

An Chomhairle
Mhúinteoireachta



The Teaching Council

Draft Framework for Teachers' Learning

Cosán

For consultation

May 2015

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

Owen, 2014

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

1. Introduction

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

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

The name *Cosán*, the Irish word for pathway, has been chosen to reflect the fact that learning is, fundamentally, a journey, and one in which the act of travelling on that journey is more important than the destination. In other words, *Cosán* is about steady and ongoing progress, rather than elusive perfection. With that in mind, the Council has drafted this consultation paper to introduce, and seek feedback in relation to *Cosán*, its proposed framework for teachers’ learning.

It is proposed that *Cosán* would be a flexible framework which will provide a long-awaited opportunity to affirm the value of teachers’ learning and acknowledge the full range of learning activities which teachers undertake for their benefit and that of their students. It would also recognise the fact that professional learning is “part and parcel of a teacher’s working life”³ and that teachers have demonstrated enormous goodwill and flexibility, particularly in recent years, when many of the traditional supports and incentives were no longer available to teachers. These draft proposals have been developed having regard to the principles which underpin all of the Council’s work, i.e., shared professional responsibility, collective professional confidence and professionally-led regulation. Through these proposals, the Council is seeking to foster a culture of “powerful professional learning” based on teachers’ active engagement in their own learning, for their benefit and that of their students. We are now inviting teachers and all stakeholders with an interest in teachers’ learning, to provide feedback on these draft proposals.

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

³ Sherrington, T. (2014). “What’s the incentive? Systems and culture in a school context”. In: Hallgarten, A., Bamfield, L., and McCarthy, K. *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action Research Centre. p. 79.

2. Background

2.1. Legislative and policy background

Following on from research, extensive consultation, sectoral meetings, drafting and redrafting of a policy document together with considerations from 200 submissions from individuals and organisations, a *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* was published in 2011 by the Teaching Council.

The policy provides the important definition for teachers' professional learning: "Continuing professional development (CPD) refers to life-long teacher learning and comprises the full range of educational experiences designed to enrich teachers' professional knowledge, understanding and capabilities throughout their careers".⁴ The policy also sets out the Teaching Council's position with regard to the development of a coherent national framework for teachers' ongoing professional learning.

Further valuable information on the provision of continuing professional development in Ireland and internationally is available in the Council's background document, [Teacher Education in Ireland and Internationally \(2010\)](#).⁵

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

2.2. Consultation to date

In order to find out more about teachers' experiences of professional learning and to inform the development of a national framework for teachers' learning, a comprehensive three-phased consultation process was devised by the Teaching Council. The first phase, which took place in late 2014, comprised of three avenues of consultation with the teaching profession. They were:

1. An online survey for individual teachers
2. Consultation workshops in Education Centres nationwide
3. Whole-school feedback following school-based workshops.

In addition, in early March 2015, the Council convened a meeting of registered teachers who had recently carried out research on CPD or related areas in order to discuss their key findings and, in particular, the learnings from their critical review of the literature in this area.

In total, 3,349 teachers participated in phase 1 of the consultation process and a summary of the issues emerging is set out in [Appendix A](#).

⁴ The Teaching Council (2011). *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*. Kildare: The Teaching Council. p. 19.

⁵ The Teaching Council (2010). *Teacher Education in Ireland and Internationally*. Kildare: The Teaching Council.

This was a unique process in that it did not involve the Council consulting on a prepared draft of the framework. Rather, it invited teachers' initial views before the drafting process commenced. In that way, it left the shape and content of the framework in the hands of the profession. As this was an entirely new approach for the Council, and for many teachers also, it could be considered an experiment of sorts. Having completed the process, the model has proven to be an effective one, which fostered rich professional conversations and generated valuable data. In doing so, the process has enabled the voice of teachers to shape the language and structures that will keep learning in its rightful place — at the heart of the teaching profession.

The purpose of this document is to propose an outline of what the framework for teachers' learning might ultimately look like, drawing on relevant literature and the input of teachers to date. Once again, we are seeking feedback from teachers and, in addition to that, the Council is now inviting initial feedback from other stakeholders.

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3. Values underpinning the proposals in this paper

3.1. Professional Autonomy

Adult learning theories conclude that effective learning is an active rather than a passive process and that professional learning cannot occur if teachers are passive recipients instead of active participants.⁶ Central to *Cosán*, therefore, is a vision of teachers as professionals who take ownership of their professional development and steer the course of their own learning journeys. As proposed, it would respect the professionalism of teachers and allow them to exercise autonomy in identifying, and engaging in, the types of professional learning opportunities that benefit them and their students most. In turn, professional learning should further enhance teachers' professional autonomy.

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

3.2. Flexibility

CPD should be linked to teachers' needs and pupils' needs and differentiated to suit the culture and context of teachers' work. The teaching profession is not a homogeneous group and the framework for CPD will also need to have regard to "teachers' individual career patterns, their priorities and their stage in life" (Huberman, 1988; Sikes 1992)⁷ as well as teachers' values, emotions, motivation and professional confidence. The framework will need to have an inherent flexibility to take account of all of these variables, while simultaneously enabling the needs of the pupils, the school and the system to be met.

3.3. Relevance and quality

A frequent criticism of CPD programmes is that they treat teachers' professional development as an activity distinct from teachers' daily work, which both limits its effectiveness and restricts the opportunities for schools to benefit from teachers' learning.⁸ As part of their feedback to the Council, teachers have highlighted the importance of CPD being relevant. Teachers in one Education Centre summed this up by saying that "it must be real". They are seeking opportunities to engage in high-quality CPD which is relevant to both their needs and those of their pupils, having regard to their sector, career stage and, in the case of post-primary teachers, their subject(s).

⁶ Lieberman, A. (1995). "Practices that support Teacher Development" in: *Phi Delta Kappan*, 00317217, 76 (8). pp. 591–596.

⁷ Stoll, L., Fink, D., & Earl, L.M. (2003). *It's About Learning (and It's About Time): What's in it for Schools?* London: Routledge Falmer.

⁸ OECD (2005) *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*. Paris: OECD.

3.4. Accessibility

Council policy states that CPD is a right and responsibility for all teachers.⁹ In that context, it is vital that appropriate opportunities for professional learning must be accessible to teachers. The principle of accessibility can be understood to incorporate a range of aspects including cost, time and geographical considerations. The most commonly articulated reason for insufficient engagement in professional learning by teachers is lack of time¹⁰ and this was highlighted by many teachers who engaged in the consultation.

