Continuous Professional Development and its Impact on Practice:
A North-South Comparative Study of Irish Teachers' Perceptions, Experiences and Motivations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study aimed to explore the perceptions, experiences and motivational dimensions of continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers from two different jurisdictions: Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (RoI). It addressed the personal, school and system contexts that motivate or inhibit teachers to engage in CPD, whilst looking at the impact of engagement on their practice. A mixed methodological approach incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods was utilised. Firstly two focus groups (n=9), in association with a review of published literature, were carried out to inform the questionnaire. The quantitative online questionnaire (n=74) was distributed using Survey Monkey. The findings showed a general level of agreement between teachers in ROI and NI. Teachers in both jurisdictions agreed that their most frequent experience of CPD was an in-service model of mandated CPD. They agreed that the primary purpose of CPD was to up-skill themselves and they felt that generally it was their own personal responsibility to engage in CPD. With regard to impact, they felt that gaining accredited, higher level qualifications which were relevant, applicable and provided opportunities for reflection had the most impact on their practice. Findings from this study will support the development of CPD of teachers in both jurisdictions and recommendations will be made to both teaching councils as to the way forward with regard to practice and research.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

In this study the researchers set out to explore the perceptions, experiences and motivational dimensions of continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers from two different jurisdictions: Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (RoI). Given the different contexts within which teachers from NI and RoI practise, the aim of the study was twofold: firstly, to examine the extent, if any, of the impact of those contextual features on teachers' lived practice; secondly, to identify teachers' perceptions of the factors - personal, school and system linked - that motivate or inhibit their improving their practice. It was our intention to achieve those aims by listening closely to teachers' stories and we emphasise that this is a perceptual study from the practitioner's stance.

1.1   Structure of the Report

In the opening section of this chapter (chapter one) the focus and aims of the study have been explained. The rationale for undertaking this particular inquiry is explained in the following section. The educational context of each jurisdiction as it pertains to teacher professional development is described by way of offering a background against which the findings of this inquiry are to be understood. In chapter two a brief review of the literature provides the theoretical framework that underpins the report, while chapter three is an elaboration of the methodology applied. The findings are outlined in chapter four. In the fifth chapter two vignettes from practice capture the essence of the composite experience of teachers from each jurisdiction and these are followed by a discussion and recommendations in chapter six.

1.2   The Rationale

The research participants are qualified teachers (nursery, primary and post-primary) undertaking master level (M-level) postgraduate courses in two universities: Trinity College Dublin and Stranmillis University College, Belfast. The rationale for focusing on this group of teachers is

based on a number of factors but principally on the finding in the OECD TALIS[1] Report (2009) which highlights that teachers who undertake university level professional development believe it to have greater impact on their practice than other professional development. Given the undoubted influence of OECD research and reports on the member states' education systems (Coolahan, 2007b; Sugrue, 2006), it is reasonable to subject such findings to further critical interrogation. In addition Guskey (2006) claims that one of the reasons why teacher professional development has not resulted in changed classroom practice and student learning outcomes is that the factors that motivate teachers have not been considered. Teachers' motivation is one of the key themes of this inquiry. There is a growing body of research that advocates the adoption of school-based initiatives to encourage teachers to deprivatise their practice (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006) and to focus on the development of school-based teacher professional learning communities (Stoll et al., 2006). Some versions of both those approaches are practised in the NI system within the Performance Related Staff Development programme, PRSD (discussed later in this report). In this study we set out to explore the impact of these practices with a group of teachers whose personal commitment to ongoing learning is already demonstrated by their decision to undertake and, in most cases, pay for their own professional development at university level.

In addition the OECD suggests that 'research on how the incidence and intensity of different types of professional development activities influences learning outcomes is still limited ... It is not clear to what extent professional development triggers or responds to the adoption of new techniques in the classroom'(OECD, 2011). This is a dimension of this study.

1.3   The Contexts – North and South

In considering the background to and description of current practice in each jurisdiction the following dimensions will be addressed:

- Who provides and funds CPD?

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[1]

TALIS focuses on the learning environments and teaching conditions in post-primary schools that offer programmes to Junior Cycle (lower-secondary) students (ages 12-15 years).

- What is the purpose of CPD?
- What is the overall emphasis in content and focus?
- What is the dominant model of CPD?
- What incentives and supports are offered to teachers?
- What are the post-CPD follow-through procedures?

From the outset it is important to note that for the purpose of this report the authors make a distinction between a) mandated continuous professional development and b) mandatory continuous professional development. Mandated CPD as it is used in this study is CPD that teachers are obliged to attend as it is organised by education providers during teachers' working hours. Mandatory CPD is applicable in situations where there are professional requirements to engage in CPD and to show evidence of such participation for continuing certification in the profession.

1.3.1   The Context: Republic of Ireland (RoI)

A Background to and Description of Current Practice

At system level the story of teacher professional development in RoI is one of ebbs and flows. Noted educationalist, Prof. John Coolahan, who has been influential in most of the major change initiatives over the last forty years, describes it as 'a chequered history' (Coolahan, 2007a, p. 2) with periods of significant developments followed by stagnation. It could also be argued that it is a story of the influence of OECD and the European Union on Irish education since the publication of the first OECD report on education, *Investment in Education,* in 1965 heralded a new era in Irish education and in particular the seminal report of its *Review of National Policies of Education* in 1991.

As a highly centralised approach, in 1992 the In-Career Development Unit (ICDU) was established to coordinate teacher professional development in the Republic of Ireland. This division of the Department of Education and Skills became known as Teacher Education Section (TES) in 2004. In the early years the teacher education programmes organised by ICDU/TES were principally curricular support or development planning support initiatives which later

included other areas of support such as school attendance and behaviour management. Prior to 1998 the provision of teacher professional development in Ireland was unsystematic and uptake was generally based on individual choice. Loxley et al described it thus: 'in the absence of any form of central provision, a default policy of laissez-faire prevailed' (Loxley, Johnston, Murchan, Fitzgerald, & Quinn, 2007, p. 270). From 1999 onwards the establishment of in-service programmes, organised on a national basis and designed and 'delivered' by teachers seconded from their schools, became the normative response to professional development needs (O'Sullivan, 2010). So over time a highly prescriptive form of CPD was mandated for every teacher in the country, during school hours (95% of teachers in the TALIS report stated that they received scheduled time for CPD) and funded by the DES. It could be argued that it came to be considered a teacher's entitlement without any reciprocity. In chapter three these programmes will be examined in greater detail in terms of the models of professional development that they typify. The following table gives an example of the kind of programmes that were offered:

Table 1.0: Sample List of Professional Development Programmes 1999 – 2010

In-Service Professional Development Programmes (Primary Level)	In-Service Professional Development Programmes (Post-Primary Level)
Primary Curriculum Support Service (PCSP)	School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI)
School Development Planning Service (SDPS)	Second Level Support Service (Curriculum) (SLSS)
Relationship and Sexuality	Relationship and Sexuality (RSE)
School Support Programme (Disadvantaged)	Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)
Child Abuse Prevention Programme	Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)
Substance Misuse Prevention Programme	Junior Cycle Physical Education (JCPE)
Teacher Professional Network Scheme	Teacher Professional Network Scheme (TPNS)
Reading Recovery	Technology
Summer Courses	Dublin Cool Schools Pilot Project (Anti-Bullying)
Special Education Support Service (SESS)	National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)
Leadership Development for Schools (LDS)	Leadership Development for Schools (LDS)
Primary Professional Development Service [2008: An amalgamation of PCSP & SDPS]	**SLSS incorporated SPHE, JCPE, RSE in September 2009.**
September 2010 to present: Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). According to its website 'the overarching aim of the PPDS is to support the development of schools as professional learning communities, in which teachers' professional development is closely linked to school development and improvement and pupil progress' www.pdst.ie accessed 03March 2012.	

(O'Sullivan, 2010)

A typical experience at primary level, for example, involved teachers attending off-site seminars as a whole school staff for an average of five to six days annually over the duration of the implementation of what is called the Revised Curriculum. It was then expected that the teachers would return to their schools, work collaboratively to customise the materials of each curricular area for their own particular circumstances and write it up as a three year plan. Once established, and while the funding lasted, these agencies continued to increase in personnel and seemed to reinvent themselves according to changing circumstances; for example, when the Revised Curriculum had been introduced to all primary level teachers, the PCSP facilitators became 'cuiditheoiri'[2]. However, in September 2010, when public finances dictated, numbers of teachers on secondment to the support services were seriously reduced and a large number of the programmes were merged into the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). While the dominant model of CPD in RoI has been off-site, seminar style lectures and workshops, mandated and funded by the DES (TALIS report shows that 79%of teachers who reported that they participated in CPD said they paid no costs) and provided by seconded teachers, there are also many other providers of CPD such as, for example, Teacher Unions, Management Bodies, Subject Organisations, Professional Organisations, Universities and Education Centres. The courses provided by non-DES groups are generally taken up by teachers on a voluntary basis and include lectures, seminars, conferences and workshops. All CPD, whether or not it is provided by DES, is characterised by a predominantly transmission model of learning and teaching. There exists little or no collaboration between the various providers and there is no indication of any initiative being considered to reach a shared vision or framework and reduce the fragmented nature of CPD.

In summary, at system level up to the 2010/11 school year, the dominant experience of CPD is mandated but not mandatory in the RoI, is largely provided and funded by the DES with the purpose of implementing a DES-driven policy and it is about building teacher skills, rather than capacity. The focus is curricular change rather than developing the person of the teacher. It is

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[2]**'Cuiditheoirí' is an Irish language term meaning 'helpers'. The PCSP 'cuiditheoirí' visited teachers on site in schools and offered support through modelling lessons or supporting at a whole school level.**

not officially a requirement for promotion but it is included in interview criteria and in practice it is an important factor in promotion. There are no explicit incentives for teachers to engage in CPD; however, time is made available during the working day and costs are generally covered by the DES, except where teachers seek out their own CPD with other providers such as university-based courses. In the latter instance there are schemes by which teachers recoup some or all of the costs. CPD is listed by the Teaching Council as a professional duty but as yet not a requirement. The summary report of the TALIS survey states:

> The types of professional development undertaken by teachers in Ireland in the 18 months prior to TALIS included attendance at courses and workshops (86% of teachers), participation in professional development networks (51%), attendance at education conferences and seminars (42%), and individual and collaborative research (26%). Relative to the corresponding TALIS country averages, proportionately fewer teachers in Ireland participated in mentoring and peer observation (18% vs. 35%), qualification programmes (11% vs. 25%), or observation visits to other schools (8% vs. 28%). (Shiel, Perkins, & Gilleece, 2009)

Some key developments are indicative of changes to come in the RoI. The Teaching Council is now charged with the development of policy and practice of teacher professional development. The recent publication of its *New Draft Code of Professional Conduct* (October 2011) suggests that the Teaching Council of Ireland is following trends in other countries such as NI of a standards based approach by listing competences that Irish teachers are to develop. However, in its *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* (June 2011), for the first time there is an indication that CPD may become mandatory in the RoI and more school-based:

> The Council intends to work towards a position, following the adoption of a coherent national framework for CPD as outlined above, where renewal of registration with the Teaching Council will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory evidence in relation to engagement in CPD.(TCI, 2011, p. 19)

and

> 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.(TCI, 2011, p. 20)

The second major initiative is the induction programme for newly qualified teachers (NQTs). In September 2010, the Minister for Education established a National Induction Programme for Teachers. Up to this time such programmes were only offered on a pilot basis with resulting limited availability to schools.

Finally, the financial crisis hitting the country means that all professional development support services are experiencing cutbacks and downsizing. The contemporaneous change in the public's attitude to public sector working conditions has led to a new trend in that DES funded CPD, such as it is, is now in some cases offered outside school hours. In the absence of any official requirements to attend CPD outside designated working hours, the level of take-up of such CPD is yet to be assessed.

