participants. Within this stance they experienced the benefits of constantly evaluating their work against research, theory, peers and critical friends while taking actions to improve. Participants' appreciation of this approach led them to recommend it to colleagues. Thus a demand for the facilitation of new groups has already begun.

The investment of the Teaching Council in this research generated whole schools' improvements, improvement in teaching by 60 teachers, and improvements in the learning conditions of at least 880 pupils - based on the overview of pupil-teacher ratios at first and second level for 2009/10 (pub_ministers_brief_2011_v2 available on www.education.ie).

Policy makers interested in school improvement will note that we have shown how individualised topic choice for continuing professional development, within a self-study research approach, can contribute to improvements in quality school management, school planning, curriculum provisions, learning and teaching and support for pupils (DES Ireland 2003, 2010). It was significant that much of the feedback from groups could be directly related to the themes for teaching and learning from *Looking at our Schools* (LAOS).

In the following example, members of a whole school group found that the individual areas they had chosen to evaluate could be linked to the Department of Education and Skills draft framework for school self-evaluation of teaching and learning:

Table 1: The staff has prioritised issues to evaluate as follows

Curriculum delivery and teacher practice	62%	Students' learning experiences	24%	Learning outcomes for students	14%
Preparation for teaching	38%	Learning environment	12%	Attainment of learning objectives	7%
Teaching approaches	12%	Students' engagement in learning	4%	Attainments in literacy	0%
Management of students	12%	Learning to learn	8%	Attainments in numeracy	7%
Assessment	0%				

This has particular significance since teachers' personal needs for professional development were addressed within this project in ways that reflect current requirements for significantly improving schools through self -evaluation.

A unique significance of this research is that it is grounded in teacher professional ethics, values and good professional conduct (see Appendix 5), It is significant that the values that many of the participants espoused for themselves were also consistent with the values of care, respect, trust, integrity and honesty as outlined by the *Code of Conduct (Draft Code Teaching Council 2011- see Appendix 5)*.

It is clear therefore that this research reflects current thinking which advocates the underpinning principles of self-study action research.

This project fits well therefore with the three pillars of 'innovation, integration and improvement as set out by the *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* (Teaching Council 2011).

Self-evaluation and reflective practice are some of the ideas underpinning *The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People* (DES 2011). While schools are still awaiting the details of how self-evaluation might be supported, the Minister for Education and Skills has announced that the Inspectorate is developing resources to support principals and staff in implementing self-evaluation in schools.

This research has implications for policy in initial teacher education on three levels.

1) In the Initial Teacher Education Criteria and Guidelines (Teaching Council 2011) the school placement models envisaged involve

'...greater levels of responsibility being devolved to the profession for the provision of structured support for student teachers. Structured support should include mentoring, supervision and constructive feedback on practice. In that context, students should be afforded opportunities for critical analysis of the experience, as well as observation of, and conversations with, experienced teachers' (Teaching Council 2011: 16).

This will require that teachers have confidence in their professional abilities. The research reported here shows that participating teachers developed their personal and professional confidence through being facilitated in articulating and explaining their professionalism.

2) The research we have conducted enabled participants to evaluate standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence as well as the values, attitudes and professional dispositions which are central to the practice of teaching. These are the learning outcomes Co-Operating Teachers will be required to assess in students teachers (Teaching Council 2011: 24).

3) Since student teachers 'should have opportunities to engage in research as the foundation of their practitioner-based enquiry stance in the future,' (Teaching Council 2011: 23) Co-Operating Teachers should have the same opportunities. The model of professional development we have researched has given participants these opportunities without having to leave their classrooms.

The Criteria and Guidelines for initial teacher education further recommend the

'facilitation by the HEI of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Co-operating Teachers and accreditation of same.'

We have developed and researched a suitable model for such CPD.

It is clear, therefore, that many current policy documents advocate the underpinning principles of self-study action research. Examining the findings from our project, we have found that practising teachers are not only ready to try these ideas; they are ready to embrace them with enthusiasm.