The Council believes that all teachers are entitled to dedicated space and time for professional learning and reflection on same, both at the individual level and collaboratively. It recognises the value of sabbaticals or other forms of leave, whereby teachers might engage in research, exchange programmes or other types of professional learning activities which would support them as researchers and reflective practitioners.

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

3.5. Acknowledgement

More than half of the responses from the consultation workshops with teachers reflected a belief that a lack of recognition or accreditation contributed to a negative experience of CPD. Owen has argued that “teachers need an outlet to showcase what they have achieved. Schools are good at celebrating the successes of their students, but are still reticent about applauding the successes of teachers ... Let us see a celebration of what we have achieved. Let it feel prestigious and let it hold value. Let us find ways to link up research projects across the country and expand the dialogue ... Creative professional development deserves to be acknowledged and applauded”.¹¹ This was echoed in the call made by teachers in one Education Centre for the Council to “positively promote the excellence and high standards and dedication of teachers”.

By developing this framework, the Council is publicly acknowledging the many ways in which teachers strive to keep their subject knowledge current, and demonstrate their commitment to their learning on an ongoing basis. Through its accreditation role, the Council will play a key role in assuring teachers and the public as to the quality of that ongoing learning. In the words of one teacher, “If the CPD is accredited, then it gains value inwardly and outwardly”.

⁹ The Teaching Council (2011). *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*. Kildare: The Teaching Council. p.10.

¹⁰ Villegas-Reimers, E. (2003). *Teacher Professional Development: an international review of the literature*. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, p. 125.

¹¹ Owen, L. (2014). “Continuing Professional Development: can it ever be creative?” In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.) *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre, p. 63.

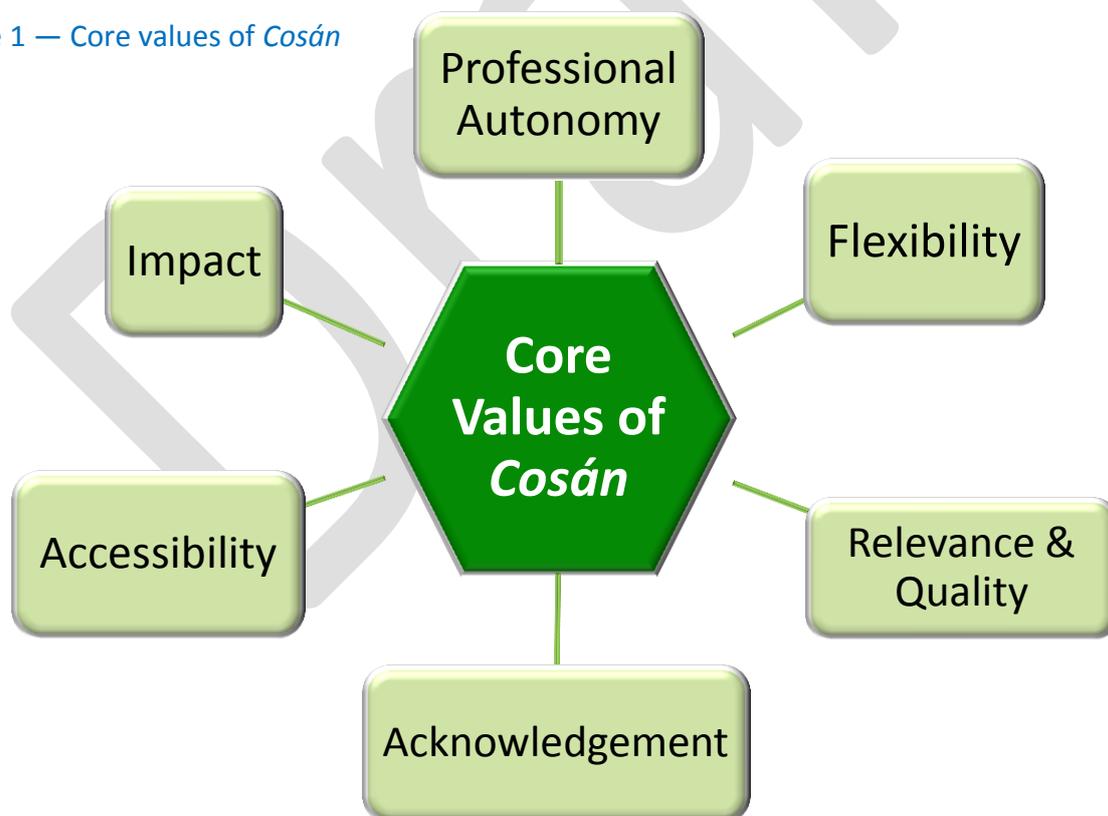
3.6. Impact

In their feedback to the Council, teachers highlighted the importance of CPD having a practical focus, with one school noting that professional learning “must enhance our teaching and learning in the classrooms”. Wiliam echoes this, noting that the extent of participation in professional development alone is not sufficient to determine its effectiveness. Elaborating on this point, he says that while it may seem obvious that teachers should engage in professional development that is focused on aspects of practice that benefit their pupils, many professional development activities “have been focussed on fads with little research evidence in their support”.¹² He suggests that educational research can play a significant role in indicating for teachers the directions which are most likely to be impactful in terms of practice.

An extensive research literature shows that professional development is most effective in improving teachers’ instructional practice and contributing to student learning when it: is continuous and sustained; closely connected to the work of teachers in the classroom; fosters teacher professional collaboration; and coherently relates to broader school reform efforts.¹³

It is intended that the development of *Cosán* will create opportunities whereby teachers can “think clearly and in an evidence-based way about the contribution of professional learning to teachers’ effectiveness individually and, more importantly, collectively”.¹⁴

Figure 1 — Core values of *Cosán*



¹² Wiliam, D. (2014). “Teacher expertise: Why it matters, and how to get more of it” In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.) *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre, p. 32.

¹³ Wei, Darling-Hammond, et al.,(2009); Darling-Hammond & Richardson, (2009); Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon (2001); Elmore & Burney, (1997) as referenced in Burns, D. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2014) *Teaching Around the World: What Can TALIS Tell Us?* California: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, p. 27.

¹⁴ Cordingley, P. (2014). “Teacher licensing and collaboration: a model for developing the confidence of the profession as a whole” In: Hallgarten, Bamfield and McCarthy (eds.) *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre, p. 45.