So, by way of locating RoI in relation to other systems, the TALIS report is helpful:

> In Ireland, 90% of teachers reported that they had participated in some professional development. This is about the same as the TALIS country average (89%), and greater than Denmark (76%). On average, teachers in Ireland attended fewer days of professional development (6 days) than their counterparts in other TALIS countries (OECD, 2009b, Table 3.1). The TALIS country average is 15 days (Table 3.1). For Irish teachers, 41% of all professional development days taken are compulsory – a figure that is also lower than the corresponding TALIS country average (51%) (Table 3.1).
> (Shiel et al., 2009, p. 4)

At School Level

The education system in the RoI is a small system comprising 3,284 primary and 742 second-level referred to as post-primary schools. The vast majority of schools in Ireland are publicly funded through the DES but privately owned, usually by religious bodies. At individual school level, the current system of school governance is by individual boards of management, serving a four year term. These combine patron nominees and elected representatives including parents and local representatives. The elected representatives, in the main, have little prior experience of governance before joining the board, with the result that much of the responsibility of leading and managing Irish schools falls on the principal. Typically, the onus is on the school to create a budget for professional development at school level. In the words of the Education Act 1998, it is the function of a school to:

> … ensure that the needs of personnel involved in management functions and staff development needs generally in the school are identified and provided for.(Ireland, 1998, pp. Section 9, j)

Equally significantly, the section on the duties of the principal asserts:

> In addition to the functions of a Principal provided for in *Section 22*, the Principal shall:

a) be responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including guidance and direction of the teachers and other staff of the school, and be accountable to the board for that management,
b) provide leadership to the teachers and other staff and the students of the school,
c) be responsible for the creation, together with the board, parents of students and the teachers, of a school environment which is supportive of learning among the students and which promotes the professional development of the teachers.
(Ireland"Education Act 1998," 1998, Section 23.)

Thus, the Act identifies professional development as a statutory right and, significantly, places the responsibility on the school to foster, and actively provide for, professional development of teachers in RoI.

Historically the issue of time for school-based professional development has been a recurring theme in discussions about education in RoI. It is often the 'elephant in the room' when looking at school improvement, in that teachers' contracted hours generally correspond with pupils' time in school. The rhetoric of the need to develop collaborative learning practices among teachers (Teaching Council website) has in practice been negated by the simple fact that up to the current school year 2011/12, with the establishment of the 'Croke Park Hours'[3], no time is assigned for such collaboration. It is an issue about which a growing number of people have voiced their concerns (Coolahan, 2003; Hogan, 2007; Murchan, Loxley, Johnston, Quinn, & Fitzgerald, 2005), and is echoed in the report issued by the inspectorate of the DES:

> …. that there is a difficulty about the provision of time for collaborative planning; this issue should now be resolved by all the education partners.(DES, 2005, p. 10)

According to the Circulars (0008/2011 for Primary and Circular 0025/2011 for Post-Primary) issued to schools by the DES, the Croke Park hours may be used in the following ways:

> School management may designate the use of the …hours to provide additional time to deal with some or all of the following items.
> - school planning and policy development (including subject planning)
> - staff meetings
> - parent teacher meetings (in line with the agreed formula for such meetings)
> - induction

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[3] **'The Croke Park Hours' refer to the extra hours that teachers are required to fulfil as integral to the implementation ofthe Croke Park Agreeement between government and public sector employees.**

- nationally mandated in-service/ Continuous Professional Development e.g. new programmes or syllabi

These 33 (post-primary) and 36 (primary) hours are to be worked in addition to the 167 day school year at post-primary level and 183 day school year at primary level. While these extra hours in school have for the first time created an opportunity for school-based collaboration and sharing of practice, anecdotal evidence suggests that not every school prioritises their use for CPD. However, the scheme is still in its infancy.

There are two important factors that need to be considered in relation to school-based CPD. The first is the lack of funding for such programmes and in the absence of such support it is up to the individual school whether to allocate any financial resources to CPD and to raise the money to do so.

The second factor is the culture of privacy that is still a dominant feature of schools in RoI. In the 1991 OECD report the authors referred to the autonomy of the Irish teacher as 'legendary' (OECD, 1991). Twenty years later, the TALIS report highlights that 'In Ireland, just 15% of principal teachers indicated that they observed instruction in classrooms, either 'quite often' or 'very often''(Gilleece, Shiel, Perkins, & Proctor, 2009, p. 138). Given ' the predominant cultural norm of non-interference with professionals' (O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011) there is little evidence of any deprivatisation of practice or feedback given to practising teachers other than those at induction stage into the practice. This is what Conway et al describe as the 'pedagogical solitude' (Conway, Murphy, Hall, & Rath, 2011) of the RoI education system.

In summary, at school level, CPD in RoI is highly dependent on the individual school, reflective of a culture of privacy of practice, with few examples of real collaborative learning as envisaged in the literature of professional learning communities (Stoll et al., 2006). Observation of practice is not a norm and CPD, outside of that mandated by the DES, is generally seen as a personal option.

1.3.2   The Context: Northern Ireland (NI)

A Background to and Description of Current Practice

Although there are many similarities between ROI and NI with regard to the Continuous Professional Development of teachers, significant differences do exist. One of the biggest influential changes came about following a review of teacher education in NI. In 2002, the Department of Education instructed the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) to review CPD, taking cognisance of the NI Teacher Education Committee (NITEC) paper *The Continuous Professional Development of Teachers in Northern Ireland – a proposal* (August 2002).Prior to the review, GTCNI had noted that there was considerable uncertainty as to what exactly constitutes CPD and attributed this confusion to the Implementation of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989. Article 29 of the Order described a structure of support for staff to help them come to terms with the curriculum changes. The *modus operandi* for this support via the Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS), along with funding changes, led to a culture of 'centrally directed courses'. These mandated courses served to 'restrict the profession's understanding of what constituted professional development activity'(GTCNI, 2002, p. 23). At this time the GTCNI noted that CPD tended to be reactive, often triggered by and linked to systemic issues such as curriculum change. Teachers tended to engage with it sporadically and only when it was externally imposed on them to do so.

In addition to educational reform, another significant development for CPD was the introduction in 2002 of the non-statutory Staff Development and Performance Review (SDPR) scheme and threshold. This was ultimately replaced by the statutory Performance Related Staff Development (PRSD) scheme in 2005. PRSD was designed to ensure that all teachers and principals had an opportunity, and a right, to reflect regularly on their work with the help and support of other professionals. This review process aimed to demonstrate a school's commitment to the development of all its teachers and to ensure increasing levels of expertise, job satisfaction and career enhancement. In this way, PRSD was to be integrated into school life, linked to school development planning and to teaching and learning (Fitzpatrick, 2007). Although PRSD was linked to school reform and was seen to feed into school development plans, staff tended to view it in a negative way and with suspicion. Due to the nature of inspection and assessment, they

tended to choose areas where they felt competent rather than focus on areas for true development.

It was, therefore, against this backdrop that the GTCNI set out to establish a framework for Continuous Professional Development. The council sought 'to enshrine the notion of 'right of access' within its statement of guiding principles and the notion of 'responsibility' within its Code of Values and Professional Practice'(GTCNI, 2004, p. 24). The council identified several of the issues that impacted on the profession's lack of engagement in CPD. It noted a culture where CPD was viewed more as an imposition than a right or responsibility and wanted to ensure that the profession recognised the responsibility of all teachers to engage in ongoing professional development. It is noteworthy that, ten years later, many of these issues are still pertinent in NI. Below is a list of the perceived barriers identified by GTCNI [GTC, 2005] with regard to CPD:

- no agreed definition of, or an agreed understanding of, the purposes of CPD;
- no single co-ordinating body affording CPD providers, policy makers and representatives of the profession an opportunity to map provision against an agreed framework and to agree approaches and interfaces;
- no substantive funding programme to allow schools the opportunity to engage in school-focused CPD;
- no funding and little opportunity for all teachers to avail of individualised CPD;
- no clarity or structure in regard to development opportunities open to teachers other than that offered in regard to the Professional Qualification for Headship in Northern Ireland(PQHNI) or those associated with academic study routes which many may not wish to undertake;
- no real opportunity for the majority of teachers to have professional learning recognised; and
- no structured or systematic approach to the recording of professional development.

Accordingly, in 2005 the GTCNI set out to develop a framework for the Professional Development of teachers in NI. The teacher competences (GTCNI, 2005) are well established within Initial Teacher Education and have been embedded into the Induction period of Early Professional Development (EPD), but these do not underpin professional development beyond the initial three year period. Therefore the council aimed to develop a framework that would allow the profession to embrace CPD at the heart of its professional practice. It was suggested that such a framework would allow for the establishment of a shared understanding of CPD, reflecting the professional competences and providing a structured, co-ordinated approach to

planning and resource allocation. GTCNI assumed that such a framework would assimilate the PRSD within a broader context of professional development and the council would take on board the role of accreditation and certification of professional learning and the recording of achievement. The structure for recording such professional learning via portfolios already exists in the education system, so the mechanism to monitor CPD in a co-ordinated manner could be easily implemented.

In establishing a framework, GTCNI adopted Day's (1999) definition of CPD and contends that all stakeholders should accept and adopt this definition as it encapsulates the philosophy of enlightenment and empowerment. The definition has at its core the enhancement of classroom practice and acknowledges the need to develop teachers as individuals. It relies on the assumption that by developing individuals one will develop professional communities. Once established, learning communities can gain the capacity to work co-operatively and members are more likely to develop as lifelong learners who engage in 'open practice' and knowledge sharing.

> Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives. (Day, 1999, p. 4)

This framework is expansive and inclusive and reflects the variety of activities that can be undertaken as part of a teacher's lifelong professional development. These include the traditionally provided RTU training courses or CASS out-centres courses, in addition to self-directed study options such as M. Ed or Doctorate courses. However, they also include 'on the job' mentoring or coaching; engagement in curriculum development; participation in peer networks or cluster school collaboration; secondments and even participation in ICT mediated learning through email discussion groups. This list is far from exhaustive, but it offers an illustration of the professional learning opportunities available for teachers in NI.

In addition to the range of activities provided in the CPD Framework, the council proposes the establishment of professional development milestones, namely Chartered Teacher and Advanced Chartered Teacher [GTC, 2005]. Chartered teacher status is a milestone for teachers to progress to, having completed their Early Professional Development (EPD). Advanced Chartered Teacher status would carry remuneration. These new professional milestones recognise a level of achievement and status and would afford teachers the opportunity to develop excellence in areas which are not solely predicated on preparation for headship or any formal leadership role.

Currently GTCNI continues to support the entitlement of all teachers to engage in CPD and it is hoped that the framework will help facilitate this. The council supports the use of more ICT-enhanced CPD as a useful means of increasing access for all teachers in all sectors. It notes the need for professional time specifically allocated to engage in meaningful CPD, such as the use of annual CPD days and proposes that funding for CPD be re-evaluated to support the variety of CPD activities in a more universal way. The need for partnership with other organisations is acknowledged alongside a proposal to establish a new Professional Education Committee to oversee the Accreditation and Certification of CPD (GTC, 2005).

In summary, the professionalization of teacher education in Northern Ireland is still in a state of flux. The current system supports the individual and school engagement of CPD, but access and equity remain unresolved issues. Teachers continue to engage in mandated CPD and there is a move by GTCNI towards mandatory CPD (consistent with other professions such as nursing, psychology etc.). However, several issues remain unresolved and there continue to be many actual and perceived barriers to lifelong professional development of teachers.

CHAPTER 2 - AN OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In this chapter an overview of the literature relevant to this study is presented by way of providing a backdrop against which the inquiry may be understood and interpreted. The review will incorporate three fields of literature that influence the authors' thinking and research. These fields include the literature on: teacher professionalism in general; teacher professional development and professional learning communities. While the dimensions overlap, each has its own particular contribution to make to a better appreciation of the phenomenon that is teacher continuous professional development.

2.1 Teacher Professionalism

The process of defining the term 'professional' is a complex one. Apart from the 'ideal type' professions of law and medicine, the boundaries and categories are often problematic (Eraut, 1994). Teaching has often been regarded as a 'semi-profession' (Saracho & Spodek, 2003) and (Hoyle, 2001) points out that, in Britain, only in the 2001 census were teachers accorded full professional status by being placed for the first time in Category 2 with doctors, lawyers, clergy, librarians and social workers. Thus the notion of teacher professionalism has acquired a strong 'external' element of societal recognition and this confers 'a professional identity that is instantly recognizable and linked to the practices, ethics, codes and core values by which they are defined' (Moloney, 2010, p. 172). This sense of professional identity is tied in with belonging to a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) or professional learning community (Bolam et al., 2005) and, according to Wenger (1998), necessarily involves the dual elements of sharing with colleagues a passion for the practice of teaching and engaging collegially in improvement. The professional standards documents produced by the two teaching councils of Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) and Teaching Council of Ireland (TCI) respectively), relate to this 'external' aspect of the teaching profession and set out the codes of conduct, values and competences to be achieved by those who belong to this profession (GTCNI 2007; TCI 2007). These are binding both at initial training and continuing professional development stages of the continuum of teacher education.

