



Teachers' Professional Journeys

A longitudinal study of teachers in their first decade

Teachers' Professional Journeys during the first decade longitudinal study: Teacher education stakeholder perspectives on initial teacher education, the continuum of teacher education and teacher supply

Report No.3 | 2025

Paul Conway, Aisling Leavy, Emer Smyth, Antonio Calderón, Johanna Fitzgerald, Mairéad Hourigan, Raymond Lynch, Déirdre Ní Chróinín, Niamh O'Meara, Genco Guralp

Funded by the Teaching Council and Department of Education and Youth



Teachers' Professional Journeys

A longitudinal study of teachers in their first decade

Teachers' Professional Journeys: The First Decade

is a national longitudinal study of teachers during the first ten years of the professional life-cycle

Teachers' Professional Journeys during the first decade longitudinal study: Teacher education stakeholder perspectives on initial teacher education, the continuum of teacher education and teacher supply

Report No.3 | 2025

This report can be referenced as: Conway, P. F., Leavy, A., Smyth, E., Calderón, A., Fitzgerald, J., Hourigan, M., Lynch, R., Ní Chróinín, D., O'Meara, N., & Guralp, G. (2025). Teachers' Professional Journeys during the first decade longitudinal study: Teacher education stakeholder perspectives on initial teacher education, the continuum of teacher education and teacher supply: Report No.3, Limerick: University of Limerick.
ISBN 978-1-911620-91-4
<https://doi.org/10.34961/19140>

Funded by the Teaching Council and Department of Education and Youth



LIST OF ACRONYMS	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	6
1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
1.1 TPJ study and continuum of teacher education policy context	10
1.1.1 The continuum of teacher education: ITE, induction and teacher professional learning.....	13
1.2 Learning from research and designing a study of the first decade of the continuum: TPJ Reports 1 & 2	14
1.2.1 TPJ Report 1: Reviews of Literature	14
1.2.2 TPJ Report 2: Study Design and Instruments	15
1.2.3 TPJ Report 3 outline	16
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	17
2.1 Introduction / Outline	17
2.2 Teacher education policy landscape: global and institutional influences on the continuum	17
2.2.1 Global and institutional influences on initial teacher education	17
2.2.2 The stakeholder(s) idea.....	21
2.3 The continuum: ITE, induction and teacher professional learning	21
2.4 Supporting early career teachers	23
2.5 Teacher supply: attractiveness, recruitment, retention.....	24
2.6 Conclusion.....	25
3 METHODOLOGY	27
3.1 Aim and research objectives of the TPJ longitudinal study	27
3.2 Research ethics.....	27
3.3 Design and Implementation of the Stakeholder Focus Groups	27
3.4 Participants	29
3.5 Analysis	30
4 FINDINGS	32
4.1 Developments in and quality of initial teacher education	32
4.1.1 ITE policy changes and opportunities to reimagine ITE	33
4.1.2 Positive impact of early (2010-15) ITE reforms & 2-year PME debate	35
4.1.3 Céim 2020 welcomed but limited flexibility and resource challenges.....	38

4.1.4	ITE reform-based re-positioning of school placement.....	40
4.1.5	Teachers on the whole are well prepared; even the well-prepared face challenges in the classroom 43	
4.2	Continuum (Droichead & Cosán) and readiness to teach in schools.....	47
4.2.1	ITE's relatively weak link to Cosán	52
4.2.2	NQTs' strong foundational education with notable needs for support.....	57
4.3	Teacher supply and retention	60
4.3.1	Teaching remains an attractive profession in Ireland ... but.....	60
4.3.2	Other noteworthy issues: teacher burnout, Irish language requirements and the resourcing of teaching 67	
4.3.3	Teacher supply and teacher diversity: Teaching is not a diverse profession.....	69
4.4	Further Education and Training.....	73
4.4.1	A complex landscape distinct from primary and post-primary with some opportunities and many challenges	73
4.4.2	Teaching Council registration and its implications	75
4.4.3	FET teacher professional identity and parity of esteem	79
4.4.4	Sectoral Identity.....	88
4.5	Professionalisation of teaching and teacher education and teachers' professional capital	89
4.5.1	Professionalisation of teaching and teacher education.....	89
4.5.2	Professional capital of teachers and status of teaching	90
4.6	Conclusion: primary and post-primary	91
4.7	Conclusion: FET teacher education.....	91
5	CONCLUSION	92
5.1	Introduction	92
5.1.1	Prevailing professionalisation discourse on teaching and teacher education	92
5.1.2	Teacher education as a site of policy prioritisation and policy intervention: lived experience, consensus (or not) and questions of quality	92
5.1.3	The 'practice turn': A prioritisation of school-based learning	94
5.1.4	The 'well prepared' newly qualified teacher... adaptive expertise.....	95
5.1.5	Recognising and supporting the continuum but advocating for a stronger and more authentic relationship across ITE, Droichead, and Cosán	97
5.1.6	The varied professional landscape: Navigating diverse paths in teacher professional development and support.....	98
5.1.7	Teacher supply is an on-going (growing) challenge, teaching remains an attractive profession	99
5.1.8	The teaching profession is not diverse in Ireland	100
5.1.9	FET as a distinct TE sector - welcome for ITE qualifications yet mismatch of structures	101
5.2	Conclusion: Valuable insights, positioning of stakeholders and longitudinal insight from teachers themselves.....	102
	REFERENCES	104
	APPENDIX 1: TPJ REPORT 1 ABSTRACT	113
	APPENDIX 2: TPJ REPORT 2 ABSTRACT	115