4. Standards to guide learning and reflection

Professional standards are central to all of the Council’s work. *Cosán* envisages that teachers’ learning journeys would be guided by standards which would facilitate teachers, as individuals or collectively, in:

- reflecting critically on their teaching and their learning, and the relationship between them
- identifying areas for further professional learning
- planning for their learning
- celebrating their learning experiences and accomplishments.

The Council is proposing the following three standards to guide teachers’ learning:

- Teachers demonstrate a sustained commitment to quality teaching and learning
- Teachers demonstrate a commitment to continued professional growth
- Teachers demonstrate a commitment to practising professionally, and to sustaining that level of professionalism over a prolonged period.

The Council recognises that not all teachers have perfectly linear professional learning journeys whereby one set of standards is attained and the teacher then progresses to the next set. *Cosán* is based on a richer understanding of standards which sees them less as goals to be reached and left behind, and more as providing a focus for ongoing and dynamic teacher learning processes. In other words, standards should be “growth-based” rather than “threshold-based”.¹⁵

The Council has developed a number of indicators of good practice which may be considered by teachers for the purposes outlined above and these are included in [Appendix B](#).

It is expected that, through the development phase which is outlined in section 10 of this consultation paper, the profession would refine these indicators of good practice as it deems appropriate.

Figure 2 — Standards to guide teachers’ learning and reflection



¹⁵ Hargreaves, A. et al. (2012). *Leading for All: A research report on the development, design, implementation and impact of Ontario's 'Essential for Some, Good for All' initiative: Executive Summary*. Toronto: Council of Directors of Education, p. 24.

5. Dimensions of teachers' learning

Based on feedback received from teachers in response to the first phase of consultation, together with a review of relevant literature, the Council considers that teachers' learning can be viewed as having the following four dimensions:

- Formal/Informal
- Personal/Professional
- Collaborative/Individual
- School-based/External to the school or workplace.

It should be noted that the four dimensions are not mutually exclusive, and as illustrated in [Figure 3](#), can combine and overlap to create an array of different learning opportunities. For example, formal learning can be either collaborative or individual, and learning opportunities often incorporate collaborative and individual elements, such as a workshop involving an individual reflection piece. Equally, collaborative learning can be formal and informal, while school-based and external learning can each be simultaneously personal and professional.

5.1. Formal and Informal

Professional learning occurs at both a formal and an informal level. As part of the first phase of consultation, teachers' feedback emphasised informal learning processes as being particularly valuable, with many teachers highlighting examples such as "the learning conversations and phonecalls" and requesting that the framework would recognise "all forms of educationally enriched discussions". This is echoed by Owen who says "teachers share insights with their colleagues when they can, often in brief exchanges in the corridor, at the coffee machine or in the staff room. But formal training sessions are not always the best place for meaningful collaboration, which depends on regular networking, sharing and interrogating our ideas and finding creative solutions to collective challenges".¹⁶

5.2. Personal and Professional

Allied to their deep interest in professional learning, teachers who participated in the Council's consultation process have expressed a strong interest in personal development. A review of relevant literature suggests that the two are inextricably linked.¹⁷ *Cosán* will need to be designed in a way which recognises the interconnectedness of the two concepts and the way in which they are mutually beneficial.

¹⁶ Owen, L. (2014). "Continuing Professional Development: can it ever be creative?" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.) *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre, p. 60.

¹⁷ Livingston, K. (2012). "Quality in teachers' professional career long development". In: Harford, Hudson and Niemi (eds.) *Quality Assurance and Teacher Education: International Challenges and expectations*. Oxford: Lang. p. 37.

5.3. Collaborative and Individual

Based on feedback from teachers who attended workshops in Education Centres, collaborative teacher learning is considered to be the most important aspect of successful, positive CPD. Teachers valued the sharing of new ideas, methodologies and resources and the support they received from colleagues. This is reflected in the work of many theorists who have argued that all learning is social and that teachers' learning should be socially constructed in an environment which supports teacher interdependency.¹⁸

While emphasising the importance of teacher collaboration with other teachers, Wiliam notes that "currently, the available evidence does not support the idea that collaboration with other teachers will always be the best way for every teacher to improve his or her practice".¹⁹ For that reason, the Council, while emphasising the importance of purposeful collaboration, recognises that individual learning also has benefits and should be recognised in *Cosán*.

Furthermore, *Cosán* is based on the premise that while teachers involved in collaboration are working towards shared professional learning goals, each will likely have identified a personalised learning pathway towards those goals.²⁰ These pathways will inevitably overlap from time to time (e.g. school-based professional learning; attendance at the same professional learning event), and it is at these points of intersection that teachers can strike an appropriate balance between the enhancement of their own practice as individuals on the one hand, and the creation of a responsive and dynamic community of practice on the other.

5.4. School-based and External

Much educational research has found that "...learning that is embedded in the work itself is far more powerful than de-contextualised in-service".²¹

By way of contrast, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, in its analysis of innovative professional development practices, recognised the benefits of immersive learning opportunities, which "...take people out of their normal environments and create new realities that challenge existing thinking and practice".²²