However, equally pertinent to the concept of teacher professionalism is the 'internal' element, whereby 'professional identities come to be conceptualized as embodied performances … rather than an externally constructed label conferred upon an occupational group'(Osgood, 2011, p. 111). Rinaldi (2006) describes the task of training early years care and education professionals as assisting students to find the connection between theory and practice, until they find their metaphorical locus in that 'meeting place' (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 194). Framing professional development as a personal journey, she refers to the process whereby this is brought about as 'formazione' - a combination of professional and personal development. Such a view is easily and validly applied to the teaching profession as a whole. (GTCNI, 2007, p. 46) reinforces this 'internal' perspective by arguing that teachers should assume individual responsibility for their ongoing professional development as an 'essential expression of their professionalism'. Similarly, (TCI, 2011, p. 20) states that 'Individual teachers should actively shape their own professional development'.

It is notable that, within the Teaching Council of Ireland document (TCI, 2011) *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education,* the section on 'Continuing Professional Development' contains separate subsections on 'Teacher formation' and 'Partnership and Collaboration, thus indicating the importance of both the personal journey and the corporate improvement aspects of professional development. It is therefore argued throughout this report that effective teacher professional development must take account of both 'external' and 'internal' approaches, resulting in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) as the context for professional development at both personal and wider levels. This will be further addressed later in this chapter.

2.2   Teacher Professional Development

Teacher continuous professional development (CPD) has become the central focus of most educational systems intent on improving standards in schools. It is also generally accepted that, next to CPD, school leadership is a close second in terms of importance assigned by governments across the globe.

While there are multiple definitions of CPD, it is interesting that the understanding adopted by the researchers at the outset of the study was that captured in Day's (1999) definition already cited above as it is, by coincidence, the definition chosen by the GTCNI for its framework document (GTCNI, 2005).

Like Day, Earley and Bubb highlight the breadth of experience, formal and informal, that is ideally incorporated into a CPD programme and they emphasise the importance of developing the person of the teacher:

> Broadly speaking continuing professional development encompasses all formal and informal learning that enables individuals to improve their own practice. Personal development is an aspect of professional development and wherever possible the two should interact and complement each other.(Earley & Bubb, 2004 b, p. 4)

Given the many references to the TALIS report, it is also important to consider their understanding in light of the above:

> TALIS defines professional development as 'activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher' in the form of courses and workshops, education conferences and seminars, qualification programmes, observation visits to schools, participation in networks of teachers, individual or collaborative research, and mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching.(Shiel et al., 2009, p. 4)

The TALIS interpretation does not refer to the professional qualities specifically identified by Day (1999) such as moral purpose, commitment, good professional thinking, and change agency. While it could be claimed that such meaning is inferred, neither does this TALIS definition foreground the importance of developing the person of the teacher (Earley & Bubb, 2004). The lack of emphasis on professional and personal renewal and enhancement may in fact indicate a lack of 'soul' in programmes led and funded by institutions of the state rather than institutions of the profession. This is a subject to be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

2.2.1   CPD Educators

Educators leading teachers' CPD clearly play a highly influential role in the quality of teacher learning. The term 'teacher educator', traditionally associated with those involved in initial teacher education, has come to mean more as highlighted below:

> Now, there is increasingly a distinction between the experience of 'initial teacher training' and that of continuing professional development, with the latter typified by school based models of mentoring and coaching, professional learning communities and peer-focused support. Inevitably, therefore, the perception and definition of the term 'teacher educator' must extend to those professionals who are practising in schools and who have formal or informal involvement in the professional development of other colleagues.(Swennen, Jones, & Volman, 2010, p. 132)

Swennen et al. above see CPD as being mainly school-based but it must be remembered that it is not exclusively so. While the practice in many systems is that teachers are seconded from their schools, put through a brief 'training the trainers' programme and then put to the task of leading peers on a CPD learning journey, little research has explored the role and impact of that approach. The inclusion of teachers in the CPD endeavour is undoubtedly laudable and appropriate, and proposed in the OECD 1991 report in RoI; however, when it becomes the dominant model over long periods of time there are other issues to be considered, as noted by Sugrue:

> … consequence of this approach to CPD has been the relative marginalisation of other providers, particularly colleges of education and university faculties of education, despite the persistent rhetoric throughout the period of 'partnership'. Instead, professional support has been 'serviced' by principals and teachers who were seconded from their respective schools and classrooms. This 'practitioner-driven' CPD became the pervasive model. De facto, therefore, this evidence suggests a pragmatic model of CPD that privileges craft or practitioner knowledge, and assumes also that all of the necessary expertise to transform curricula, pedagogy and school leadership already resides within schools.(Sugrue, 2011, p. 797)

Given that teacher education is, as Linda Darling-Hammond et al (2005) suggest, an almost 'impossible task' it surely needs the wisdom, knowledge, skills and qualities of a wide variety of expertise in the field: the practitioner, the researcher, the academic and the student. While much has been written on the role of external CPD educators working in developing countries, they make the case that:

> ...., in developing countries, the technical skills and the pedagogical and subject understanding of teacher trainers are often identified as a constraint in the development of effective in-service teacher training programmes.

Can we be sure that it is more globally relevant than we think? Would CPD not have a greater chance of leading teachers to ' renew, review and extend their commitment as change agents to

the moral purposes of teaching'(Day, 1999)if it were to be inclusive of multiple providers each bringing their own particular portfolio of expertise and qualities?

Given the decade of continuous CPD in the RoI, for example, it must be asked why:

> Although in some TALIS countries, holding constructivist beliefs is shown to be associated with participation in professional development activities, this is not the case in Ireland. Here, constructivist beliefs are not found to be associated with quantity of professional development or participation in professional development activities…(Gilleece et al., 2009)

2.2.2   *Models and Purpose of Continuous Professional Development*

The researchers engaged in this study acknowledge the different models of CPD that are practised both in NI and RoI. We also acknowledge that they are representative of most CPD menus on offer around the globe. However, we agree very much with Kennedy (2005) when she cites Hoban (2002) 'that there is a paucity of literature addressing the spectrum of CPD models in a comparative manner'(Kennedy, 2005, p. 235). Given the focus on CPD this is a concern. Kennedy (2005) presents a framework through which it is possible to review the nine different models of CPD she identifies and she considers each from a number of perspectives. The nine models are self-explanatory: training, award-bearing, deficit, cascade, standards-based, coaching and mentoring, community of practice, action research and transformational. Kennedy considers the practice of CPD through a lens of five key questions. For the purpose of this paper we will focus on her final two questions:

1. What capacity does the CPD allow for supporting professional autonomy
2. Is the fundamental purpose of the CPD to provide a means of transmission or to facilitate transformative practice? (Kennedy, 2005, p. 247)

These two questions will be considered in our discussion of the findings from this inquiry. Joyce and Showers (2002) are two of the few researchers to have undertaken a comparative study of the CPD approaches and as a result are now ubiquitously cited. They claim:

> that the knowledge exists for designing and implementing programs that make a difference in the lives of students.(Joyce & Showers, 2002, p. 10)

They also claim that their research shows that the difficulties in transferring and implementing new learning to the classroom are a 'product of weak pre-service and in-service programs, not in

the learning ability of teachers' (Joyce & Showers, 2002, p. 3). They insist that without school-based learning through feedback and coaching few professionals use new strategies until they become normative practices. They urge:

> Staff development programs include demonstrations, opportunities for practice with feedback, and the study of the underlying theory… As initial skill is obtained, the participants should be organised into teams to implement the coaching component within the community of peer coaches, pairs of teachers …visit one another and discuss how to make the strategies work… (Joyce & Showers, 2002, p. 146)

The seminar model of CPD, according to Hogan, has in fact contributed to the perception that professional development is 'an add-on' (Hogan et al., 2007a, p. 22) and not integral to the teacher's main work. A further concern was raised by Sugrue (2002), who highlighted that this model resulted not only in very fragmented experience for teachers, but also in an experience of professional learning that is limiting. Sugrue's interpretation of the Cochran-Smith and Lytle delineation of teacher learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) is seen in the following table:

Table 2.1: Representations of Teachers' Learning (Sugrue, 2002, p. 38)

Knowledge	Policy	Professional Learning	Research
Knowledge for Practice			
A body of empirically verifiable knowledge is generated by experts	Disseminate/update teachers' knowledge-base to attain predetermined goals	Teachers 'bring back' 'best practice' to their classrooms: knowledge users	Researchers, not teachers, generate knowledge
Knowledge in Practice			
[Knowledge is] constructed by teachers in specific contexts	Focus on schools as learning communities for teachers and learners	Teachers: active agents- knowledge construction & reinventing their practice	Systematic documentation of teachers' knowledge
Knowledge of Practice			
[Knowledge is] problematic and contested	Should empower teachers as transformative agents	Learning is social and communal: committed to seeking significant questions	Conducted by teachers as agents of their own learning

This representation by Sugrue suggests that, when knowledge is presented as coming from the expert in compliance with a given policy, teachers apply their new skills without questioning and devoid of critical examination. Sugrue concluded that:

> … much of current provision, though provided by practitioners for their colleagues, may combine some of the more negative features of 'knowledge for practice' and 'knowledge in practice' where teachers are being 'talked at'…, the absence of support at school/classroom level means learning is not sustained as it lacks appropriate support and context sensitive feedback.(Sugrue, 2002, p. 318)

In light of these issues, McMillan (2008) argues that a 'reflective competence' model of training (McMillan, 2008; Reynolds & Salters, 1995) is more likely to produce the 'changing mindsets' that characterise real professional learning and to 'facilitate transformative practice' (Kennedy, 2005, p.247). Furthermore, such a model is conceptually consistent with the widely accepted social constructivist model of children's learning. (Sullivan Palincsar, 2005, p. 308) recommends 'the application of the tenets of social constructivism to the design of professional development contexts with teachers' and Warford's (2011) Zone of Proximal Teacher Development (ZPTD) is an attempt to do this by applying Vygotsky's (1981) well-known Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), to teacher education. The model has four stages and involves 'demonstrations of innovative teaching techniques in actual settings' (McMillan et al, 2012, p.3) as a crucial part of the process. Throughout this process the reflective tools of 'dynamic assessment' (Warford, 2011, p. 255) such as journaling, role-taking and autobiographical narratives are used to assist professional development (see McMillan et al, 2012 for use of this model in developing a Professional Development Model for early years professionals in Ireland).

The role of reflection on theory and practical situations is regarded as essential to effective CPD in many fields such as medicine, social work and nursing, in addition to teaching (Claxton, 2002; Goldie, Dowie, Cotton, & Morrison, 2007; Leeson, 2004; Moon, 1999; Schon, 1987; Taylor, 2006). Moon (1999, p.20) describes the reflective 'experiential learning' approach in terms of 'organizing and construction of learning from observations that have been made in some practical situation, with the implication that the learning can then lead to action (or improved action)'.Given the potential of CPD to inform and transform daily practice in classrooms it is imperative, indeed a professional obligation, that we learn from the research in this field.

2.3 School as a Professional Learning Community

The social constructivist approach to professional development places significant emphasis on constructing professional identity (McGillivray, 2011; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010; Tucker, 2004) at both personal and corporate levels. It follows that the formation of a teacher's 'professional self' and integration into the teaching professional community is dependent on 'contingent realities'(Lave & Wenger, 1991) such as social contexts, experiences and a supportive learning community Wenger (1998, p. 5) contends that the components of learning - 'learning as experiencing, doing, belonging and becoming' - are interdependent and essential to both individual and community identity. Similarly, two of Claxton's (2002) learning dispositions - 'reflectiveness' and 'reciprocity' - involve an array of capacities such as planning, revision, distillation, collaboration, interdependence and imitation, which by definition demand both personal and corporate application.