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF HEIS AND EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY: 116

List of Acronyms

- ALD: Accelerated Longitudinal Designs
- ASTI: Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
- ATU: Atlantic Technological University
- DCU: Dublin City University
- DEY: Department of Education and Youth
- ITE: Initial Teacher Education
- INTO: Irish National Teachers' Organisation
- COGG: An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta
- CPD: Continuing Professional Development
- CPSMA: Catholic Primary Schools Management Association
- ERC: Educational Research Centre
- EPV: Extra Personal Vacation:
- ESCI: Education Support Centres Ireland
- ETBI: Education and Training Boards Ireland
- FET: Further Education and Training
- HC: Hibernia College
- JMB: Joint Managerial Body
- MIE: Marino Institute of Education
- MU: Maynooth University
- MIC: Mary Immaculate College
- MTU: Munster Technological University
- NABMSE: National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education
- NAPD: National Association for Principals & Deputy Principals
- NCAD: National College of Art and Design
- NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
- NCSE: National Council for Special Education
- NPC: National Parents Council
- NQT: Newly Qualified Teacher
- OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PME: Professional Master of Education

PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

SOLAS: An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna

SETU: South East Technological University

TALIS: Teaching and Learning International Survey

TC: Teaching Council

TCD: Trinity College Dublin

TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

TPL: Teacher Professional Learning

UCC: University College Cork

UCD: University College Dublin

UniG: University of Galway

UL: University of Limerick

UG: Undergraduate

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

HEI: Higher Education Institution

NOTE: *Oide* is a support service for teachers and school leaders, funded by the Department of Education and Youth.

Acknowledgements

The research team is very grateful to all of the stakeholders who were interviewed as part of this study. They were generous with their time and their insights, and we hope that the report does justice to their reflective comments. We acknowledge the comments of the Teaching Council, the Department of Education and Youth and members of the Project Review and Monitoring Committee for comments on an earlier draft of the report.

Executive Summary

Context: *Teachers' Professional Journeys (TPJ): The First Decade (2024-2030)* is an accelerated longitudinal mixed-methods study focused on understanding the dynamics of teacher learning and development from the final year of initial teacher education (ITE) through the first nine years of teachers' work within classrooms and schools in the context of the wider education system at primary, post-primary and further education and training (FET) sectors in Ireland. The purpose of this third report is to present the perspectives of teacher education stakeholders in higher education, government organisations, national education agencies vis-à-vis developments in and the quality of initial teacher education, the continuum of teacher education, readiness to teach and teacher supply to inform subsequent phases of the TPJ study.

TPJ Study Aim and Objectives: The overarching aim of the TPJ study is “to understand beginning teachers’ professional journeys, by examining the key personal, educational, professional and systemic influences that define and shape their early careers and practice, including the impact of different learning and professional development phases”. Following from that overarching aim, the five TPJ study objectives are:

1. To examine beginning teachers’ attitudes, values, dispositions and formative experiences in relation to teaching and learning.
2. To investigate early career teachers’ and other stakeholders’ perceptions of their capacity (knowledge, skills, experience, preparedness) to meet the needs of learners in a variety of school contexts.
3. To explore teachers’ early professional learning and career experiences as they leave ITE and transition across the three phases of professional development.
4. To review the ability of ITE programmes, Droichead and Cosán to respond to national priorities, policy and practice developments.
5. To consider issues relating to teacher supply, diversity and retention.

Participants: The participants comprised 65 stakeholders from teacher unions, school management bodies, teacher educators in higher education, government departments and agencies. The government departments that participated in the focus group were the Department of Education and Youth (DEY), the Teaching Council (TC), Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), and Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI.) Other organisations participated include, *Oide*, NABMSE, JMB, ACCS, CPSMA, NCSE, NPC, COGG, SOLAS, NAPD, Gaeloideachas and PDST. The unions that joined include, TUI, ASTI, and INTO. Finally, teacher educators from the following HEIs participated: UCC, UCD, MU, MIE, UniG, UL, MIC, ATU, TCD, DCU, HC, NCAD, MTU, and SETU.

Research Design: This study involved 15 online focus groups in which participants provided detailed comments about and insights into three themes, each with two sub-themes that were communicated to them in advance. Participants were asked to discuss these themes and sub themes with colleagues in their respective organisations/agencies before the focus groups. The three themes and associated sub-themes are:

1. Developments in and quality of initial teacher education:

- (i) changes in the duration, structure, and content of ITE,
 - (ii) the extent to which newly qualified teachers are prepared to teach in today's classrooms.
2. The continuum of teacher education (ITE, induction and teacher learning) and readiness to teach:
- (i) the interaction between ITE and Droichead,
 - (ii) the relationship between ITE and Cosán
3. Teacher supply, retention and diversity:
- (i) the attractiveness of the profession to a diverse population,
 - (ii) teacher recruitment and retention

Findings: Presented below are fourteen key findings derived from the analysis of stakeholder input, reflecting core insights from the study. The analysis was undertaken by small three-person teams, each assigned specific areas to examine and analyse. This division of labour was essential due to the volume of data. Each team presented its preliminary findings to the full research team for feedback. The provisional themes were reviewed by the study leads, who provided further feedback to the three-person teams. Subsequently, the preliminary findings were shared with the Project Review and Monitoring Group comprising Teaching Council, DEY and external academic advisors. At that stage, the themes were further elaborated and refined.