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

¹⁸ Stoll Fink and Earl 2003; Sawyer 2006; Darling Hammond and Mc Laughlin 1995

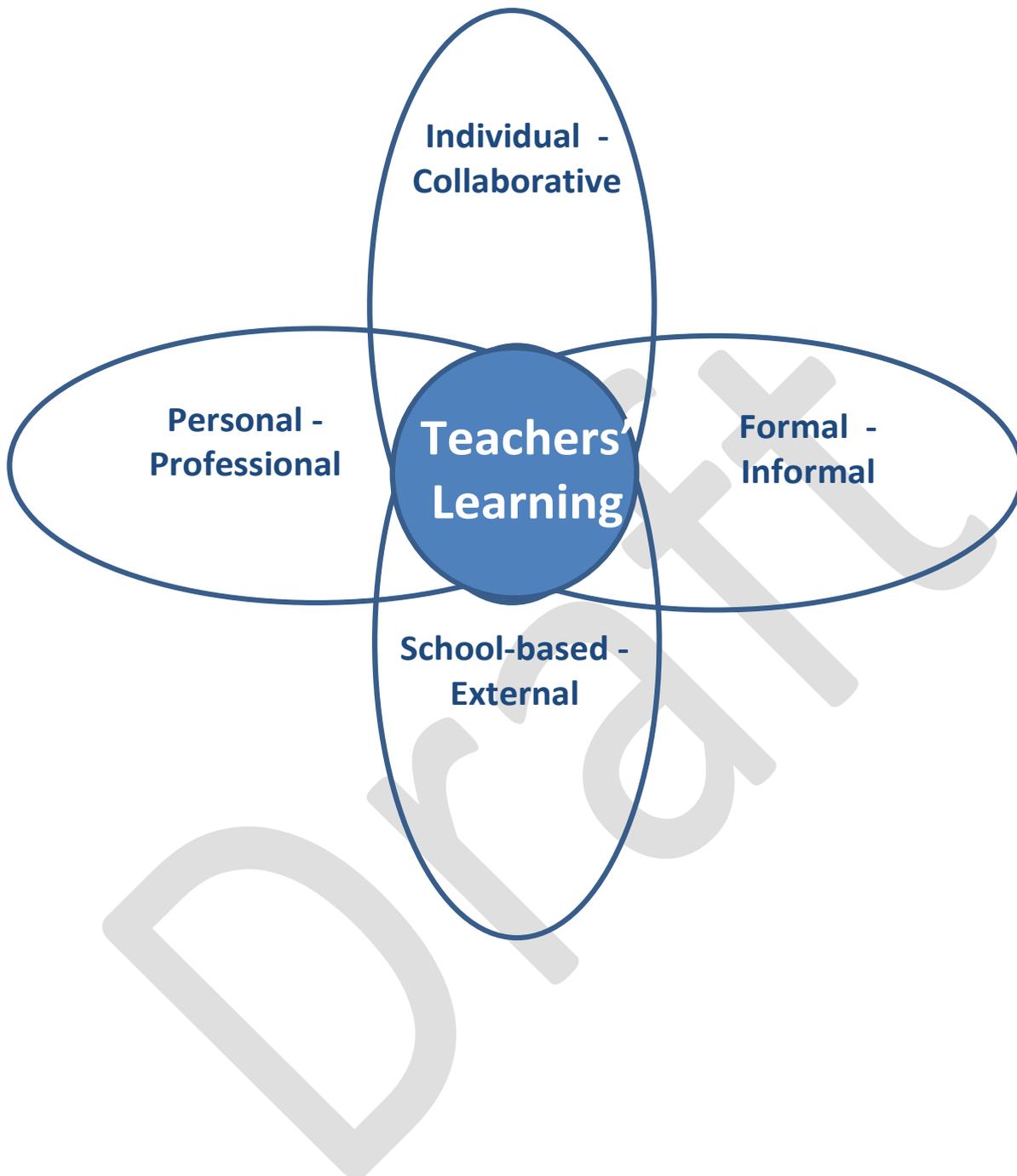
¹⁹ Wiliam, D. (2014). "Teacher expertise: Why it matters, and how to get more of it" In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.) *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre, p. 33.

²⁰ Lowrie, T. (2014). "An educational practices framework: the potential for empowerment of the teaching profession" In: *Journal of Education for Teaching: International research and pedagogy*, 40(1) pp. 34–46 DOI: 10.1080/02607476.2013.864016.

²¹ Harris, A. & Lambert, L. (2003). *Building Leadership Capacity for School Improvement*. Berkshire: Open University Press, p. 92.

²² Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2014) *Global trends in professional learning and performance & development: Some implications and ideas for the Australian education system*. Melbourne: AITSL, p. 19.

Figure 3 — Dimensions of teachers' learning



6. Teachers' learning processes

Based on the feedback from the first phase of consultation, it is clear that teachers see value in a range of learning processes. This reflects the complexity of teaching as a profession and the findings of many educational theorists who have concluded that all individuals learn in different ways.²³ In its review of models of CPD, the Department of Education and Skills concluded that “[...] people can learn about themselves and their professional work at any time and in most places – inside and outside a school, with people and alone”.²⁴

[Figure 4](#) below highlights the types of learning processes in which teachers currently engage, drawing on a review of the literature and the feedback from teachers as part of the consultation process. [Figure 5](#) provides sample learning processes under each heading. It is proposed that the framework would allow teachers to select a range of learning activities which take account of their needs and personal circumstances. This approach is in line with the views of many authors, including Lowrie, who support the concept of personalised professional learning, and Wiliam, who advocates for a greater role for teachers in determining what works well for them: “Novice teachers will, of course, need clear direction from their supervisors about which aspects of their practice should be priorities for development, but once teachers are established in their classrooms, it seems reasonable to assume that each teacher has a better idea of what will improve the learning of their students, in their classroom, in the context of what they are teaching them, than anyone else”.²⁵

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

²³ Rogers, C.R. & Freiberg, H.J. (1994) *Freedom to learn*. (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan College Publishing Company.

²⁴ Department of Education and Skills. (2014). *Models of Continuing Professional Development: A Review*. Report from TES Working Group, November 2014, p. 23.

²⁵ Wiliam, D. (2014). “Teacher expertise: Why it matters, and how to get more of it” In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.) *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre, p. 32.