In short, professional learning is best achieved within a supportive learning community. Thus there is a growing body of evidence supporting the call for CPD to be school-based and as close to classroom practice as possible. The concept of the school as a professional learning community (PLC) - already mentioned earlier in this chapter - is one that offers the structure to facilitate such learning (Carnell, 1999; Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, & Hammerness, 2005; Hord, 2004; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Louis, 2006; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Stoll & Louis, 2007; Watkins, 2005; Wiliam & Thompson, 2007). As quoted in Stoll (2006), a professional learning community is:

> … an inclusive group of people, motivated by a shared learning vision, who support and work with each other, finding ways inside and outside their immediate community, to enquire into their own practice and together learn new and better approaches that will enhance all pupils' learning. (Stoll, 2006, p. 6)

There is general agreement in the literature of the core characteristics of a professional learning community (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2006; Hord, 2004; Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006a):

1. Shared vision based on shared values
2. Shared leadership
3. Collective responsibility for all pupils' learning guided by ongoing assessment
4. Collaborative learning teams based on reflective enquiry and shared practice
5. Individual and collective professional learning

6.   Norms of openness, networks and inclusive membership, mutual trust and respect
7.   Supportive conditions.

However, when following the PLC route of CPD it is vital to consider that creating a professional learning community is a complex undertaking, as research has identified: 'when we turn to the school level… we run into a series of structural, cultural, and vocational impediments' (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2000, p. 10). The basic building block of the professional learning community is the learning team (Dufour et al., 2006; Hord, 2004; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). In setting up and supporting teachers in creating these teams inclusivity is a hallmark (Bolam et al., 2005; Stoll et al., 2006) and yet it is not automatically attainable. Simply creating opportunities for teachers to meet in teams does not necessarily mean that meaningful professional learning is happening. Watkins, we believe, gets to the nub of the issue when he states:

> …a common mechanism is that of creating teacher teams, which does have a positive impact on teacher empowerment and teacher collaboration, but it does not necessarily lead to a greater focus on learning… one of the reasons suggested for this is that teachers do not have the experience and models for how to do it.(Watkins, 2005, p. 190)

The core characteristics of a PLC are fundamental to its effectiveness and authenticity. In fact it could be said that:

> They are interdependent and the absence of even one changes the concept…Any group of people coming together to talk about their practice does not automatically constitute a PLC – there is a danger that the term is now being used so ubiquitously that it is losing all meaning. A support group is different from a planning group; each has a distinct purpose which is different again from the purpose of a PLC. Unless participation in a school-based PLC leads to improving classroom practice, making the hidden visible and improving what and how the students learn then it is not functioning as a PLC. (McDermott, Parsons, & O'Sullivan, Oct 2011, p. 37)

In this chapter the authors have provided an overview of the three main fields of literature relating to the current research. The chapter is structured so as to provide a logical progression from the concept of teacher professionalism in general to the chief components of teacher professional development (here identified as the CPD educators and the models and purpose of CPD) to the school as a professional learning community. As noted at the outset, there are elements of overlap between these sections, yet it is argued that together they contribute to a better appreciation of the phenomenon that is teacher continuous professional development.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

This chapter addresses the methodology used in the study. It will firstly consider the ethics of the study before describing the background context in both ROI and NI. It will then outline the methods adopted for both the focus groups and the questionnaire.

3.1 Ethics

Guided by the ethical principles and protocols of the British Psychological Society, the Psychological Society of Ireland, and the British Educational Research Association, the ethical approach to this research was specifically informed by the Code of Ethics of the School of Education at Trinity College, Dublin. The study adhered to the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and the right to withdraw. All participants gave consent for quotations to be used in the publication of this report and any future published work resulting from this study.

3.2 Methodology design

A mixed methodological approach incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis was utilised. A staged process began with qualitative analysis of the focus group discussions. These focus groups, in conjunction with a review of published literature, informed the questionnaire. The questionnaire data provided a descriptive overview of teachers' perceptions, experiences and impact of CPD and this served to supplement the qualitative data.

3.3 Context in ROI and NI

There are over 3165 primary schools and 730 + post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. Teachers' engagement in CPD is obligatory and there is no requirement to provide evidence of CPD. In Northern Ireland there are 90 nursery schools, 886 + primary schools and 230+ post-primary schools. Teachers in NI engage in an annual performance review process (PRSD) which

suggests that it is good practice to provide evidence of engaging in CPD. The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland is working towards developing a framework for monitoring and certifying CPD and making it mandatory for accreditation.

3.4 Participants

Two centres which provide Masters Level CPD for teachers (one from each jurisdiction) were selected. Practising, qualified teachers who were either engaged in, or had just completed, an M.A/M. Ed course in Trinity College Dublin (TCD) or Stranmillis University College (SUC) were targeted. All prospective participants were sent a letter of invitation by email, with follow-up phone contact where required. Those expressing an interest were sent brief emails explaining what participation would entail and other necessary information. Those participants who agreed to participate in a focus group were contacted to make arrangements.

3.5 Focus Groups

Following pilot studies in both centres of education, nine M-Level students participated in the focus groups (one held in each jurisdiction). Five took part in the ROI focus group and four in the NI focus group. In line with previous research involving teachers, and reflecting course enrolment at both centres, females were overrepresented in both focus groups. The findings from the focus groups were used to inform the questionnaire design and to illuminate some of the quantitative findings. A range of semi-structured questions were developed (See Appendix A) regarding engagement in CPD, its impact on the participants and barriers to CPD. The semi-structured approach to the data collection concluded with participants being asked to suggest alterations to current CPD provision.

3.6 Questionnaire Survey

A total of 220 questionnaires were distributed using Survey Monkey (120 ROI, 100 NI). 112 (51%) questionnaires were completed and returned for analysis (63 ROI and 45 NI were not returned). However, out of those returned, 18 were rejected from ROI and 20 rejected from NI

due to incomplete survey. This resulted in response data of 74 completed surveys (39 ROI and 35 NI).

The majority of respondents (89%) were full-time, permanent teachers with 78% being female. The majority of participants were equally split between primary and post-primary teaching, with only two participants (both in NI) belonging to the nursery sector. Questionnaire content was presented in a similar sequential style to that of the focus group questions (see Appendix B). Response option formats included multiple choice, forced choice and Likert scales. Examples of questions include:

- *How would you rate the general impact of your professional development experiences in enhancing your knowledge of the subject?*
- *What professional development opportunities have you undertaken since you starting teaching and how would you rate the impact on your professional practice?*

3.7 Analysis

Analysis of the quantitative data was completed using SPSS version 16 and descriptive and inferential statistics are presented in this report. Qualitative comments from the focus groups have been used throughout the findings chapter to illuminate data and hypothetical vignettes have been used to 'bring to life' the story of participants' CPD and to illustrate the impact on their practice.

CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

In this section the findings from the focus group interviews as well as the on-line surveys are presented as one report. The presentation is structured under the three key research questions as follows:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of CPD?
2. What CPD have they undertaken? What have they learned?
3. What factors influence uptake and follow-through of CPD at personal, school and system level?

4.1   What are teachers' perceptions of CPD?

Participants were asked to rate a number of statements about CPD in terms of how they related to their own experience. It is important to note that any statements included in this way in the questionnaire were selected on the basis that they were statements made by those who participated in the focus groups or they were included in the TALIS (OECD, 2009) survey.
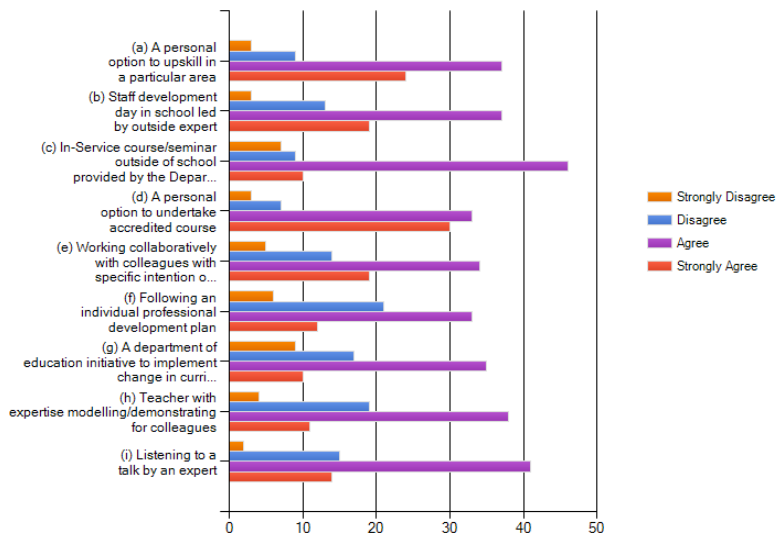
Table 1

Table 1 shows the different options that teachers were asked to provide a score for on a 4 point scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree (left to right) in terms of how the options resonate

with their experience of professional development. For this group, perhaps unsurprisingly, the highest mean rating goes to personal option, with the lowest mean score for a DES initiative to implement change. Further inferential analysis shows no significant differences based on country, age group, gender, permanence of position, school-type, and highest qualification.

4.2 The purpose of CPD

Table 2

Please rate each of the following statements about the PURPOSE of teacher professional development from your experience of its practice:
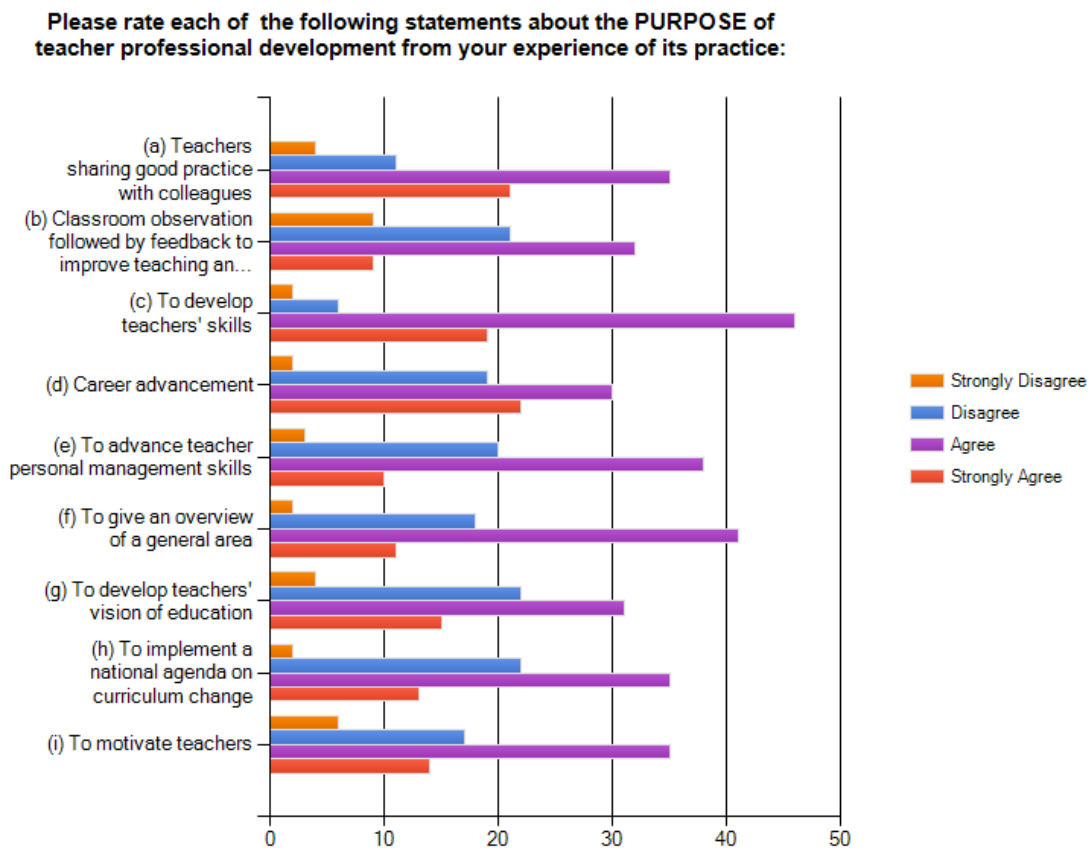

Table 2 shows clearly what the teachers who responded thought of as the purpose of CPD. It was to develop skills, and to enable sharing of good practice, more so than being a classroom observation exercise, or focusing on management skills. In this particular instance, further inferential analyses do reveal some differences between different groups. Differences between teachers in NI and RoI emerge for the items "teachers sharing good practice with colleagues" (F [1, 69] = 4.38, p = .04), "classroom observation followed by feedback to improve teaching and

learning" (F [1, 69] = 11.38, p = .001), and "to give a general overview of an area" (F [1,70] = 4.42, p = .04). For the first two of these items, teachers from NI gave a higher mean rating, while for the final item, teachers from RoI gave a higher mean rating for the third item.