Developments in teacher education and quality in ITE

Finding 1: The landscape of initial teacher education (ITE) provision has shifted due to two accreditation cycles (AC), enabling a largely welcomed process of review and reimagining of ITE.

Finding 2: There is broad agreement on the positive combined impact of early reforms (2010–2015), which led to the 4-year undergraduate and 2-year PME programmes. However, as reforms have accumulated, views on the value of the 2-year PME have diverged—more between than within stakeholder groups—though concerns about its cost are widely shared.

Finding 3: Accreditation Cycle 2 (Céim 2020) introduced a range of positive and largely welcomed changes, though it is also seen as somewhat inflexible and associated with significant resource challenges, particularly in certain features and sectors.

Finding 4: The combined impact of Accreditation Cycle 1 (2011) and school placement changes driven by the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategy (2012) has made school placement both more significant and more challenging within ITE programmes, particularly as school–university partnership is widely perceived to rely heavily on the ‘goodwill’ of schools.

Finding 5: Perceptions of current ITE outcomes vary significantly—while many view graduates as very well prepared, others see them as less so, with notable differences across stakeholder groups. However, there is shared recognition that even well-prepared graduates face considerable challenges in an evolving school and societal context.

The continuum and readiness to teach

Finding 6: Stakeholders highlighted several ways in which the Droichead process interacts with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to extend and deepen newly qualified teachers' preparedness for the classroom.

Finding 7: Compared to other themes, discussion of Cosán was less prominent in some focus groups, suggesting uneven levels of familiarity or engagement across stakeholder groups.

Finding 8: Across primary, post-primary, Irish-medium, and FET contexts, newly qualified teachers (NQTs) were generally viewed as emerging with strong foundational training. However, several areas for further development and systemic support were identified.

Teacher supply

Finding 9: Despite some differences of opinion, teaching was generally viewed as an attractive profession. This perception was supported by references to ITE application numbers and the view that teacher pay and qualifications in Ireland compare favourably with many other countries.

Finding 10: Less frequently raised in some focus groups, but still notable, were concerns around teacher burnout, Irish language requirements for prospective primary teachers, and the resourcing of teaching—issues that were often context-specific.

Finding 11: There was broad consensus among teacher educators and stakeholders that the teaching profession in Ireland lacks diversity in terms of ethnic, cultural, and social class backgrounds, resulting in a noticeable mismatch between the teacher workforce and the student population.

Finding 12: Because FET emerges as quite distinct from the primary and post-primary sectors, the main themes that centre on the diversity of qualification pathways and employment structures within the sector are addressed separately.

Professionalisation of teaching and teacher education and teachers' professional capital

Finding 13: The professionalisation of teaching and teacher education is the prevailing discourse in relation to T&TE in Ireland among T&TE stakeholders, i.e. there was no evidence of any drive for deregulation of teaching and teacher education.

Finding 14: Teachers and teacher unions were perceived as having very considerable professional capital within the education system.

Conclusions/Recommendations: This TPJ report draws on a unique data set that informs and deepens our understanding of initial teacher education and how stakeholders, from divergent vantage points, interpret the origins, developments, and emerging impact of a period of dynamic change in teacher education in Ireland across the primary, post-primary, and FET sectors. The distinctiveness of the FET sector shaped our approach, leading to the inclusion of a dedicated focus group with FET stakeholders. This decision proved valuable and will inform TPJ's future engagement with FET teachers/practitioners in their first decade post-ITE.

The report concludes by highlighting the main themes emerging from the focus group interviews: the impact of policy developments over the last fifteen years and the quality of initial teacher education, the greater focus on the role of school placement, the continuum

of teacher professional development, teacher supply and the lack of diversity in the teaching profession.

The prevailing professionalisation discourse on teaching and teacher education is an important context for this report and the entire TPJ study. First, it points to the significance of the wider political and policy environment for teaching and teacher education. Second, as we outlined earlier in this report, how a system responds to the four issues of regulation, standards, curriculum of teacher education and accountability provides a landscape within which stakeholder perspectives need to be located and from where they can be better understood. Third, the prevailing professionalisation discourse is likely to impact the views of teachers in their first decade. That is, TPJ Reports will be published annually in 2026, 2027, 2028 and 2029 based on the findings of surveys of the three cohorts along with individual teacher case studies. These annual reports will provide insights on how the wider discourse influences the professional journeys of early career teachers.

1 Introduction

1.1 TPJ study and continuum of teacher education policy context

The *Teachers' Professional Journeys (TPJ): The First Decade (2024–2030)* is a national, accelerated longitudinal mixed-methods study designed to investigate the evolving professional lives of teachers across the continuum of teacher education and practice. Funded by the Teaching Council and the Department of Education and Youth, the TPJ study spans the final year of initial teacher education (ITE) through to the first nine years of teachers' careers in the primary, post-primary, and further education and training (FET) sectors in Ireland.