Figure 4 — Learning processes by category

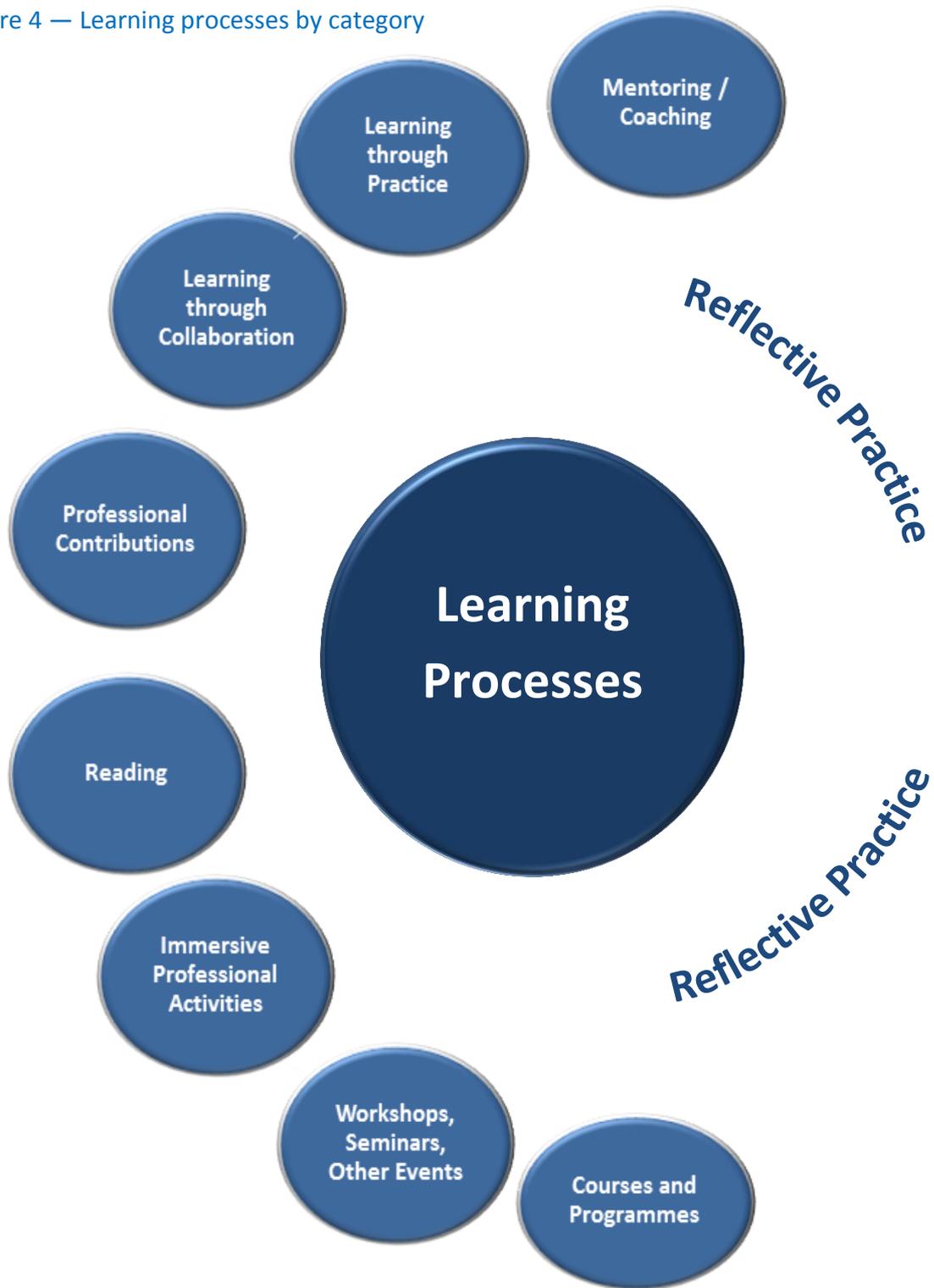
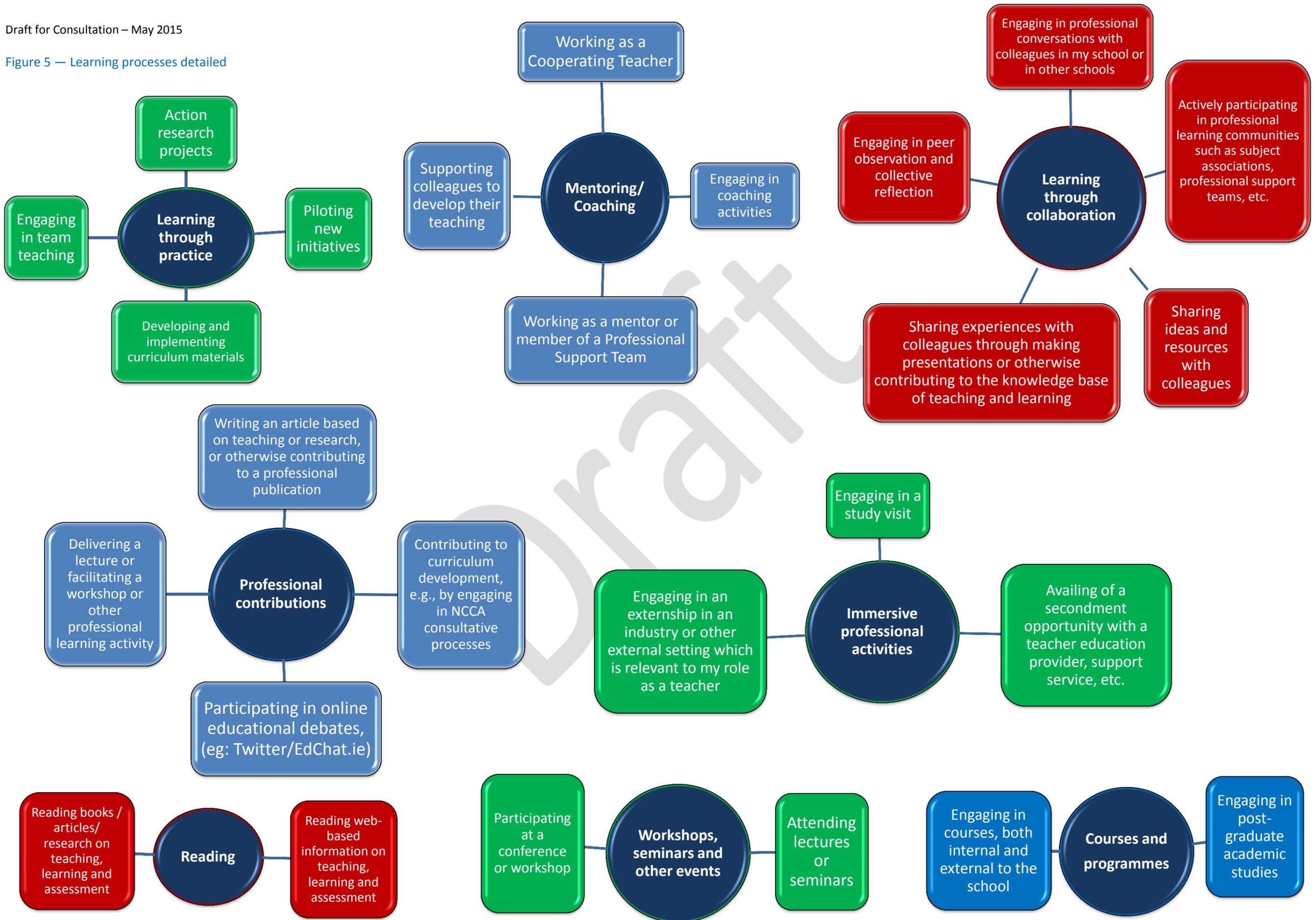


Figure 5 — Learning processes detailed



7. Priority learning areas

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

- actively maintaining their professional knowledge and understanding to ensure it is current
- reflecting on and critically evaluating their professional practice, in light of their professional knowledge base
- availing of opportunities for career-long professional development”.²⁶

In that context, and in line with the principles of professional autonomy and flexibility identified earlier in this paper, the Council believes that teachers should be afforded the maximum degree of autonomy in identifying their particular learning needs. It is intended that, in planning their personalised learning pathways, teachers would choose a combination of learning processes which best meet their learning needs in a range of areas including, but not limited to, the priority areas identified in Figure 6 below. It is proposed that these priority learning areas would be reviewed by Council from time to time, in consultation with the profession and other stakeholders.