Further analyses reveal no gender differences and one difference based on age in relation to the item "to develop teachers' vision of education" (F [4, 67] = 4.01, p = .006), with the oldest group of teachers showing a particularly low mean rating for this item. A similar finding arises in relation to length of time spent teaching. There was a significant difference based on type of position for the item "to motivate teachers" (F [4,67] = 3.55, p = .011), with full-time permanent teachers giving this item a low mean rating in comparison with full-time temporary teachers giving the highest mean rating for this item. There were no significant differences between primary and post-primary teachers for these items, nor based on highest qualification achieved.

4.2.1 *Professional Development/Professional Learning*

When asked whether, based on their experience, teachers thought that professional development was the same as professional learning, there were significant differences in viewpoints between NI and RoI:

NORTHERN IRELAND (n= 33)	REPUBLIC OF IRELAND (n= 40)
YES = 12%	YES = 42.5%
NO = 82%	NO = 45%
UNSURE = 6%	UNSURE = 12.5%

Sample comments from teachers from NI who responded Yes to the question:

> *Yes-the greater the learning and understanding of an issue/topic the greater the impact on your teaching and professional development.*

> *In my case yes - I am completing my masters to consolidate my own professional developing and professional learning. I believe this is important considering the competitive job climate that is evident within primary teaching. Job criteria are increasingly more and more demanding. Employers are seeking teachers who are engaging in professional development as well as professional learning.*

Sample comments from teachers from NI who responded No to the question:

No, professional development is usually in line with the needs of the whole school. Professional learning is individual.

No, professional development is a phrase often used by management teams in schools when discussing PRSD, it is often seen as imposed on staff rather than taken by choice. Staff being told what they should know or do for their professional development. Professional learning is not a phrase I am familiar with; I assume it to mean continued learning by a professional.

No, not necessarily...it depends on the nature of the training and whether or not the participant is receptive to learning.

No, professional development up-skills or informs certain areas of teaching, however I have found professional learning, as in the masters programme, has changed and challenged my thinking on aspects of education and education policy and that this has therefore affected the way I teach.

Professional learning is mandatory in order to keep up with changes and government policies. Professional development is something individual teachers may seek and educate themselves for in the hope their efforts are recognised by their school so that they can improve their careers.

No, from my experience people who have completed professional development courses all come out of them able to talk and use all the current buzz words and phrases but at times they can't translate this into practice.

Professional learning is an ongoing updating of your skills and experience while professional development has a purpose such as introducing a new curricular area.

No, professional development is a tick box exercise once a year; professional learning is an ongoing process - day to day.

As a teacher you are learning new things every day/week as you self-evaluate your work, you have to develop your learning, if only to change or update the way in which you teach a lesson/subject. Professional development, however, in my opinion is viewed upon by certificates and qualifications for the teacher and or school and is not necessarily always implemented when a programme/course is completed.

Sample comments from teachers from NI who responded Unsure to the question:

They are often described interchangeably and the differences aren't clear and universally agreed upon.

Sample comments from teachers from RoI who responded Yes to the question:

Any time you learn something new you are developing yourself and potentially developing the people and teams you work with, once you willingly share that knowledge with them.

Yes, because in learning to become more professional in any given area involves development on a professional level.

Yes, professional development should incorporate new learning of some kind that will impact on your profession as a teacher.

Yes, as I think when you learn something, your thinking changes and thus you develop professionally and as you develop, you are learning (although this may not be learning academically). Attending a professional development course will not necessarily lead to learning, but developing professionally itself and learning are inextricably linked.

Yes, as it is usually up to the teacher to take it upon themselves to develop and learn professionally. Teachers may choose to take on a course unrelated to education, which I consider professional learning. .... if the DES or school provides courses then it constitutes professional development. In my experience they are one and the same as I have chosen to complete all courses, whether summer or postgraduate, and there has been no provision, encouragement or support from the DES. Authorities seem unconcerned with professional development and more concerned with cutting costs.

Sample comments from teachers from RoI who responded No to the question:

No, professional development is associated with department in-service initiatives that are usually off-site and do not involve peer collaboration. The latter is the springboard for professional learning. There appears to be a 'tick the box' approach from the government regarding professional development. Teachers attending courses may look good on paper but without peer collaboration and specific follow-ups on course content, professional learning is not given a fair chance to develop and grow.

No, professional development in my experience is about developing or acquiring new skills, it might be once a year perhaps. Professional learning, on the other hand, is continuous; you may learn from colleagues, in my experience not necessarily my teaching colleagues but in my job musicians who may necessarily not be teachers, but whose expertise I can apply in the classroom.

Professional development I assume would involve opening doors for advancement in career prospects. Professional learning seems to portray a more personal experience, maybe to improve technical knowledge.

No. Teachers need to continually learn in order to develop as professionals but my experience of professional development has been through in-service workshops, which have been mostly about curriculum changes rather than individual development.

No. For me, professional development encompasses all areas of development (professional, personal etc) that can influence teaching and administration. Professional learning would be more specific to the profession.

Sample comments from teachers from RoI who responded Unsure to the question:
I'm not sure what the distinction may be, but professional learning strikes me as being deeper and more profound than professional development. Professional learning is the action of working with colleagues to deepen understanding of practice. Professional development is a broader notion more closely linked to career advancement.

In summary, while there was a significant difference in numbers of teachers who viewed professional development as different from professional learning, there was much agreement between teachers from NI and RoI in terms of how they described the difference.

For both groups professional development is linked to:
- Schools and school plans through the PRSD programme (NI) or the Department of Education and Skills (RoI);
- 'Tick-box' exercise by those who mandate it;
- Career advancement;
- Skills development and curricular change.

For both groups professional learning is linked to:
- Personal choice;
- Continuous learning;
- Deeper engagement leading to changing thinking and changing practice.

Table 3

Whose responsibility is it to seek out or provide for teacher professional development?
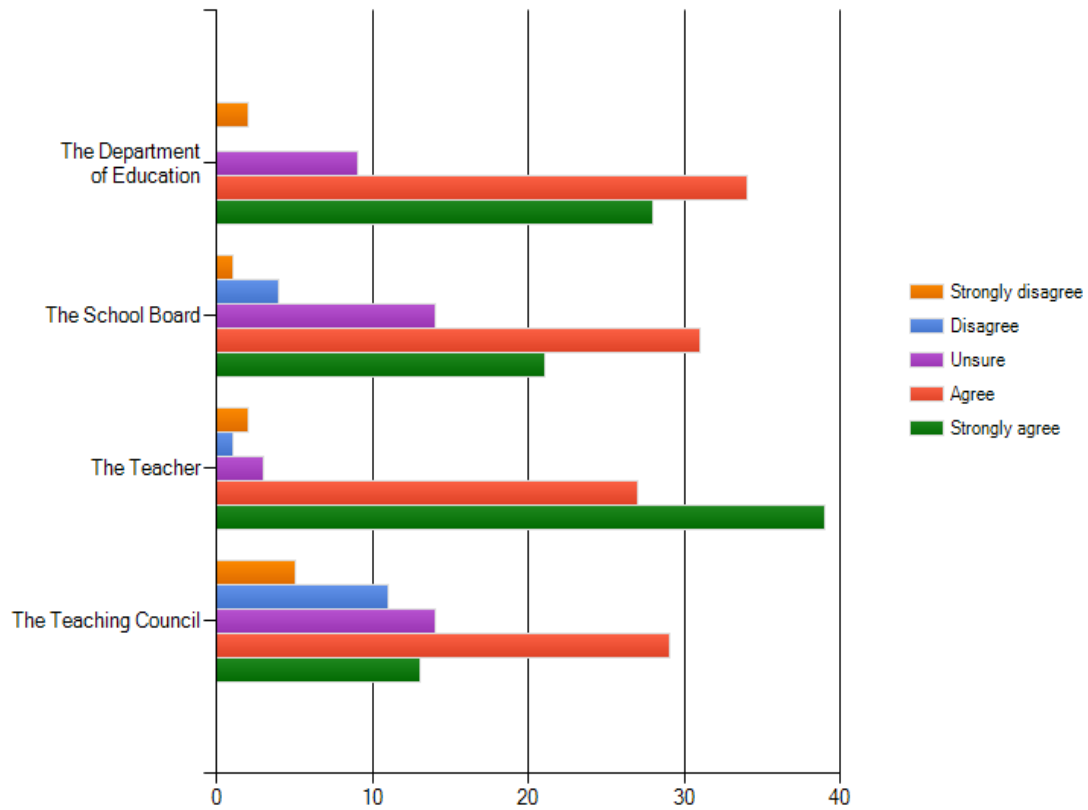

Table 3: In relation to whose responsibility it is to seek out or provide professional development, it appears that on average the person seen by the sample as most important is the teacher. This might be due to the fact that these responses are from teachers who themselves are doing M-level courses. The next most important people are the Department of Education, the school board, followed distantly by the teaching council. Further inferential analysis shows no significant difference between the two countries in relation to these items. Similarly, there were no significant differences based on gender, age, permanence of position, school type, highest academic qualification or age.

4.3   Experiences of CPD: What CPD have they undertaken? What have they learned?

Teachers were asked about the specific CPD that they had undertaken and their perspectives on its impact on their practice.

Table 4

What professional development opportunities have you undertaken since you started teaching and how would you rate its impact on your professional practice?
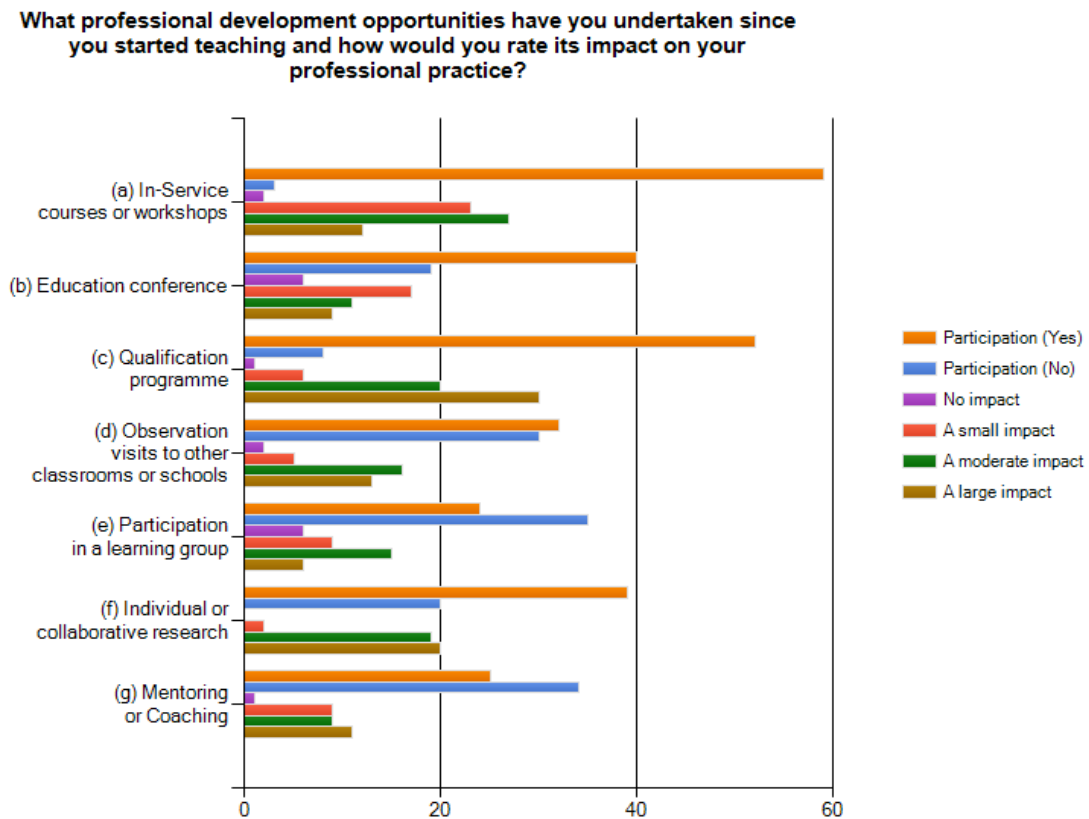

Table 4 shows the different types of CPD that teachers attended and their perceptions of how much impact each had on their practice, on a 4-point scale from no impact, through to a large impact. The most commonly attended type was in-service courses or workshops, followed by a qualification programme. The highest rated in terms of impact on professional practice, however, were individual or collaborative research, followed by the qualification programme. It is also worth noting that instances of undertaking practitioner research were linked to early career activities such as induction or accreditation courses and third level/university courses. There were instances where such practitioner research was also linked to the involvement of some DES support agencies such as the National Behaviour Support Service in RoI.   It is interesting to note

that the most frequently attended types of professional development, in service courses or workshops, and education conferences, did not have large ratings in terms of impact.