Building on a growing recognition of the significance of early career experiences in shaping long-term teacher development, the TPJ study addresses the dynamic interaction of personal, educational, professional, and systemic influences that shape teachers' beliefs, competencies, well-being, and professional agency. Central to the study is the concept of an 'architecture of the continuum'—a tri-partite structure encompassing ITE, induction (Droichead), and teacher professional learning (Cosán)—and how this continuum both shapes and is shaped by teachers' evolving professional identities. Noteworthy, here is that the term teacher professional learning (TPL) is the more current term used in the Irish context replacing what previously would have been termed continuing professional development (CPD). Furthermore, it is important to note that neither TPL nor CPD fully capture the breadth of both teacher learning and teacher development, which together are central to the TPJ focus.

A core feature of the TPJ study is its theoretically grounded, multi-layered design, which connects policy intentions and enactments with teachers' lived experiences and professional outcomes. The study follows graduates of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes from the years 2019, 2022, and 2026—cohorts who are likely to remain in the profession into the 2060s. Depending on their entry year, these teachers will have completed ITE programmes shaped either by the 2011 professional accreditation standards or by the more recent 2020 Céim standards (which apply to PME 2025 and undergraduate ITE 2026). By employing an accelerated longitudinal mixed-methods approach, the TPJ study captures experiences across the full spectrum of years 1–9 of teaching, providing a rich, time-sensitive understanding of early career development in the context of a profession undergoing significant reform.

The overarching aim of the TPJ study is to understand beginning teachers' professional journeys by examining how individual dispositions, institutional supports, policy contexts, and systemic conditions interact to support or constrain teacher learning and development across the early years of the profession.

The five research objectives guiding the study (see Figure 1.1) are:

RESEARCH AIM				
To understand beginning teachers' professional journeys, by examining the key personal, educational, professional and systemic influences that define and shape their early careers and practice, including the impact of different learning and professional development phases.				
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES				
1. To examine beginning teachers' attitudes, values, dispositions and formative experiences in relation to teaching and learning.	2. To investigate early career teachers' and other stakeholders' perceptions of their capacity to meet the needs of learners in a variety of school contexts.	3. To explore teachers' early professional learning and career experiences as they leave Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and transition across the three phases of professional development.	4. To review the ability of ITE programmes, Droichead and Cosán to respond to national priorities, policy and practice developments.	5. To consider issues relating to teacher supply, diversity and retention. To examine beginning teachers' attitudes, values, dispositions and formative experiences in relation to teaching and learning.
Illustrative exemplar questions				
<p>How do beginning teachers' values and beliefs shape their perceptions of teaching and their role as an educator?</p> <p>How do newly qualified teachers' biographies impact on their experiences of ITE and early professional learning?</p> <p>How do their ideologies of teaching align with formal policy definitions of teacher professionalism?</p>	<p>What are teachers' learning needs at this stage in their careers?</p> <p>How prepared do teachers feel to be inclusive, agentic, reflective, research-engaged and collaborative practitioners?</p> <p>Do teachers feel competent and confident in their teaching?</p>	<p>What factors influence choice of ITE courses?</p> <p>How do different ITE models influence beginning teachers' professional experiences and practice?</p> <p>How effectively are linkages made between ITE, Droichead and Cosán, to support teachers as they transition from one phase to the next?</p> <p>How do teachers' early career experiences shape their later careers?</p> <p>How does choice of curriculum subject influence beginning teachers' professional experience and practice?</p>	<p>What mechanisms or processes are in place to enable ITE providers to adapt their programmes and schools to adapt their engagement with Droichead and Cosán so they can address national priorities and respond to policy and practice developments?</p>	<p>How are ITE programmes contributing to supporting/ensuring future teacher supply?</p> <p>How do ITE programmes and the professional development process seek to promote and maintain the attractiveness of the teaching profession?</p> <p>How can heterogeneity/diversity be enhanced within the profession?</p>

Figure 1.1. TPJ Research Aim and Research Objectives

1. To examine beginning teachers' attitudes, values, dispositions, and formative experiences in relation to teaching and learning.
2. To investigate early career teachers' and other stakeholders' perceptions of their capacity (knowledge, skills, experience, preparedness) to meet the needs of learners across a variety of school contexts.
3. To explore early career teachers' professional learning and career experiences as they transition across the three phases of teacher development—ITE, Droichead, and Cosán.
4. To review the responsiveness of ITE, Droichead, and Cosán to national priorities, policy developments, and emerging practices.
5. To consider issues relating to teacher supply, diversity, and retention.

Drawing on conceptual frameworks informed by national and international research, the TPJ study adopts an integrated design that enables the intersection of policy and practice to be examined through the lived experiences of teachers and the perspectives of stakeholders.

With its participatory ethos and alignment with evolving policy cycles, TPJ is designed to generate robust, evidence-based insights that can inform ongoing educational reform and professional learning policy in Ireland.

1.1.1 The continuum of teacher education: ITE, induction and teacher professional learning

Since the establishment of the Teaching Council in 2006, the Teaching Council (TC) has adopted a phased approach to the development of professional life-cycle policies. Over the course of a decade, the Teaching Council published the following key documents:

- 2011: Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education
- 2011: Guidelines on Initial Teacher Education vis-à-vis the accreditation of teacher education programmes
- 2016: *Cosán*, the national framework for teachers' learning
- 2017: *Droichead*, an integrated professional induction framework for newly qualified teachers (NQTs)

In the case of both ITE and induction, both policies have developed informed by reflection and consultation vis-à-vis their implementation. In the case of ITE, the 2011 Initial Teacher Education: 'Criteria and Guidelines for Providers'¹ have evolved into the 2020 *Céim* 'standards' (Teaching Council, 2020). In relation to induction, over the course of the four-year period from 2017 to 2021-2022 there was a phased introduction of the *Droichead*/induction programme until its full implementation in 2021-2022. Furthermore, in relation to teacher professional learning, Teaching Council publication of *Cosán* in 2016 as the national framework for teachers' learning in 2016, it could be argued, was further developed through an Educational Research Centre (ERC) literature review and linked teacher professional learning and evaluation of well-being programme implementation.