Figure 6 — Priority learning areas



²⁶ The Teaching Council. (2012). *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*. Kildare: The Teaching Council. p. 8.

8. Recording and reflecting on learning and its impact

8.1. Individual reflection on learning and its impact

One of the key principles underpinning *Cosán* is professional autonomy. Another is impact.

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

These principles are also reflected in William’s argument that, as well as deciding what to improve, every teacher should be responsible for deciding what evidence they need to collect in order to demonstrate that their practice has improved.²⁷ Cordingley points out that “working with evidence is central to professional learning” and provides a means for teachers to demonstrate “their professional growth”.²⁸

In line with that, it is proposed that teachers would identify from their own practice, examples of their teaching which will help them to determine the impact on practice. This process would also support their reflection on the standards and on their learning in light of those standards.

The Council believes that these cycles of evidence-gathering, reflection and ongoing learning are career-long processes, whereby “the point of the journey is not necessarily to arrive, but to make the most of getting there”.²⁹

It is proposed that the Council would develop, or support the development of, an ICT-based solution to facilitate engagement in these processes in a user-friendly manner.

8.2. Collaborative reflection on learning and its impact

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

Whatever ICT-based solution emerges for facilitating evidence-gathering, reflection and ongoing learning, it should also allow for groups of teachers to collaborate and to share with others those aspects of their teaching and their learning which they feel comfortable in sharing. Such an approach would be very much in line with the Council’s underpinning principles of shared professional responsibility and collective professional confidence, and would, according to

²⁷ William, D. (2014). “Teacher expertise: Why it matters, and how to get more of it” In: Hallgarten, J., Bamfield, L. & McCarthy, K. (eds.) *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre, p. 33.

²⁸ Cordingley, P. (2014). “Teacher licensing and collaboration: a model for developing the confidence of the profession as a whole” In: Hallgarten, Bamfield and McCarthy (eds.) *Licensed to Create: Ten essays on improving teacher quality*. London: RSA Action and Research Centre, p. 46.

²⁹ Hicks, T. (2005). “Beyond the ‘Bells and Whistles’: Towards a Visual Rhetoric for Teachers’ Digital Portfolios” In: *English Education*, v37 N3, pp. 200-222.

Cordingley, “capture evidence about what makes a difference *and* reinforce the importance of teachers’ collective contributions to each other’s and pupils’ learning”.³⁰

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

9. Quality assurance processes

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

Guskey states that historically professional developers have not paid much attention to evaluation and suggests that evaluation often takes the form of feedback questionnaires that gauge participant enjoyment of the activity or reaction to the experience, rather than impact or outcome.³¹ He further argues that this type of evaluation does not capture the effectiveness of the activities undertaken in terms of participant or student outcomes or whether there were any gains in knowledge or changes in practice as a result of the intervention.

When Section 39 of the Teaching Council Act is commenced, the Council will have the statutory power to review and accredit “programmes relating to the continuing education and training of teachers”.³²

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

- active/interactive participation
- participant involvement in the design and evaluation of the learning activity
- opportunities for purposeful collaboration by all
- use of ICT
- opportunities for individual and collective reflection on practice and on learning
- promotion of action research and inquiry
- continuity, allowing for follow-up support and progressive and sustained learning over time
- impact on teachers’ learning, confidence and practice
- advancement of professional learning communities.

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

³¹ Guskey, T.R. (2002). “Does it make a difference? Evaluating Professional Development?” In: *Educational Leadership* v59, n6, p.45.

³² Teaching Council Act (2001). Section 39 2(c). p. 26.

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

Mindful of the fact that many teachers are seeking to have their learning recognised in an academic sense, the Council is open to working with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) towards the development of protocols whereby a variety of teacher learning processes could be considered in terms of Recognised Prior Learning (RPL).

Draft

10. Action research phase

The Council is mindful of the fact that the introduction of a framework for teachers' professional learning, while firmly rooted in and acknowledging the learning that teachers already do, will by its very existence represent a degree of cultural change for registered teachers and for the education system. For that reason, the Council believes that it will be important, once a framework is adopted by Council, that time be provided to allow it to bed down and for different approaches to be trialled and developed. It is envisaged that there would be a development phase involving participation on a voluntary basis by teachers, groups of teachers, or schools, so that they could see what it would mean for them in practice. Through their participation, such teachers would develop their thinking on key features of the framework, including the indicators of good practice and the processes for reflecting on learning and determining impact. This would include addressing questions such as:

- What mechanisms would work best for facilitating teachers in reflecting on their learning and determining its impact?
- How can teachers be supported in developing those?
- How appropriate are the indicators of good practice?
- Are there others which should be included?
- What criteria should the Council use in accrediting programmes?
- How can teachers' feedback inform the Council's accreditation process?
- In what way should engagement with professional learning be linked to renewal of registration?

By working together to seek answers to these questions, teachers would inform the way in which the framework would evolve beyond the development phase and be rolled out to the wider profession.