Teachers were asked to complete a sentence beginning as follows: A good CPD programme should involve…….

The three most cited themes in the responses of teachers from NI were applicability, opportunities for reflection and provided by experts in the field. For teachers in RoI the themes most frequently cited were applicability, opportunities for reflection and recognition of the contribution of teachers to CPD. By far the most frequently reported element both in NI and RoI groups was that CPD should involve applicability - should provide practical advice, examples, or programmes, which may involve some time spent in the class as part of the programme. In RoI this applicability was frequently linked with transferability and follow- through after the CPD 'event' through on-site demonstrations and coaching. There was a strong desire that the programme should not simply be once-off but that there should be feedback, and follow-ups at a later date to ensure that they are kept up to date and retain the knowledge or skills taught in the programme. In the RoI there was some desire for programmes to involve collaborative exercises, with opportunities for group discussions and the sharing of knowledge between teachers. For the NI teachers it was also very important that the programme should be provided by experts, in several cases specifically they stated they would prefer to hear about teaching programmes from teachers who had successfully implemented them.

Teachers' Views on what a good CPD programme should involve: Northern Ireland

- **Applicable and Relevant**

  Useful, practical input and self-evaluation. It is currently largely a paper exercise.

  The opportunity for all training staff to address local priorities by developing work-based courses for participants which ensures that they are directly relevant to the students' roles that they teach and have positive impact on teachers' knowledge and practice.

  Adaptable tools that can be used to enhance lifelong outcomes for children. Such a programme should enhance the confidence of both teachers and children and inspire learning of both adults and their pupils, in order to make it a worthwhile process.

Relevant research by other professionals, a monitoring period where new ideas are considered, put in place and then reflected upon and evaluated. In my experience Department of Education training initiatives are rolled out too quickly and forgotten about within a few weeks, having little impact on professional development.

Adaptable tools that can be used to enhance lifelong learning for children. Such a programme should enhance the confidence of both teachers and children and inspire learning by both adults and their pupils, in order to make it a worthwhile process.

Reflection: provoking lectures, challenge, time for reflection and opportunities to interact with other teachers and learn from each other.

- **Reflection**

  What teachers want and what the education system needs. Time to reflect on aspects of teaching such as assessment, good practice etc.

- **Expert Input**

  High quality training from specialists in their area of expertise. Teachers should have some freedom to develop their knowledge and skills down routes that are of interest to them as individuals. Teachers should be credited when they complete additional higher level qualifications (e.g. Masters level and other accredited courses) that are personally funded. DENI should ideally provide grants for teachers who undertake such courses. Teachers should be rewarded in some way when they successfully complete accredited qualifications.

  The use of experts to show by example the ways in which they can enrich and inspire the teachers participating.

  Coaching from someone who has already succeeded in the area. Passion and enthusiasm from the person leading or coaching. Being well prepared - knowledge. Opportunities for a wide variety and experience to share their knowledge.

Inclusivity in the NI context specifically referred to the case of substitute teachers who currently are not eligible to participate in CPD:

The opportunity for substitute teachers to take part. As a substitute teacher for 7 years I have received little or no professional development as no school feels responsible or is willing to bear the cost of having a sub at a development day. I have yet to get an invite from the Department of Education to attend a training day.

Teachers' Views on what a good CPD programme should involve: Republic of Ireland

- **Applicable and Relevant**

  Practical advice in relation to good practice that can be readily transferred to the classroom situation, ideally combined with a practical element to the programme.

  Hands-on techniques and personal mentoring.

  Relevant material that must have pedagogy as the central focus of it. It should show videos of how it has previously worked in the classroom and must be delivered by practitioners - i.e. people working in the classrooms who have successfully implemented the programme and not just once but in a variety of different teaching scenarios e.g. boys, girls, mixed, mixed ability, disadvantaged and so on.

  Practical elements that will help improve your everyday teaching, to include on site practice and demonstrations in a real classroom and the option to be observed and receive feedback, as well as follow up support to any professional development programme.

  Follow-up on the effect on practice. At the moment it is assumed that dissemination is enough and that changes in practice automatically follow.

  Structured follow-up. By that I mean that sometimes there is too much theory without practical application and help. It is my observation that some teachers, whether at in-service or within the school at staff days, don't see the relevance of the courses. I also feel that a certain amount of CPD should be mandatory and I think the Teaching Council should seek proof of attendance at CPD courses as part of the criteria for registration.

- **Reflection**

  The opportunity for teachers to reflect on current practice; offer alternative perspectives on good practice and children's learning; build on teacher's existing knowledge base; stimulate curiosity and the desire to learn more; be relevant, fresh and easily accessed; provide an academic and intellectual dimension to develop more profound understanding of education philosophy and theory.

  Interesting topic, new research, challenging the norm and challenges you to develop.

- **Collaboration and Inclusivity**

  Collaboration between teachers in their own school as well as in clusters (comprising of school of schools of similar size, location and socio-economic status). Boards of Management and the Teaching Council should monitor progress of staff members.

  Relevant, current topics and issues that teachers face daily; in-school or local provision of courses; opportunities to work with and learn from other teachers; input from other

educational professionals besides teachers; opportunity to put new ideas into practice and review their success at follow-up sessions; on-going support from the bodies involved.
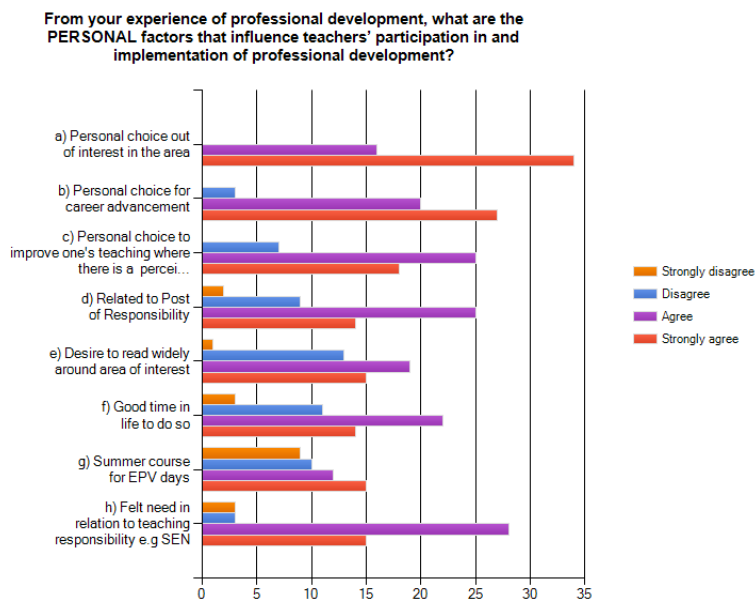
Making sure that every member of staff feels that they were valued enough that their personal skills are developed on an ongoing basis. That staff motivation is a key outcome of development. That a love of learning is instilled in all members of the school, students and teachers alike.

Facilities to encourage teachers to offer examples of what they feel is appropriate and needed, be directed at individual areas, rather than whole school approaches, not everyone needs to develop the same area. Teachers should be given time and encouragement when they attempt to further their own personal areas of interest, instead of as is sometimes the case, being denied the opportunity to further their professional area.

Motivators of CPD: What factors influence uptake and follow-through of CPD at personal, school and system level?

Teachers were asked to select from a list of statements the personal motivators that most Influence their take-up and implementation of CPD. In both groups personal choice was by far the most cited reason. Personal choice included personal interest, career advancement and in response to perceived need to improve practice. See **Table 5** below:

Table 5

From your experience of professional development, what are the PERSONAL factors that influence teachers' participation in and implementation of professional development?
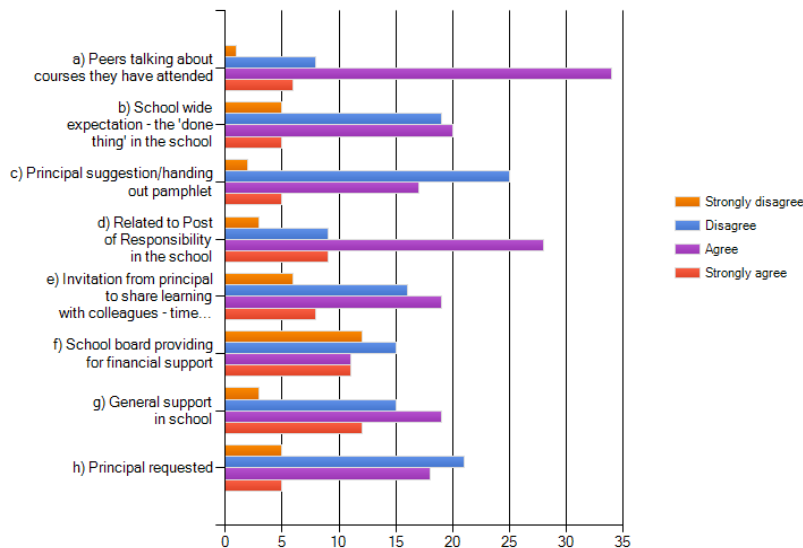
Further inferential analysis shows one significant difference between teachers in RoI and NI in relation to the item "related to a post of responsibility" (F [1, 48] = 6.22, p = .016), with teachers from NI giving a significantly higher rating to this item. There was also a significant difference for gender in relation to the item "personal choice out of interest in the area (F [1, 48] = 7.15, p = .01), with women giving this item a significantly higher rating. There was a significant difference for school type for the items "desire to read widely around area of interest" (F [2, 45] = 4.38, p = .018) and "summer course for EPV days" (F [2, 43] = 11.07, p < .001), with primary teachers giving a higher rating for both items. No significant differences arose in relation to age group, number of years teaching, permanence of position, or highest qualification.

Table 6 shows the school related factors influencing teacher participation in professional development activities, rated on a scale from 1 to 4. The most highly rated item was that professional development was influenced by peer support, (usually cited as peers talking about courses they had attended), the nature of the responsibilities of their post, and general support within the school.

Table 6

From your experience of professional development what are the SCHOOL RELATED FACTORS that impact on teachers' participation in and implementation of professional development?

Further inferential analysis shows no significant differences based on country, gender, age group, number of years teaching, permanence of position, school type, or highest qualification.