Our original collaboration with Prof. Mark Morgan was in terms of making current research accessible to others. We had hoped to be able to initiate a process of facilitating accessibility but because of budget restrictions we were unable to do this. We suggest that this may be a project for further exploration.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Preliminary comments

We consider our programme to be epistemologically and methodologically innovative. The evaluations received, and the verbal feedback throughout, show us that our programme has met with very positive responses from the teachers who participated in the research. We believe that the project has demonstrated the valuable role that self-study action research can take in the professional development of teachers. Because it supported constructivist approaches to professional learning and facilitated real, practical action, the learning outcomes for all involved showed that self-study action research provides meaningful contexts in which teachers are motivated by their own needs, and their students' needs, to engage in improving their practice.

Based on our findings we recommend that the Teaching Council and Department of Education and Skills would formally acknowledge this new approach and consider embedding it in future continuous professional development policy and initiatives, Masters Degrees and in whole school planning projects. We are strongly recommending a particularly open form of self-study action research. Our research has shown us that this method offered an approach to change and learning that empowered the teachers, in that they felt a sense of ownership of the process and the resulting solutions. It gave the participating teachers an approach for coping with future change as they experienced strategies for adopting something new, learning to take a few risks, initiating and then incorporating new ideas into practice (Murcia, 2004).

Specific recommendations

On foot of our research findings and taking into account the extremely positive feedback from participants, we make the following recommendations:

FORMALISING ACTION RESEARCH APPROACHES AS CPD FOR TEACHERS

- We recommend that the Department of Education and Skills (DES) would formalise this programme and include it in the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes to be ratified by the Teaching Council as part of teachers ongoing professional development. Wood and Millichamp (2000) explain how when education has been bureaucratised to such an extent as to become a threat to the teachings itself, then teachers need to regain the central aspects of teaching for themselves, to collaborate and share expertise with one another. The Practice-based Research Encompassing Professional Development project has encapsulated that act of regaining, and the professional status of teachers engaging in this programme should therefore be appropriately acknowledged.

- We further recommend, on foot of requests from participants, that the current project should continue to be supported by the Education Centres and be formally acknowledged with Extra Personal Vacation (EPV) days for participating teachers - while that structure is still in place with DES
-

POST GRADUATE STUDY AS CPD:

- We suggest that the project be embedded in a formal diploma/masters structure. We have a proposal ready for such a programme and we would be willing to undertake /oversee its implementation.
 - We further suggest that it be considered as an approach for the accreditation of co-operating teachers who engage in Initial Teacher Education school placements.
-

TEACHERS IN REMOTE RURAL SETTINGS:

- There is a need for structures to be put in place to encourage and facilitate the participation of teachers who are located in rural settings where there may not be easy access to Education Centres.
-

THROUGHOUT TERM MODEL AND WEEK-LONG COURSES:

- Many participating teachers felt that the current dominant model of CPD - such as the one -week summer course model - are grounded in a transmission-style deficit model and, as such, have very little potential for transforming teaching or learning. We acknowledge that teachers need to be kept apprised of new approaches and resources, but looking along the continuum of teacher professional development, we feel that the one-week -course model does not adequately address teachers' professional needs. However, we do recognise that teachers need to become familiar with the methodology of self-study and so following participant feedback, (DEC 2011) we are prepared to offer intensive week-long research summer courses to support work done during the year and/or prepare candidates for Masters programmes grounded in the self-study action research paradigm.
-

LITERACY AND NUMERACY:

- The on-going and reflective nature of the form of CPD we have trialled holds particular potential for improving both the understanding of, and pedagogical practice in, Literacy and Numeracy. McDonagh (2006) and Roche (2007, 2011), for example, show its viability in Literacy. Existing research mostly in Australian and Asian contexts (Murcia 2004; Stack and Watson 2010; Vincent, 2004) demonstrates the viability of action research for improving teaching and learning in Numeracy. The response of Tom Moore (retired Assistant National Coordinator, Leadership Development for Schools) to the invitation of the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills
-

to contribute suggestions/comments on the Draft Proposals on Literacy and Numeracy (2011) also highlights and reinforces the important role played by action research in improving the teaching and learning of numeracy and literacy.

WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION:

- We recommend that whole school staffs examine this approach to self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is a key aspect of all school planning and WSE (DES 2003 and DES 2010). Collaborative action research is eminently suitable for collective professional development and this was borne out by the evaluations of the whole school group that participated in the study. (See McNamara et al 2011; Moore 2011)
-

CONCERNS REGARDING PROFESSIONAL READING:

- Research from various international contexts (Cremin et al 2009, Delaney 2005, Rudland and Kemp 2004, Trelease 2007) shows that teachers' professional reading habits are giving cause for concern. Delaney (2005) states that Irish teachers have a very low rate of engagement with professional literature 'the lowest of any participating country' (p6). He suggests that this may have less to do with motivation and may rather be attributed to difficulty of access to relevant material. We consider this issue to be of some importance for teacher professional development.
- We recommend that some thought is given by the Teaching Council and DES to providing teachers with access to education research literatures. During our research we became aware of the difficulties teachers have in accessing professional literatures. This was a problem for us facilitators as well as for our participants. We authors subscribe to Associations like ESAI and AERA, BERA etc and have access to journals but this involves considerable personal expense. We recommend that teachers participating in CPD programmes like ours would be provided with access to relevant and up-to-date research. This may involve school-university partnerships. During conversations with several educationalists from different institutional contexts at various conferences, we have noted that whenever we broached the topic, the issue of library access for teachers has been discussed with great interest.

IN CONCLUSION

Rarely have teachers been afforded a voice in how accredited professional development might be structured. In the past, third level institutions and the Department of Education and Skills decided what was appropriate for the profession. In this report the teachers who took part in the *Practice-based Research Encompassing Professional Development Project* and the authors of the report have now clearly indicated what they value as effective professional development. Given the Teaching Council's role in accreditation for a continuum of professional development, we thank them for affording teachers a voice - a research informed voice - in influencing policy and practice in the future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

(Copy of Contract)

An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta

The Teaching Council June 2010: 13, 14 and 16

Agreement between The Teaching Council and Dr. Máirín Glenn, Dr. Mary Roche, Dr. Caitríona McDonagh and Dr. Bernie Sullivan in relation to the provision of research services with the assistance of Professor Mark Morgan.

In Appendix 1 of contract see Submission by Research Team

Teacher-Led Professional Development: A Proposal for a Pilot Project to The Teaching Council Page 16

During the five phases in the programme

1) Participants will identify an area of concern in their day to day work; plan what they might do about it; examine the rationale and underpinning conceptual frameworks that informed the problem they identified and their choice of action

2) Within each group there will be peer review and validation of what participants have done to date and their plans for future actions

3) Participants will state and demonstrate their claim to improvement in practice or understanding of practice

4) Participants will generate evidence of improvement or change in professional practice by testing their claims against the criteria that they had identified in earlier phases

5) Dissemination of changes in professional practice to next intake of participants. Each participant will present their work in a number of ways including personally to colleagues, at conferences, in multimedia presentations, paper presentations, or online book

This proposal was amended by Appendix 4 of contract: Email sent to Researchers on 18 January 2010

- The committee would like to see a scaled-down proposal which would see it become, in effect, a pilot of the methodology, with a significantly reduced budget. A budget in the region of €20k would be considered to be reasonable.
- The committee agreed that the funding of an online course, as included in the proposal, could not be considered by the Council until such time as it has a formal policy on CPD. There would also be the issue of ownership of the course, which would cause further complication. The members recognise the tension that is there between development and research especially in an action research study but they encourage you to focus more on the research dimension.
- It was also considered that it would not be appropriate to fund a conference as suggested in the proposal. However, the committee would be keen to see the findings widely disseminated and suggested that, instead, some of the participants might wish to present at The Teaching Council conference in Autumn 2011, which is currently at planning stage

(Sample Flyers)



Venue:
St. Patrick's College, Thurles, Co. Tipperary

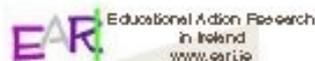
**Summer Course
July 2010 for
teachers 1-7 July**

In this course we invite teachers to renew their passion for teaching through critical reflection and action

research on their work, with a particular focus on pedagogy and critical thinking. Course fees €75 with €30 deposit (meets requirements for EPV days). More details at www.eari.ie

- Reflection
- Action
- Passion
- Critical Thinking
- Improvement
- Insight
- Planning
- Curriculum
- Practical advice

“ If you would like to learn a little more about reflection and action research, you might like to apply for our forthcoming Summer 2010 programme - Revitalise your teaching! An introductory course on Reflective Practice and Action Research. This programme will run from 1 to 7 July 2010 in St. Patrick's College, Thurles, Co. Tipperary. ”



▶▶▶

Revitalise your teaching! An introductory course on Reflective Practice and Action Research

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Numbers: _____

Teacher Number: _____

I have enclosed a deposit of €30 (cheques payable to M Roche, or C McDonagh or M Glenn) and will pay the remainder of the fee (€45) when I attend the course.