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

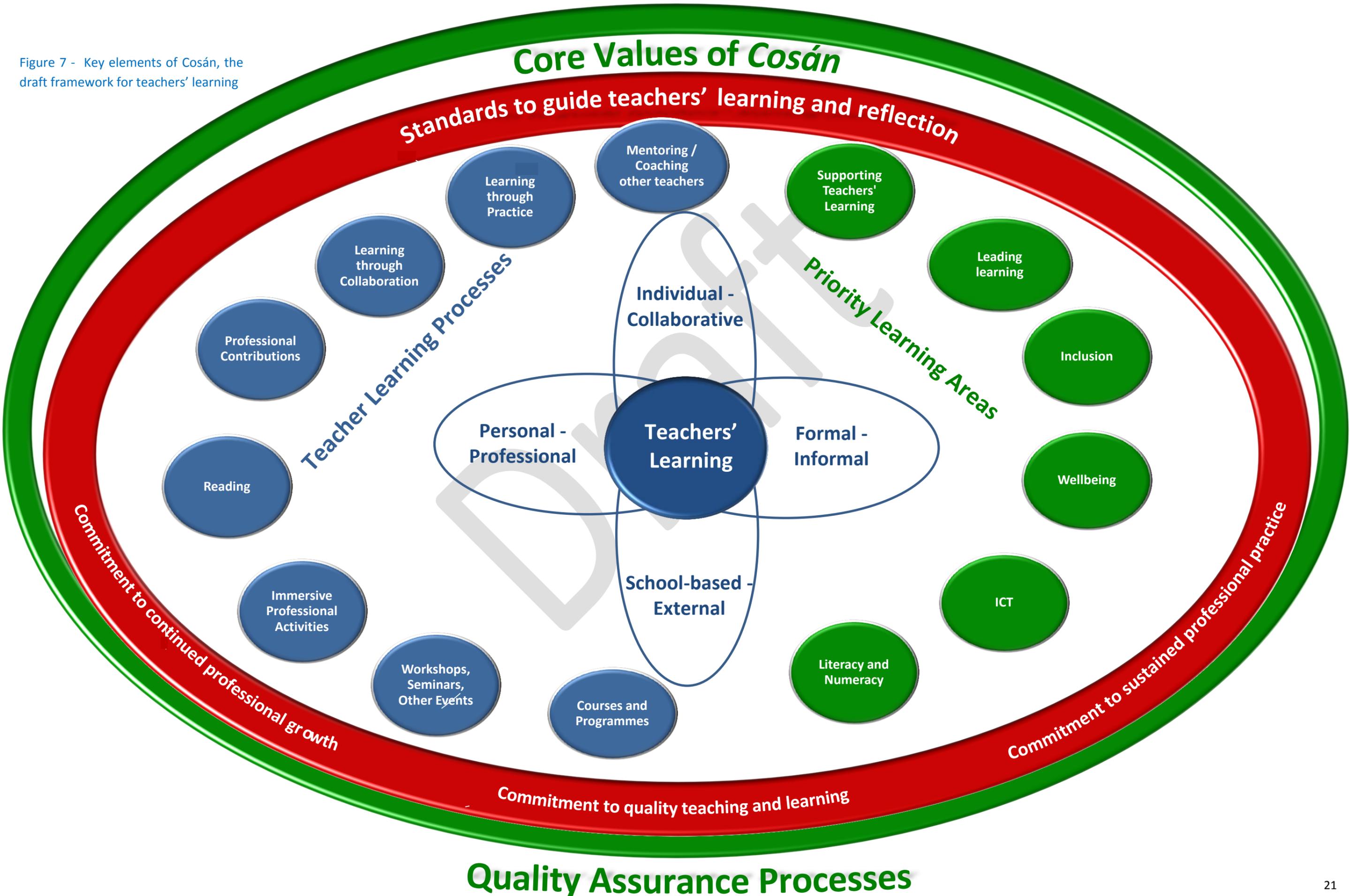
11. In summary

Based on all of the foregoing, [Figure 7](#) overleaf provides a graphic representation of the key elements of *Cosán* as proposed in this paper.

The two outer oval shapes represent the core values and the standards which it is proposed would guide teachers' learning and reflection. It is proposed that *Cosán* would be a flexible framework which would affirm the value of teachers' learning and acknowledge the full range of learning activities which teachers undertake for their benefit and that of their students. In order to reflect that, the outer oval shapes contain a wide range of learning processes and priority learning areas which the Council has identified. These lists are not exhaustive and teachers may well identify their own additional priority areas. At the centre of the diagram are the dimensions of teacher learning which, as is illustrated in [Figure 3](#), can combine and overlap to create an array of different learning opportunities.

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

Figure 7 - Key elements of Cosán, the draft framework for teachers' learning



Appendix A: Summary of issues emerging from Phase 1 of the consultation

A major conclusion to be drawn from the consultation is the **complexity** of Continuing Professional Development/Professional Learning. The issues are far from simple and the development of a national framework for teachers' learning must take account of many deeply embedded factors in Ireland's education system.

Participants gave a detailed account of their experience of CPD in all its variety. What is most apparent is that teachers are extremely interested in opportunities to engage in **high-quality, relevant and appropriate** professional learning activities. Many teachers are deeply involved in the provision of CPD and all of these acknowledge that they have gained professionally from their involvement.

Allied with the deep interest in professional learning, is a strong interest in **personal development**, and in the types of **collaborative learning** and professional conversations which take place in schools on a **formal** and **informal** basis. In terms of collaborative learning, **mentoring** is highlighted as a particularly valuable form of CPD.

Teachers are very keen to have **choice** in relation to how they engage in professional learning, with many participants noting the need to **respect** the professionalism of teachers and allow them to exercise **autonomy** in choosing what type of CPD would benefit them most. The feedback would suggest that CPD should be differentiated to meet the needs of the school and the individual. It was noted by many that the framework must allow for the teacher's personal circumstances.

Teachers' perception and **understanding of CPD** varies a good deal. A narrow frame of reference for CPD is adopted by many participants, who see it as being confined to attendance at courses and seminars as opposed to viewing it in the broader sense as reflected in the Teaching Council's definition.

It is apparent that the **Extra Personal Vacation [EPV]** system, whereby days off are available in lieu of attendance at DES approved courses, is valued by primary teachers. Much of the feedback would appear to be based on anecdotal evidence and rumours which are circulating in relation to the impact that the framework might have on EPV days and the way in which engagement in CPD might be linked to registration, and this would appear to have influenced the way in which some teachers have engaged with the process. There was considerable **scepticism** expressed by some teachers in relation to the consultation process, with some suspecting that the framework has already been developed and, therefore, not perceiving the consultation as a genuine one.

The question of **access** to CPD is a major one for all respondents. Many respondents cite the cost of travel, child-care, interference with home life, intrusion on personal time, and distance and geographical considerations, as being among the factors that preclude them from benefiting from certain CPD opportunities. **Education Centres** figure prominently in the feedback, and many participants spoke positively of the personal satisfaction to be derived from face to face courses and seminars. Respondents tend to see Education Centres as important resources that could play a key role as ‘learning hubs’ if appropriate strategic provision is made for their contribution to professional learning.