As such, the architecture that now frames the continuum of teacher education in Ireland—spanning ITE, *Droichead* (induction), and *Cosán* (continuing professional learning)—has evolved substantially over the last three decades. First signalled in the 1991 OECD review of Irish education, which proposed a coherent '3 Is' model (initial, induction, and in-service), this vision has become increasingly institutionalised. Notable developments along this path include the aforementioned 2011 ITE programme accreditation (Accreditation Cycle 1), the formalisation of the *Droichead* process, a national framework for professional learning in 2017 and the 2020 introduction of the *Céim* standards, marking the second accreditation cycle (AC2). Together, these milestones represent a significant reconfiguration of the structures supporting teacher professionalism in Ireland. As noted in TPJ Report 1 (2014) "...over the last

¹ Section 38 of the Teaching Council Act refers to the Council setting standards for ITE and reviewing and accrediting programmes against those standards.

15 years a new policy and practice architecture for the professional life-cycle of teachers has been established.” (p. 35).

1.2 Learning from research and designing a study of the first decade of the continuum: TPJ Reports 1 & 2

This is the third TPJ report and follows on from the literature reviews-focused first report and the design-focused second report. The first report (see Appendix 1 for its abstract) in the *Teachers' Professional Journeys (TPJ): The First Decade* series established a critical evidence base by conducting three scoping reviews, alongside an issues paper on teacher supply. It addressed the five TPJ research objectives by synthesising a broad and diverse body of research related to teacher beliefs, competence, early career transitions, policy responsiveness, and workforce dynamics. The reviews informed the conceptual framework and design of the TPJ study. TPJ Report 2 (see Appendix 2 for its abstract) built on the insights from Report 1 (Conway et al., 2024) by presenting the study's conceptual framework, methodological design, and data collection instruments.

1.2.1 TPJ Report 1: Reviews of Literature

The first review examined longitudinal studies of teachers and teaching from 1970 to 2023. A key finding was the substantial growth in longitudinal research over the past 15 years, particularly since 2010. These studies increasingly use diverse research designs—including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches—to capture complex trajectories of teacher development. However, the review also highlighted that much of this work remains concentrated in the early years of teaching, with fewer studies following teachers beyond year three or four. Importantly, while the U.S. remains a dominant source of such studies, comparable research is emerging from a broad range of countries, including Finland, Australia, Scotland, and Singapore, offering valuable perspectives for the Irish context.

The second review focused on large-scale international studies—particularly OECD's TALIS, TIMSS, and PIRLS—and their application to understanding teachers' work. These studies provide comprehensive data on teachers' beliefs, practices, working conditions, and professional learning across diverse systems. Findings from this review suggest that constructs used in these studies (e.g., teacher self-efficacy, autonomy, and collaboration) could meaningfully inform the TPJ study's instruments and analyses. Although Ireland has not participated in recent TALIS cycles, the review recommended incorporating relevant TALIS items and scales into TPJ data collection to enable international comparison and benchmarking. It also underscored the potential of these instruments to inform national policy on teacher development, especially in relation to professional learning, job satisfaction, and teacher retention.

Together, these two reviews underscored the importance of both depth (through longitudinal inquiry) and breadth (through large-scale comparative data) in understanding the complexity of teachers' professional lives. They also identified an important gap in the Irish research landscape: the absence of sustained, system-wide empirical data on teachers' experiences beyond their induction period.

The third review examined empirical research conducted in Ireland between 2000 and 2023 on teachers in the first decade of their careers across the primary, post-primary, and further education (FE) sectors. It revealed a concentration of research in primary settings and a strong focus on the initial years of teaching (particularly years 1–3). Significantly fewer studies examined teacher development in years 4–9, or across the post-primary and FE sectors, highlighting a fragmented understanding of teacher growth over time. The review also found that much of the existing Irish literature employed small-scale, qualitative methodologies, underlining the need for a large-scale, longitudinal study such as TPJ to offer a more systemic and comparative analysis of teachers' experiences over the first decade of their careers.

Finally, the teacher supply issues paper reviewed national and international literature on teacher recruitment, retention, and workforce diversity. It introduced conceptual models of teacher supply, distinguishing between “pipeline” approaches (focused on numerical flows into and out of the profession) and “pipeline-plus-experience” models that incorporate teachers' lived experiences and working conditions. The paper identified multiple structural challenges in the Irish system, including limited data integration, persistent issues in attracting and retaining teachers across certain regions and sectors, and a lack of diversity in the profession. Drawing on international examples, the review stressed the need for improved workforce planning, longitudinal tracking, and a greater focus on the working conditions that shape teacher career trajectories.

In sum, Report 1 underscored the necessity of a national longitudinal study capable of capturing the complexities of teacher learning, policy responsiveness, and workforce sustainability across sectors and over time. It provided the conceptual and empirical foundation for the TPJ study's design and affirmed its potential to inform both policy development and teacher education practice in Ireland.