Table

7

From your experience of professional development what SYSTEM WIDE factors impact on teachers' participation in and implementation of professional development?
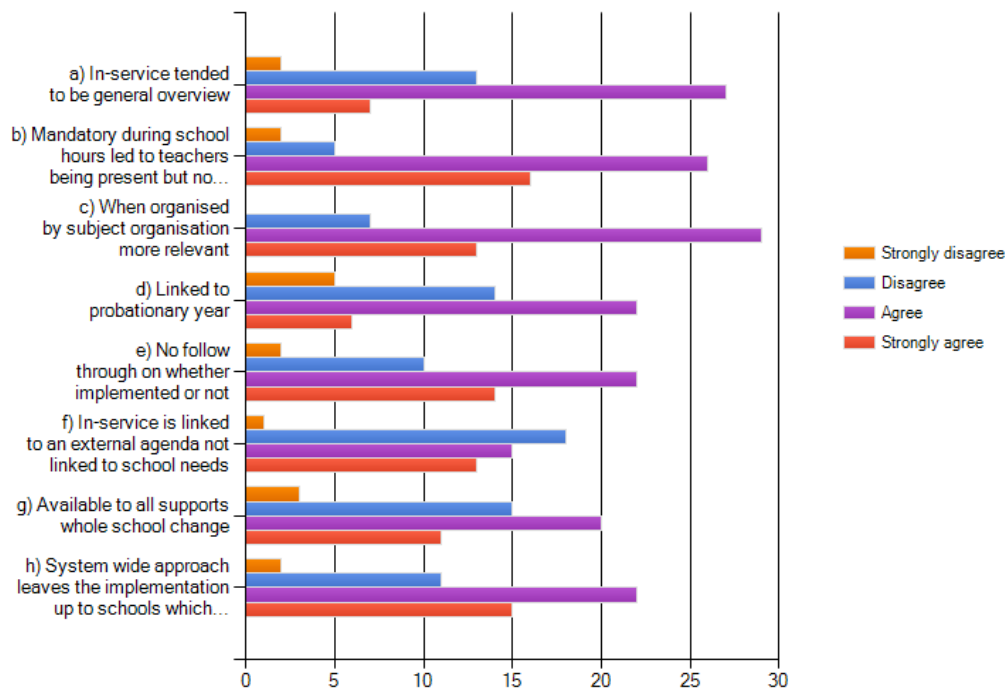
Table 7 shows the system wide factors which can influence teacher participation in professional development. The highest rated items include the fact that some professional development events may be mandatory when they occur during school hours, followed by relevance.

A summary of the findings is found in the next section through the presentation of a composite character from each jurisdiction: Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland.

CHAPTER 5 - VIGNETTES FROM PRACTICE

In this report the term 'vignette' means 'a short descriptive literary sketch' (Merriam-Webster on-line dictionary). The purpose of the following two stories is to describe the typical experiences of teachers in NI and RoI as they emerged in this study through the focus groups and the on-line survey. The two composite characters that are represented below are the synthesis of the participating teachers in this research - one each from NI and RoI. The idea of portraying composite characters is not new to research as Keys points out:' such an approach is not unique ….contemporary research in science education has made use of the composite character to demonstrate teachers' training practice (e.g. Tippins, Tobin & Nichols, 1995)' (Keys, 2007, p. 47).

5.1   Susan's CPD Story – Northern Ireland

Susan is a full-time Year 2 teacher in a primary school in Northern Ireland. She qualified seven years ago and was lucky enough to obtain a permanent post in her current school. During her years as an Early Years teacher, Susan has engaged in many forms of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). She sees the purpose of CPD in terms of developing her teaching skills and 'up-skilling' in specific areas. She also values opportunities to share good practice with colleagues.

As a 'beginning teacher' Susan was mentored by a more experienced teacher in her school and now she herself mentors new staff members as part of the school's induction process. She has always found in-house mentoring to be a valuable part of CPD, largely because of the informal opportunities for ongoing feedback and support. Susan has also attended many compulsory in-service courses, most of these in recent years related to the introduction of the Revised Curriculum. These have, she reflects, had only a moderate impact on her teaching. She has often attended conferences and has found these generally interesting, though some have turned out to be less relevant to her teaching needs than she had thought when agreeing to attend. The observation visits to other schools, which Susan has undertaken as part of the compulsory Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) process, have had a limited impact on her

practice. On a few occasions Susan's school has organised a visiting speaker to provide CPD for all staff together. She has not found these sessions helpful to her practice, since the guest speakers were not familiar with the context and needs of Susan's school. Recently Susan was appointed Pastoral Care Co-ordinator for the school and she has attended training specific to this role. She has found this helpful in relation to these specific duties. She also belongs to a Foundation Stage teachers' cluster group, which meets once a term. In Susan's opinion, this group has the potential to influence practice, but often suffers from lack of focus and unresolved power issues amongst the members.

Summing up her experience of CPD to date, Susan says that the main focus has been around her own subject area – Early Years education – and she has tried to choose courses relating to pedagogy, children's learning and aspects of professionalism. Susan believes that a teacher must have a thorough understanding of their subject area – at any level of teaching – and a good grasp of the pedagogical skills appropriate to the particular phase of education. This will, she argues, involve further and continuous PD, since *'teaching as a profession is not static'*. In conversation, Susan explains that she does not equate CPD, which she sees as consisting of mainly school-based activities linked to PRSD and the school's needs – with true professional learning, which she regards as a process of continuous learning leading to changes in thinking and practice. She recognises, however, that the term CPD is often used in practice to refer to both ideas.

In pursuit of these goals, Susan has recently enrolled on a Masters in Education (Med) programme at Stranmillis University College. This was a personal decision and Susan feels strongly that, even though CPD is mandatory in Northern Ireland schools, it is the individual teacher's responsibility to seek out the most relevant training in order to further their professional learning. In conversations with teaching colleagues in school and on her Masters course, Susan notes there is an assumption that teachers pursuing M-level study do so primarily as a means to promotion, whereas this was not a factor in her decision. Having qualified seven years ago and taught the same class for five years, Susan says she felt she was ready for a new challenge: '*It is good for teachers to stretch themselves and undertake further study'*. She decided to apply for the M.Ed after seeing a flyer on the staffroom notice board and hearing colleagues recommend

the programme. The school Senior Management Team members are supportive of Susan's studies, as the School Development Plan highlights the desirability of teaching staff engaging in M-level study. Although Susan pays her own study fees, the school provides substitute cover to allow her to attend daytime classes and even allows her occasional study days. In return, Susan has been asked by the school Senior Management Team to consider taking an M-level module relating to her duties as Pastoral Care Coordinator in the school and to lead a training day on this issue for Foundation Stage and Key Stage One staff later this year. Susan is happy to take this module as she is keen to increase her knowledge as the school's 'expert' in relation to Pastoral Care, though she feels that the Senior Management Team are saving money from the training budget by effectively asking her to pay for her own CPD in an area which is part of her job. She is happy, nonetheless, to have the chance to share her learning with the other staff at the training day, seeing it as *an opportunity to bring other staff in the setting the benefit of a course - others may not want to take part but may benefit from the content'*.

Susan rates the M.Ed as the best experience of professional learning she has had to date. Asked to explain this, she highlights its impact on both her personal and professional development. Her personal development has been enhanced through meeting and interacting with new people, as well as through achieving academic success at M-level. Her professional development has benefitted in terms of increased motivation, enthusiasm and commitment to the teaching profession. The reciprocal process of sharing ideas with other teaching professionals is rated by Susan as the key to effective professional learning. She assesses the benefits of her CPD activities in terms of an increasing ability to critically question her own practice and to engage in reflective practice: *'Teachers are not 'the finished article' when they qualify …when you qualify as a teacher you do not know everything'*.

When asked to list the features of good CPD, Susan is clear that it should be applicable to practice – involving both theoretical and practical elements relevant to the teacher's area of practice. She emphasises the importance of feedback to effective CPD, saying that 'one-off' courses have less value than those with follow-up support. Susan reiterates her belief in the value of the collaborative aspects of CPD – networking with other professionals. She also believes that

the most effective CPD is delivered by experts and as part of an externally recognised, certificated programme. All of these factors, she states, have been reflected in her M.Ed experience. Susan takes every opportunity in her work situation to recommend further study to her colleagues – particularly to her mentees, as she thinks they would benefit hugely from both the course content and the interaction with other teachers: *'I think it is good to 'model' training for other staff'*. However, she realises that for some of her colleagues CPD opportunities outside the school context are problematic, due to factors such as time constraints, lack of self-motivation and the financial expense involved in self-funding. Despite these difficulties, Susan remains an ambassador for meaningful CPD. Her underlying aim is simple: *'To be better equipped for teaching – to give the best opportunities to the children'*.

5.2   Jim's story – Republic of Ireland

Jim[4] is a full-time teacher in a post-primary school in the Republic of Ireland. He decided early on in secondary school that he wanted to become a teacher. It was no surprise to most people as there is a tradition of teaching in his extended family. Having completed his primary degree, Jim was very lucky to get a place on a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) course, now known as the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PDE). Having his PGDE meant that he was recognised as a registered teacher from the start of his career. Many of his college classmates were not so lucky and had to wait a number of years to get this qualification. He learned a lot on the PGDE course; in fact, on reflection he feels it was the only time that he got constructive feedback on his teaching.

The first two years of Jim's career were spent as a substitute teacher. He found those years to constitute a very uncertain time. However, a permanent position became available in the school and he was successful in his application. Jim is very interested in sport and enjoys coaching the football team with another colleague. He became involved initially because he thought it would help his prospects of getting a permanent position if one came up in the school, but he continues

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[4]The gender of the composite character in the RoI is not intended to suggest that the ratio of male to female research participants was higher. The ratio was as follows:Female: 82.5% Male: 17.5%; Primary Teacher: 38.6% Post-Primary Teacher: 61.3%.

with it now because he enjoys the involvement. As a young teacher Jim would have appreciated being mentored by an experienced colleague but it wasn't an option offered to him. However, this year the principal invited him to act as mentor for a newly qualified teacher who joined the staff. Jim finds that the professional development that he is receiving through this programme is having a significant impact on his own learning and practice.

Jim has experienced a variety of professional development opportunities in his career to date. He links the term professional development with the '*DES bringing teachers up to speed on new techniques and materials*' which has served the purpose of '*giving an overview of a general area*'. His most common experience of CPD is of in-service offered during school hours, sometimes in a hotel or in the local education centre provided by teachers on secondment from their respective schools. He has found the value of such days to vary widely – because he is interested in developing himself he has always approached such days with enthusiasm. However, he has found it frustrating when, on returning to school, the back-up and resources were simply not there to effect the changes recommended on the course. In addition, practices that seemed straightforward when explained by the 'expert' teacher at the seminar were not so straightforward when he tried to implement them in his own classroom. Anyway, nobody seemed interested in whether he was implementing the changes or not. There was no follow-up. Recently the leadership team in the school started to explore ways of engaging the staff in professional development as a way of 'using the Croke Park hour'. A list of speakers is being compiled, based on areas of interest identified by the teachers. The topics already covered include 'Differentiation in the Classroom' and 'Assessment for Learning'. Two friends of Jim recently attended a course for Year Heads which they found really helpful as it was really relevant to their lived experience in the school.

When it comes to professional development Jim is committed to engaging in his own ongoing learning and is always looking for opportunities to develop his subject knowledge and his pedagogical practice in a manner that engages '*his heart and his head*'. He is interested in trying out team teaching – a practice about which a friend from another school speaks highly.

Jim is a member of his subject association. He is involved in the organising committee and finds the regular meetings with like-minded, committed teachers to be very motivating. The association organises conferences, seminars and workshops and Jim has learned a lot through this network. He thinks the fact that it allows him to follow his own personal interest is a key factor in its influence on his practice.

When asked if the considered professional development to be the same as professional learning he needed to consider it for a while, then said:

> *Professional development in my experience is about developing or acquiring new skills. It might be once a year perhaps and is more than likely to be provided by the DES for the purpose of introducing a curricular change. Professional learning on the other hand is continuous; you may learn from colleagues, and in my experience not necessarily my teaching colleagues …could be sporting colleagues who may not necessarily be teachers, but who have an expertise from which I can learn and apply in the classroom. But ideally professional development and professional learning should be the same as one cannot develop as a teacher unless they are constantly learning.*

Jim suggests that a good professional development programme should include '*the opportunity for teachers to reflect on current practice; offer alternative perspectives on good practice and children's learning; build on teacher's existing knowledge base; stimulate curiosity and the desire to learn more; be relevant, fresh and easily accessed; provide an academic and intellectual dimension to develop more profound understanding of education philosophy and theory but above all it must be applicable'*. He is adamant that as a professional it is his responsibility to engage in professional development but also expects the DES to provide quality opportunities for his own ongoing learning. He has found the DES agenda is prioritised over his own interests as a teacher and he would like to see a better balance in future.