Signed: _____

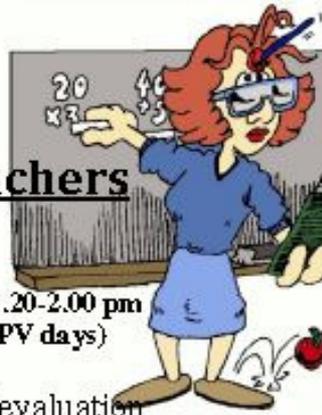
Please return to Dr. Cairiona McDonagh Teachers' Summer Course, c/o St Patrick's College, Thurles Co Tipperary

Condition of Booking
Places are limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis upon receipt of the application form and fee. The course will be cancelled if it does not attract a minimum of 15 applicants, so apply early to confirm course.

Self-Evaluation for Teachers

Summer Course 2011

**Mayo Education Centre 22nd - 26th August 9.20-2.00 pm
(Primary teachers are entitled to three EPV days)**



This course is an introduction to self-evaluation through reflective practice. It involves using an action research approach to improve teaching and learning. It looks at practical examples taken from teachers' work and gives guidelines to enable teachers to do their own self-evaluation.



If you would like to read more, see www.eari.ie

Date: 22nd – 26th August 2011
Course leaders: Drs. Máirín Glenn, Caitriona McDonagh,
Mary Roche and Bernie Sullivan
More information at www.eari.ie

**To book your place on this course go to
<http://www.mayoeducationcentre.ie/> and
follow the Summer Courses Link**

Summer courses cost €50 per person (Non Refundable). To enrol:
(1) provisionally book by telephoning 094 90 20700 to check course availability.
(2) forward your completed course booking form with the fee of €50 (non-refundable) to Mayo Education Centre, Westport Road, Castlebar, Co Mayo on or before Friday 17th June 2011.



APPENDIX 3

APPENDIX 3: Sample prompt sheet Personal Action Plan for Self Evaluation

Name:

Date:

1. What did I do differently (or what do I understand differently)? A brief description

MY ACTIONS

2. How I can show this to others? (Make a list of the ways)

DATA

3. Do colleagues agree that there has been an improvement in my practice? (include comments)

VALIDATION

4. Link what I have done to professional values I hold (see back of page)

CRITERIA

HIGHLIGHT VALUES RELEVANT TO YOUR SELF-EVALUATION

APPENDIX 4

Staff values around teaching and learning (November 2010).

These values will form the criteria we will use to evaluate our work

- Fairness
- Happy children – have to be happy or they won't learn.
- Connecting with children
- Good classroom atmosphere and children's attitude
- Seeing children achieve
- Communication skills
- Ability to deal with different children's needs
- Content atmosphere of staff and children
- Spark of genuine interest
- Putting in a system that work because it makes life easier for teachers
- Approachable establishing relationships

Teaching Council Codes (Values) of Practice

http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/regulating_the_profession/default.asp?NCID=154

Holistic Development

I am committed to a holistic vision of education which includes the aesthetic, cognitive, intellectual, critical, cultural, emotional, imaginative, creative, moral, social, political, spiritual, physical and healthy development of my students.

Cultural Values

I see myself as providing opportunities for the development of awareness and appreciation of cultural values being mindful of Irish, European and more global contexts.

Social Justice, Equality and Inclusion

In my professional role, I show commitment to democracy, social justice, equality and inclusion.

I encourage active citizenship and support students in thinking critically about significant social issues, in valuing and accommodating diversity and in responding appropriately.

I work in a collegial, collaborative, respectful and caring way.