1.2.2 TPJ Report 2: Study Design and Instruments

TPJ Report 2 built on the insights from Report 1 (Conway et al., 2024) by presenting the study's conceptual framework, methodological design, and data collection instruments. Framed as an accelerated longitudinal mixed-methods study, TPJ follows three cohorts of teachers—graduating in 2019, 2022, and 2026—through their first nine years in the profession. It is important to note the distinctiveness of TPJ's accelerated longitudinal design. Cáncer et al

(2023) observe “Accelerated longitudinal designs (ALD) allow studying developmental processes usually spanning multiple years in a much shorter time framework by including participants from different age cohorts which are assumed to share the same population parameters.” (p. 761). In the case of TPJ rather than, for example, following the 2026 graduates for their first decade, taking the 2019, 2022 and 2026 ITE graduates will provide findings on the first decade of teacher learning and development in a shorter period of time. TPJ Report 2 outlined the study’s aim: to explore the personal, professional, and systemic factors shaping teachers’ journeys, and detailed five research objectives that align with both national policy priorities and global trends in teacher development.

Report 2 introduced the TPJ Conceptual Framework, a multi-level model encompassing macro contexts (e.g., policy, curriculum, economic conditions), teacher beliefs and competencies, classroom and school environments, and teacher learning and outcomes. It also described the development and rationale for the mixed-methods instruments, including surveys, interviews, and experience sampling, all aligned with the framework’s components.

Emphasising a participatory and policy-aligned approach, the report highlighted the TPJ study’s capacity to generate longitudinal insights into teacher development in an evolving educational landscape. It also recognised the unique opportunity to capture how different accreditation standards (the 2011 ITE guidelines and the 2020 Céim standards) shape early career trajectories.

1.2.3 TPJ Report 3 outline

TPJ Report 3 is structured in four main sections. The first section offers a brief review of the literature, beginning with an introductory overview and progressing through key thematic areas including the politics, quality and evaluation of ITE; the transition from ITE to Droichead; the connection between ITE and continuing professional development (Cosán); issues relating to teacher supply, attractiveness, recruitment and retention; and the enactment of effective teaching in schools. This is followed by a methodology section, which restates the research aim and objectives, outlines ethical considerations, describes the focus group method and sampling strategy (including efforts to ensure inclusive participation), and details the approach to data analysis. The third section presents the findings aligned to the thematic structure of the literature review, offering stakeholder perspectives across the same domains. The final section provides a conclusion, summarising key insights and highlighting both research and policy implications arising from the findings.

2 Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction / Outline

This literature review situates the TPJ study within key national and international research on teachers' professional lives. The review is structured around the study's core research objectives, providing a synthesis of the available evidence on teacher supply, the continuum of teacher education, and the enactment of teaching in schools. In doing so, it draws heavily from the three scoping reviews and issues paper presented in TPJ Report 1 (Conway et al., 2024), which offered an extensive analysis of research relating to teachers' beliefs, preparedness, early career transitions, policy responsiveness, and workforce dynamics.

The review is organised into thematic sections aligned to the TPJ study's research questions. Section 2.2 explores the politics, quality, and evaluation of initial teacher education (ITE), while Section 2.3 examines the continuum of teacher education in Ireland, from ITE through the induction process (Droichead) to continuing professional learning (Cosán). Section 2.4 focuses on the enactment of teaching in schools, specifically addressing the extent to which newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are prepared to teach in contemporary classrooms. Section 2.5 considers issues relating to teacher supply, attractiveness, recruitment, and retention. The review concludes by highlighting key gaps in the evidence base and positioning the TPJ study as an important contribution to addressing these gaps.

2.2 Teacher education policy landscape: global and institutional influences on the continuum

2.2.1 Global and institutional influences on initial teacher education

...perhaps the most powerful mantra - certainly affecting the western world and many parts of the developing world, has been the dual proposition that the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers and that the quality of teachers depends - at least in significant part - on the quality of their preparation, of their teacher education. (Menter, 2021, p. 88)

Primarily due to the landmark *McKinsey Report* (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), this guiding proposition - that the outcomes of schooling depends on the quality of teachers and teaching, and that teacher education matters - moved to the forefront of attention for governments and education policymakers. The resulting intense focus on this dual proposition has given rise to diverse framings of teaching and teacher education: with some arguing for enhanced professionalisation of both teaching and teacher education and others arguing for prompt deregulation of teaching and teacher education.

It is important then that we recognise the *Teachers' Professional Journeys* study (TPJ) is being undertaken in a context where, while the OECD (2006) observed that *teachers matter*, the

policy responses to how teachers matter differ markedly, and in highly consequential ways, between and sometimes within countries (Ingvarson et al., 2006; Santoro et al., 2011). As such, over the last 30 years not only teaching but the education of teachers has become a policy priority for governments around the world inspired by the desire to achieve more globally competitive economies with a resultant drive for educational reform (Darling Hammond, 2021). In terms of understanding this development, Tatto (2006) has argued that “the influence of educational reform on teachers and their work can be thought of as two kinds global and institutional” (p. 7). The effects of global influences are evident in “...changes at the economic, social, cultural and political levels as nation states act to remain competitive in a dynamically changing global economy” (p. 8). For Tatto (2006), the institutional aspect of educational reform is how nation states, and their governments, react and position themselves in relation to these powerful global influences. Of major significance in relation to transnational influences on education policies is the impact of transnational and/or inter-governmental agencies such as the OECD, EU and more recently UNESCO.²