Summing up his experience and beliefs about teacher professional development, Jim is passionate about his subject area and its importance in the curriculum. He believes it is very important for him to keep himself up to speed on new developments and he is an avid reader around his own field of interest. While he has engaged in all professional development opportunities provided for him, he has found the impact of seminars, in-services courses and

conferences to have small to moderate impact on his daily practice. He has not had anybody come into his classroom to observe his lesson and give feedback, except the DES inspector when his school was subject to a Whole School Inspection. He recalls the most significant experience for him in terms of learning to improve his teaching was the action research project that he was involved in last year that was initiated by the National Behaviour Support Service. His only other experience of doing action research was as a student teacher – which he found equally effective. He has heard a lot about teachers' learning groups on his current M.Ed course but it is something that he has not engaged in up to now. However, he is very clear that the professional development that he has received has had a positive impact on his commitment to ongoing learning.

When asked about his motives for undertaking his current M.Ed course Jim said he believes it is very important for his career and personal interest and desire to learn. He aspires to promotion once the current moratorium on posts of responsibility is over and he believes it is important to have a master's level qualification for that. He is really learning much more than he expected and loves the challenge. He says it is *'causing me to be much more reflective about my own practice. I am more aware of how important it is that I regularly participate in professional development … I am much more open to collaborating with other teachers. I am developing my own vision of how education and the way we work in schools can develop into the future'*.

CHAPTER 6 - DISCUSSION

In this chapter we consider the implications of the findings from this small-scale research. We open the chapter by giving an overview of the findings. The discussion to follow is based on five key themes that have emerged from our analysis and, as in the lived experience itself, are not separate phenomena but interlinked and mutually influential.

The researchers set out to explore the perceptions, experiences and motivational dimensions of continuous professional development of teachers from two different jurisdictions: Northern Ireland (NI) and Republic of Ireland (RoI). Given the different contexts within which teachers from NI and RoI practise, we expected some significant differences in teachers' perceptions and experiences of CPD and differences in their respective perceptions of the factors - personal, school and system linked - that motivate or inhibit their improving their practice. The surprise finding is the level of agreement of teachers' perceptions and experiences of CPD and the level of agreement on the impact of the different models of CPD on their teaching practice.

Teachers in both jurisdictions were in agreement that:
1. Their most frequent experience of CPD was an in-service model mandated by the respective Departments of Education;
2. The primary purpose of CPD, as they have experienced it, is up-skilling;
3. The teacher her/himself is primarily responsible for her/his own CPD.

In terms of **impact on practice**, they were equally in agreement that:
1. The most frequently experienced model (in-service) had least impact on their practice;
2. Action research and qualification programmes had most impact on their practice.

When it came to identifying **the elements of a good CPD programme**, they were also in agreement that:
1. It should be applicable and relevant;
2. It should provide opportunities for reflection;

3. It should be provided by experts in their fields (NI);
4. It should be accredited in some way (RoI).

Considering the **motivating factors for teachers to undertake CPD**, both groups were also in agreement that these included:

1. Personal choice in following area of personal interest;
2. Personal career advancement;
3. Perceived needs in their own practice which may be linked to a post of responsibility in their schools (NI);
4. School-related motivators relating to peers - particularly colleagues talking about courses they attended. Teachers engaging in CPD are more likely to come from schools where there is a cultural practice of engaging in CPD;
5. The system level motivator for both groups was that it was mandated.

It is interesting to note that the only instances of significant differences in the findings are in relation to the question that explored teachers' perceptions of the purpose of CPD, where teachers from NI gave a higher rating for 'teachers sharing good practice with colleagues' and 'classroom observation followed by feedback to improve teaching and learning', while their colleagues in RoI gave a higher rating to the purpose as 'to give a general overview of an area'.

The five key themes that we have chosen to highlight from these findings are discussed below:

1. The Models of CPD utilised in NI and RoI

The dominance of the model of in-service seminar and talk by an expert as the preferred choice of mandated CPD must be questioned from a number of stances:

a. The body of research and awareness that has been generated in recent times on the limited effect of such an approach to changing teachers' practice is irrefutable (Hogan et al., 2007b; 2002; Kennedy, 2005; Sugrue, 2002). It is difficult to understand therefore why that model is still most likely to receive the bulk of the financial support from central

Departments of Education. The new Literacy and Numeracy campaign in RoI is a case in point.

b. The findings show that teachers from both jurisdictions identified action research as having high impact on their practice, yet the experiences of such CPD was associated with one-off events or degree -awarding courses. Questions must be asked about why such professionally respectful practices are not more prevalent in both systems. Perhaps it is as Talbert (2010, p. 558/559) suggests:

> School systems also face technical challenges…..Many lack…skills and experience in using data well. So districts are challenged also to developing teachers' skills in using a wide range of data to assess student performance gaps and to evaluate instructional interventions on an ongoing basis. This core condition of PLC success develops over time and involves a steep learning curve for most teacher groups.

2. Teacher Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Observation of and Feedback on Practice

While opportunities to engage in professional learning communities would of course come under the heading 'models of CPD', we are discussing this CPD experience separately due to the particular importance we accord to the findings from this study. In the review of the literature we underscored the potential for positive impact on practice when teachers engage in professional learning communities and the accompanying deprivatisation of practice including classroom observation and feedback. The findings from this study show that teachers from NI have more frequent experiences of such approaches than their counterparts in RoI. This was expected as such approaches are recommended in the school-based emphasis on CPD through the PRSD programmes in NI. However, the findings do not reflect a higher impact on practice in NI than in RoI. Wiliam and Thompson (2007) found from their experience of developing PLCs in their work on teacher capacity building in relation to Assessment for Learning that it is critical for teachers to understand the underlying theory of action. In this case it means that unless teachers, and those that are leading PLCs, have a deep understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of PLCs then it is unlikely that they will lead to deep professional learning. This may be a consideration in understanding the low level of impact on practice as noted in this

study. This is not necessarily a reflection on the good efforts on the part of school personnel who are striving to make PLCs work. Thompson and Goe (2009) found that:

> In most schools, there simply isn't enough existing know-how and cultural readiness to sustain these communities, even if school leaders get them off the ground. This knowledge eventually led us to understand that learning to do teacher learning communities required the development of expertise and thus would benefit from opportunities for learning, practice, reflection, and adjustment(p. 25).

Similar, we believe, is the case of classroom observation and feedback. The importance and effectiveness of feedback to advance professional learning is well recognised (Askew, 2000; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Thurlings, Vermeuen, Kreijns, Bastiaens, & Stijnen, 2012). The understanding of learning that underpins the practice of feedback shapes the experience and practice and the likelihood of its leading to changes in practice. The low degree of impact on practice in this study raises questions about the CPD that those who observe and give feedback on practice received to prepare them for this potentially powerful practice. If it is the dominant CPD model received by others in their respective systems, then it is based on a transmission model of learning which has little chance of resulting in the aspired transformational learning. It is difficult to see how learning received through a transmission model may in turn be processed and transferred as transformational. In addition if feedback on practice is solely based on peer generated learning, what is known about the learning that is transferred or the values and beliefs that underpin it?

3. Teacher Educators

In both jurisdictions the main providers of mandated CPD have been teachers on secondment from their schools through support services financed by the Departments of Education. While undoubtedly the 'The direct involvement of teachers in the design, delivery and management of support services has been a very positive feature of the activities, and there now exists a cadre of high quality trainers with generic skills in the system'(Coolahan, 2004, p. 16), there are limits to what can be expected of such a model. There are also valid concerns about the dominance of peer-driven CPD in many systems like our own such as Scotland, where a recent report by Donaldson highlights the need to have university-based educators involved in teacher CPD (Donaldson, 2010).

The role of seconded teachers to lead national programmes of CPD is inherently problematic when it becomes the dominant model. Reasons for making this claim include the fact that the seconded teacher is dependent on the Department of Education for his/her job. Therefore criticality of policy and practice may not be as integral a dimension of CPD as would be expected of a professional programme that supports and encourages an inquiry stance. Little (1994) says that a test of good CPD is to look at 'its capacity to equip teachers individually and collectively to act as shapers, promoters, and well-informed critics of reforms' (p. 1). Where there exists a relationship of dependence and where power relationships are not equal it is difficult to maintain the necessary criticality that the teaching profession both needs and deserves.

The promotion of schools as professional learning communities is well supported by research and literature as a legitimate aspiration of CPD programmes, but it is also recognised that effective PLCs are inclusive of expertise from all sources and are networked with colleagues in local universities and professional networks within and outside their school system.

4. Time for Learning

Learning takes time. Deep learning involves experimentation, feedback, reflection on that feedback, new planning and evaluation, supported by much professional dialogue - it is a multi-cyclical experience that leads to understanding over time.   Such learning is not encouraged in short-term courses characterised by quick-fix methodologies.

If school systems, national and local, are to create opportunities for transformational learning – that is teacher learning that will translate into transformed practice, transformed learning and teaching then it must be accepted that this is a long-term commitment, a daily dimension of practice and guided by expert support as needs arise. Therefore there are costs involved – time and financial. The role of the teacher and the school day must be re-conceptualised. The teacher's 'working' day has to balance both his/her teaching time and professional learning time – while these may sometimes be simultaneous events there is a need to formally recognise both

as the ying and the yang of the teacher's work. While the teacher's role is solely seen as 'teaching' the profession and society are the poorer for such narrow interpretation. CPD can no longer be seen as the 'add on' of teaching but integral to teaching as formative assessment is integral to the learning experience itself.

5. **Mandatory or mandated**?

The CPD promoted through this paper is rooted in the willingness of professional adults to engage with passion and enthusiasm in the improvement of their own practice. The investment of the self in the time and processes that such learning implies is closely linked to issues of personal values, personal interest and personal autonomy. It is difficult to envisage such passionate commitment being nurtured through externally mandated practices. It has already been discussed that CPD that does not involve the flourishing of a professional 'soul' (Freidson, 2001) is unlikely to illicit the value-laden personal commitment needed for the development of a vibrant profession. On page sixteen of this report we emphasised the personal journey that effective CPD demands – engaging the heart and mind. That is the challenge for the profession of teaching and those involved in leading and managing teacher CPD – how to safeguard the implicit promise made to society that the teacher in every classroom lives by the highest code of professionalism, up-to-date with latest learning and expertise in the field and at the same time respect the professional autonomy of the adult professional learner. Working to make the aspirations of both Teaching Councils, North and South a reality must be the goal – all teachers viewing CPD as an 'essential expression of their professionalism' and where individual 'teachers ... actively shape their own professional development'. This is more of a challenge that many realise – even in systems that have actively tried to integrate PLCs it has been found that such teacher groups formed through mandates simply comply with the letter of the law and fail to realise the real potential of the collective learning opportunity. Learning to bring teacher professional responsibility and teacher autonomy into harmony is a worthy goal.

CHAPTER 7 - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That there be a greater interrogation of the purposes and potential outcomes of CPD involving all relevant partners – practitioners and researchers in an inclusive and mutually supportive relationship.

2. That opportunities for CPD be provided for all teachers with the professional expectation and that the individual teacher be actively involved in the choice of CPD;

3. Those CPD opportunities encompass a broad spectrum of approaches as appropriate to the particular purpose.

4. That professional and personal development is integral to all CPD.

5. That the CPD opportunities provided are relevant and specific to the interests of the teachers and include opportunities for reflection and feedback ;

6. That CPD include award-bearing qualification, led by experts and involving universities;

7. That the content and processes of CPD courses be informed by research on applicable learning and having as active intention the development of deep understanding of the theory and practice;

8. That there be more flexibility with regard to CPD provision, and that some of the money allocated for in-service CPD be redirected to universities for research activities to provide more appropriate and applicable CPD;

9. That teaching councils recognise individual teachers who engage in CPD and that CPD is recognised as a professional requirement to practice.

10. That teaching councils or a professional body recognise and maintain a register of CPD;

11. That ITE ensures that newly qualifying teachers embrace the requirements of lifelong CPD and the professionalism of their career choice; and

12. That there is a need for future research to carry out an audit of CPD needs for all teachers in Ireland.

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APPENDIX A – FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Focus Group Questions ONLY

Section 1   TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. What is your understanding of the term professional development?

2. In your opinion, what is the purpose of teacher professional development?

Section 2:   TEACHERS' PRIOR EXPERIENCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. What professional development opportunities have you undertaken since you started teaching? In each case, why?

2. What did you implement in your practice as a result of each professional development? Why?

APPENDIX B- QUESTIONNAIRE

See Attached Questionnaire