APPENDIX 6

THE PARTICIPANTS EVALUATED THE PROJECT UNDER THE FOLLOWING HEADINGS

Question 1: Has it changed you as a teacher? How?

Question 2: How do you know?

Questions 3: Is this form of Continuous Professional Development viable? If so why?

Question 4: If you believe that valid and authentic professional development can be achieved through this kind of reflective practice model, then what advice would you give on how to organise it in the future?

Question 5: What advice would you give the DES, Teaching Council and INTO about how it might be implemented or rolled out on a broader scale?

<p>Question 1: Has it changed you as a teacher? How?</p>	<p>The responses to Question 1 indicated that the project offered teachers opportunities to live more fully according to the Standards of Professional Conduct (Teaching Council 2nd edition 2011) under the headings</p> <p>3.1 Professional Values and Relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · It has encouraged me to think more about myself as a teacher · Yes I have improved my planning and differentiation so I am working in more inclusive ways. · I am using more holistic approaches. <p>3.2 Professional Integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · More honestly evaluating my teaching and me as a teacher · It has changed my thinking about prioritizing, this in turn should lead to more relaxed management <p>3.3 Professional Conduct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · It has changed the way I approached things. I have more time for unexpected call at any time. <p>3.4 Professional Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Yes more planning done · Science, drama, music · I have become more focused on all areas of the curriculum not just the core subjects. · Yes I'm better planned/organized for lessons · Yes I have become more efficient with timetabling · Using a more interactive resource for Gaeilge has led to more participation within lessons This increases levels of learning and enjoyment. · I feel I am now working towards a fixed goal for my students with EAL I can see areas that I need to be focused on with ease and having planned in advance know where i am going in terms of their learning and what I will

	<p>do next.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has improved my preparation of lessons and the ready material for them in the classroom. <p>3.5 Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has made me question myself more and ask how I can improve <p>3.6 Collegiality and Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships with colleagues - easier to approach Yes however I feel that more discussion with peers would be beneficial
<p>QUESTION 2: How do you know?</p>	<p>The responses to Question 2 can be considered as an indications that the project offered teachers the opportunity to live more fully according to the Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct (2nd Edition 2011) which states that</p> <p>'Ethically the role of the teacher is to educate. The Council expects that the values of respect, care, integrity and trust will underpin the work of the teacher in the practice of his or her profession.' (Teaching Council 2011:6).</p> <p>In terms of</p> <p>Respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Teachers uphold human dignity and promote equality, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, teachers demonstrate respect for spiritual and cultural values, diversity, social justice, freedom, democracy and the environment' My term plans now take differentiation into account I can now relax more and have more time for discussions and meetings I enjoyed teaching the area that I evaluated more and I can see that the children enjoy this area also. This (the children) was my criteria for judging improvement <p>Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'A teacher's practice is motivated by the best interests of the pupils/students entrusted to his/her care. Teachers show this through positive influence, professional judgement and empathy in practice.' The development in pupils work (homework) and knowledge about the topic is evident I consciously ensured that my plans were clear and made sure I had time to cover everything and meet children's needs I did small group work in English and feel that it benefited a lot of kids The children struggling were able to achieve more and those who were fit for more got time to do it. <p>Integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in integrity. Teachers exercise integrity through their professional commitments, responsibilities and actions Lessons are more thorough – easier to evaluate I find I am meeting deadlines without panicking I have kept folder of work that has been done, is being done and is to be done by these children

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing to cover more subjects in a day Creating aims for every subject and evaluating whether I met them or not <p>Trust</p> <p>Trust embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Teachers' relationships with pupils/students, colleagues, parents/guardians, school management and the public are based on trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have felt that I used a more child centred approach and more active learning approach More aware that as a teacher I do not have all the answers – or to say I don't know. Teachers observation of classes and getting children to carry out tasks
<p>QUESTION 3: this form of CPD Viable? If so why?</p>	<p>In terms of : 100% said yes it was viable and they gave personal, collegial and institutional reasons:</p> <p>Personal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gets you thinking about your personal strategies and successes Each person needs to be focused on themselves Throughout ad on how they can improve and better their own teaching. Yes keeps you thinking about how you teach instead of falling into a pattern <p>Collegial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourages discussion between staff members and encouraged me to try new things It allows staff to discuss issues that would rarely be viewed Definitely – it's great to see the staff interacting on a professional level-sharing expertise, learning how to improve teaching and learning Yes working as a group allowed us to hear and use ideas if others <p>Institutional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> as teachers do not have a formal forum to air ideas and concerns Yes it ensures you are more focused and the children as a result benefit from it. Yes it encourages teachers to reflect on their teaching and therefore try to improve it. It can only be a positive
<p>QUESTION 4: If you believe that valid and authentic professional development can be achieved through this kind of reflective practice model, then what advice would</p>	<p>Suggestions for further roll out in terms of</p> <p>Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> personal self development can be done in the extra hour Begin at the start of the year x 2 Beginning of the year not too near the end of the year Make time dedicated to it. <p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As is now whole school discussion I feel it worked well – small groups worked and then general discussions