In considering the preferred direction of national education reforms, for example, Sahlberg's comparison, of what he identified as the widely influential global education reform movement (GERM) and Finland's approach to reform, highlights their consequentially diverging stance vis-à-vis three policy levers: standards, curriculum and accountability. These three policy levers, or foci, succinctly identify how governments, in an era of enhanced globalisation, driven by the pursuit of education system quality, have inevitably deployed consequential approaches to reform no matter whether they are adopting GERM-inspired reform or other reforms more resonant of the approach in Finland. In relation to standards, he counterpoints central, high and prescribed versus flexible, loose and local innovation-based reforms. In relation to curriculum, Sahlberg characterises it as a contrast between narrow versus broad/creativity inspired. In relation to accountability, he differentiates between strict and smart accountability.

While Sahlberg was considering reforms of teaching and schooling, in his cogent analysis of reform trends across national settings, the identification of the three levers and the contrasting approaches within each is also relevant in any consideration of both teaching and teacher education reforms. For the purposes of the TPJ study, we extend his framework by adding a fourth dimension: (de)regulation. By adding regulation-deregulation as a fourth dimension to Sahlberg's framework, we might usefully consider how together (de)regulation, standards, curriculum and accountability provide a useful lens for examining how teacher education in Ireland is being shaped-and might continue to be shaped - over the coming decade.

Key questions for reflection (see Table 1) include:

² Commissioned by the Department of Education and Youth, UNESCO is currently undertaking a major study of teacher shortages in Ireland (2024-26) see: <https://core.unesco.org/en/project/549IRE1000>

- How has, is, or might **(de)regulation** of teacher education impact teaching and teacher education?
- How have, are, or might **standards** for teachers be framed?
- How has, is, or might '**curriculum in teacher education**' be configured?
- How have, are, or might issues of **accountability** evolve in relation to teacher education?

Governments in many countries have prioritised high impact developments in relation to intertwined policies concerning teaching standards (Louden, 2000; Darling Hammond, 2021; Goodwin, 2021; Mockler, 2022; Woo et al., 2024), performance assessments of teaching, prescription of teacher education curricula (e.g. in England, Hordern & Brooks, 2023; Hordern & Brooks, 2024) and higher levels of accountability for both teaching and teacher education (Ellis and Childs, 2023; Mayer & Mills, 2021). First, for example, in relation to standards, Louden (2000) observed that in the 1990s first wave standards were developed and characterised by “long lists of duties, opaque language, generic skills, decontextualised performances, an expanded range of duties and weak assessments” (p. 118). Critical of this first wave, he argued that Australia ought to develop “brief, transparent, specialised, contextualised, focused on teaching and learning, and matched by strong assessments” (p. 118). Second, for example, in relation to the curriculum of teacher education, Hordern and Brooks (2023 & 2024) have documented and critiqued the introduction in 2016 in England of the very detailed core content framework (CCF) for initial teacher education now required to be fully addressed as a condition of ITE programme accreditation. They argue that “the CCF encourages an image of teaching as a decontextualised series of interventions with narrow objectives, and thus implicitly marginalises wider educational goods and purposes and deprofessionalises teachers’ work.” (p. 800).

Reflecting international policy trends, in the case of Ireland over the last twenty-five years, there have been distinctive developments in relation to regulation, standards, the curriculum of teacher education and accountability. The establishment of the Teaching Council in 2006 has been a landmark development nationally in relation to the regulation, rather than deregulation, of both teaching and teacher education. In relation to the curriculum of teacher education, rather than the highly prescriptive approach taken in England, the Teaching Council has specified key programme features (e.g. teacher inquiry and core elements) along with broadly framed content-focused signposting in relation to foundations, professional studies though with more specific specification in relation to school placement. In relation to the overall accountability and evaluation culture, teaching and teacher education in Ireland

Table 1: Four criteria for teacher education policy analysis: international and national examples

Four criteria for analysing preferred national TE policy direction	Illustrative international examples	Ireland
<i>How has, is, or might (de)regulation of teacher education impact teaching and teacher education?</i>	Scotland, Norway, Finland: Significant central regulation of teaching profession and TE USA: highly impactful deregulation drive pitted against the professionalisation of teaching and teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001)	Teaching and teacher education firmly positioned in a professionalisation discourse with no evidence of a drive for deregulation.
<i>How have, are, or might standards for teachers and teacher education framed?</i>	First wave standards in the 1990s and second wave standards in many countries in the last 25 years (Louden, 2000). Global trend toward articulation of standards for teaching and teacher education (Darling Hammond, 2021; Mayer & Mills, 2021; Santoro et al., 2011; Torrance and Forde, 2017)	Guidelines for ITE in 2011 and more recently standards in 2020 ITE accreditation policy.
<i>How has, is, or might 'curriculum in teacher education' be configured?</i>	England: move to insert detailed 'core content' in TE programmes (Hordern and Brooks, 2023; Hordern and Brooks, 2024)	Specification of teacher inquiry and core elements in ITE along with broadly framed content signposting in relation to foundations, professional studies with more specific specification in relation to school placement.
<i>How have, are, or might issues of accountability evolve in relation to teacher education?</i>	USA, England: Performance assessment of teachers, schools and teacher education (re. USA see Zeichner, 2005; Conway & Artiles 2005; Darling Hammond, 2021; Kelly and Leavy, 2013; Sloane et al., 2013; re England, see Baxter & Clarke, 2013; Mutton and Burn, 2024)	Accountability of teachers via code of conduct and teacher education by 2011 guidelines and 2022 standards for teacher education programme accreditation.

continue, like Finland, to be characterised by a high trust model. In summary, policy developments in relation to teaching and teacher education are firmly positioned in a professionalisation of teaching and teacher education rather than the deregulation of the profession. As the other phases of TPJ data collection take place from 2025 to 2029, any developments in relation to these four policy levers, whether directed to teaching and/or teacher education, will likely have a significant impact on teachers' professional journeys.