The use of **technology** and online access to CPD in all its varied forms is a major theme for those who participated in the consultation and who revealed extensive engagement and familiarity with online opportunities. Remarkably, there is widespread recourse to online CPD and many participants note that this type of professional learning is beneficial and rewarding. It is apparent that teachers are generally supportive of online access for professional learning and of its inclusion as part of the national framework for CPD.

Many teachers who participated in the consultation are opposed to the concept of **mandatory CPD**, and expressed fears that, if compulsory, it would promote a ‘compliance mentality’ with minimal real engagement. The concern was put forward by many that this would be damaging for the goodwill and professionalism of teachers. However, some participants take a different view and consider that the maintenance of professional status for teachers requires some level of obligatory CPD. While there are mixed views about this issue, there are signs that for some newly qualified teachers there are benefits to be derived from the induction procedures now provided under the NIPT. The issue is somewhat clouded by various assumptions that some respondents have about possible developments in this regard.

The ‘**Croke Park hours**’ are a significant concern for respondents and there is a broad range of opinion about their application for CPD. While the hours have been used to some extent for CPD within schools, and reference was made to their positive impact in terms of whole staff development, consistency, and “*collegiality and team-building benefits*”, some participants are critical about features of inflexibility that they perceive. “*Ticking the box*” is commonly offered as a criticism of the quality of some of the CPD given in some schools. Many of those who expressed concerns in this area believe that the mandatory element of Croke Park hours has impacted negatively on levels of goodwill and engagement.

Many teachers would recommend that CPD could be **accredited**. While there are various suggestions for credits and points systems to record attendance and completion of CPD, the feasibility and practicability of these must remain as an open question that would have to be addressed as part of the national framework.

Formal academic studies and research are highly valued by participants many of whom have pursued post-graduate diplomas and degrees to the highest levels. It is apparent that respondents rate this form of professional learning very highly and wish that there might be incentive and reward for its pursuit. Respondents see great benefit for education and for the system when teachers are enabled to engage in scholarly inquiry.

Many teachers commented on the need for incentives generally and drew attention to the costs of CPD and earnestly hope that this issue would be dealt with generously. Sabbatical leave and tax **incentives** are proposed by some participants to assist teachers to pursue research and study. The suggestion was also made that CPD be linked to increments rather than registration. In general, respondents would seek to have much of the cost of CPD borne by the DES but it is apparent that teachers have invested significant sums in CPD over the years.

Suggestions were also made on how to progress the development of the framework. They varied from reinstating middle management structures and financial remuneration, restoring school development planning days and allowances for postgraduate qualifications to ultimately realising that what underpins CPD is a commitment to lifelong learning. Some participants recognised that a change in culture is required.

The work of **subject associations** is given extensive attention by many respondents to the online survey, particularly those in post-primary and further education. There is high value placed on the subject associations for the benefits they have conferred on teachers over the years. Respondents expect that the national framework for teachers' learning will consolidate and support the role of the associations. **Teacher Professional Networks** are given favourable mention by some respondents also and these merit inclusion in deliberations concerning CPD and professional learning.

Irish as a subject and Irish-medium instruction feature in the feedback received via the online questionnaire. There are particular needs that arise in respect of Irish as a language and some respondents highlight issues of concern. As regards provision of CPD both for the language and for its use as a medium of instruction in many schools, some respondents express the desire for better resources.

A relatively small number of participants mention the use of **portfolios** to keep record of professional learning. While respondents are anxious to have accreditation and credits for CPD, there are relatively few mentions of auditing systems for keeping account of the professional learning that has been undertaken by an individual teacher. A few respondents listed a chartered scheme for teachers as something to be developed.

Appendix B: Proposed standards mapped to suggested indicators of good practice

Standard	Indicators of good practice (Practising Teachers)	Indicators of good practice (Non-Practising Teachers)
Teachers demonstrate a commitment to continued professional growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers take a proactive approach to their learning and to reflection on that learning and on their practice • Teachers engage professionally in a range of quality learning processes in accordance with the national framework for teachers' learning • Teachers engage fully in the life of the school and support colleagues' in their learning • Teachers seek and avail of opportunities to observe and work alongside other teachers, and to have their teaching observed by other teachers • Teachers seek and avail of support and engage with constructive feedback from other teachers and co-professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers take a proactive approach to learning and reflection on that learning. Teachers engage professionally in a range of quality learning processes in accordance with the national framework for teachers' learning • Teachers engage fully in a professional learning community and support other teachers in their learning • Teachers seek and avail of opportunities to observe and work alongside other teachers. Teachers seek and avail of support and engage with constructive feedback from other teachers and/or co-professionals
Teachers demonstrate a sustained commitment to quality teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers engage in long-term and short-term planning, individually and in collaboration with colleagues • Teachers contribute to the development of school policies and the relevant national curriculum/syllabus, and practise in line with same • Teachers collaborate with others to develop a range of appropriate teaching methodologies, resources and assessment techniques, and evaluate and refine them according to context • Teachers structure and pace lessons appropriately and collaborate with others to establish an effective learning environment at classroom and whole-school level • Teachers provide for differences in pupil/student abilities, backgrounds and learning styles and engage with others to promote the highest quality of educational experiences for all • Teachers cover an appropriate range of material and proactively share resources with colleagues • Teachers support others in demonstrating their commitment to quality teaching and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers who are not practising remain current on the latest thinking in relation to teaching, learning and assessment and keep abreast of curricular reforms and other national policy developments
Teachers demonstrate a commitment to practising professionally, and to sustaining that level of professionalism over a prolonged period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers demonstrate well-developed communication skills and apply them in a range of contexts • Teachers demonstrate well-developed classroom management skills which have been refined over time • Teachers engage with all of the school community, including parents, in a respectful and courteous manner, having due regard for the values and standards set out in the <i>Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers</i> and for the school's Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy and other relevant policies • Teachers collaborate in the development of strategies for supporting, guiding and motivating pupils/students towards the achievement of quality learning outcomes, and apply these strategies in a range of situations • Teachers exercise excellent professional judgement in dealing with a range of complex issues and unpredictable situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers who are not practising remain current on the latest thinking in relation to teaching, learning and assessment and keep abreast of curricular reforms and other national policy developments