<p>you give on how to organise it in the future?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Put teachers into their class level groups · Has to be organised in a structured forum – maybe look for ideas from staff, prioritise them and maybe organise as part of CPD · Specific topics of interest to the staff – work on some of these · Yes maybe work with colleague at own level - similar to planning meetings · It was well organised this time · I felt that the small groups worked well for discussions and ensured that all ideas and voices were heard as well as receiving advice from others <p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A closer look at values – what is education? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is knowledge? • How is knowledge acquired? • What is the use of education? · Specific topics of interest to the staff – work on some of these · Based on areas of weakness, perhaps teachers who have good ideas could share them in a session
<p>QUESTION 5: What advice would you give the DES, Teaching council or INTO about how it might be implemented or rolled out on a broader scale?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Unfortunately the time span was short · The extra hour can be effectively used · Continuous training · Educate teachers on the value of it · Lots of examples · Train up facilitators · Option as a summer course · Think some talks on self -assessment and time allocated by DES every month for self-assessment · Use a pilot school/schools and perhaps pool ideas re group discussions · Time is required to do this · Ask them to advise schools that this is a valuable way to use our extra hour

APPENDIX 7

Numbers of participants			
Groups	1st level	2nd Level	Teachers in Further Education
Cork Education Support Centre (CESC)	11	2	2
Drumcondra Education Centre (DEC)	7	1	
Whole School Project (WSP)	35	Not applicable	Not applicable

APPENDIX 8

SPECIFIC AREAS RESEARCHED BY PARTICIPANT TEACHERS

- Get everything, I planned to get done, done - time management
- Be more subject balanced/enthusiastic about all subjects
- Have an openness to new ideas
- Take more time to respond to children
- Slow pace and interaction of lessons
- Organisational skills
- Voice levels
- More creative & versatile
- I.T competency
- Differentiation across the curriculum
- Allowing the child to learn at own pace
- The child /learning-centred classroom and the teacher centred classroom are based in two different ideas about what education means. Which is important to me and my teaching?
(for example John Dewey saw education as an opportunity to learn how to apply previous experiences in new ways and Lev Vygotsky talked about scaffolding pupil learning)
- Supporting child-centred education which is difficult in bigger classes.
- Teaching is about motivation but can it depend on the subject
- Assessment of tangible outcomes as well as intangible things
- What is the link between education and teaching. We have not discussed what education means since college. Education is about fulfilling the potential of the child and a growth for all the participants in it.
- Differentiation of curriculum assessment
- Democratic classroom
- Grief
- Facilitating teachers in art groups/language support
- Information and Communications Technology in Post Leaving Certificate courses
- Teacher as researcher
- Improving literacy skills
- Improving Maths skills
- Dealing with an unhappy child in resource class
- Organising group work
- Improving poor reading fluency and comprehension

- Dealing with and understanding autism
- Maths differentiation
- Encouraging course leaders to teach with differentiated learning in mind
- Renewing passion and enthusiasm in teaching
- Developing a more student-orientated learning environment for deaf pupils
- Helping a child to develop independence and socialise more with his peers in his mainstream class setting
- Focussing on children's differing learning styles and make more use of ICT as a tool in teaching
- Planning better so that teaching is more effective and efficient
- Developing time-management skills in order to become more organised and not try to do too much
- Involving the whole school community in a Green Schools initiative

(Some areas were replicated by numerous participants)