2.2.2 The stakeholder(s) idea

In this report, the term *stakeholder* is used to acknowledge the diverse actors who bring distinct values, perspectives, and standpoints to teacher education. Understanding both converging and diverging views across these groups is of particular importance in identifying key themes in teacher education. This approach is informed by our understanding of the aforementioned 'new' policy prominence of teacher education in educational policy debates over the last thirty years (Conway & Artiles, 2006; Ingvarson et al, 2006; Darling Hammond, 2021). Global and institutional influences shape how stakeholders engage with teacher education, with national contexts being especially significant (see Cochran-Smith, 2008; Furlong, 2008, special issue of *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*). As Cochran-Smith (2013, p. 6) observes:

“Currently there are multiple teacher education reform policies being proposed, piloted, and debated at a variety of levels and by various interest groups, stakeholders, and policy-makers. Along with an unprecedented sense of urgency about these important goals, what most U.S. reforms have in common is increased accountability.”
(Cochran-Smith, 2013, p.6)

As such, while the policy directions being adopted in Ireland are context specific, there are nonetheless important resonances with policy trends internationally. Notwithstanding the significance of national contexts, global and trans-national influences will continue to play an impactful role in shaping stakeholder perspectives in the national conversation about teaching and teacher education in Ireland. Underpinning this governmental and trans-national gaze on teacher education is that it has been identified as a 'public policy problem' (Cochran-Smith, 2005). As Paine and Zeichner (2012) observed, “Teachers, their teaching, and teacher learning are now a central conversation, not just locally but globally” (p. 569).

2.3 The continuum: ITE, induction and teacher professional learning

A growing body of international research explores teacher development across different phases of the professional continuum, though the emphasis has tended to be strongest at entry points—Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and the early years of teaching. Chapters 2 and 3 of TPJ Report 1 (Conway et al., 2024) highlight the substantial growth in longitudinal studies over the past two decades, particularly those examining transitions from ITE into the profession. These include studies tracking beliefs (Akiba et al., 2023; Martell, 2013, 2022; Ni Chroinin and O’Sullivan, 2014), self-efficacy (Ensign et al., 2020; Maulana and Helms- Lorenz

2016; Lazarides et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2022; Thomson et al., 2019, 2020), autonomy (Guo & Wang, 2021; Morgan and Sims, 2023; Qi and Bin, 2022), job satisfaction (Ahn et al., 2023; Ceylan et al., 2020; Collie et al., 2020; Gouëdard et al., 2023), and professional identities (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Beijaard and Meijer, 2017; Pillen et al., 2013), typically over the first three years (Findlay, 2012; Ni Chroinin and O'Sullivan, 2016). While numerous studies explore the role of ITE in preparing teachers, induction experiences and early adjustment challenges (Greenberg et al., 2014; Lammert, 2023; Maulana et al., 2015; Scales et al., 2018; Sawyer, 2022; Tolgfors et al., 2023; Tondeur et al., 2016), few extend their scope into the mid-career phase or examine sustained engagement with professional development frameworks akin to Cosán. This pattern is particularly evident in the concentration of studies from North America, Europe, Australia, and select Asian contexts such as Singapore, while there remains a noticeable absence of published longitudinal research from other global regions. As highlighted in Chapters 2 and 3 of TPJ Report 1, this limits comparative insights into how cultural contexts and system-level policies shape teachers' professional trajectories, transitions, and continuities, especially in under-represented settings.

In the Irish context, the research base is similarly weighted toward the early stages of the continuum. Chapter 4 of TPJ Report 1 reveals a relatively robust body of research focusing on initial teacher education and induction—especially the Droichead process. Studies highlight the importance of mentoring, supportive school cultures, and the developmental impact of early professional relationships (Kitching, 2009; Kitching et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2010). There is also a strong evidence base on how ITE influences preparedness, though findings often point to a mismatch between the technical preparation in ITE and the social and emotional realities of school life (Brennan et al., 2023; Killeavy, 2001; Kozina, 2013; Nally and Ladden, 2020). The transition from ITE to induction (such as Droichead) has been a particular focus of recent research, including national evaluations and smaller scale case studies (Nally, 2020; O'Sullivan and Conway, 2016; Smyth et al., 2016; Uí Choistealbha et al., 2021). However, research that explicitly tracks teachers from ITE into their ongoing engagement with professional learning as conceptualised in Cosán is notably absent. The literature reveals little about how teachers' early professional learning trajectories are shaped by the formal and informal opportunities presented in the CPD phase or how teachers conceptualise continuity in their learning across the three phases.

This gap in research—particularly on the mid-to-late early career phase (years 4–9) and the integration of Cosán in teacher identity and practice—limits our understanding of the full professional lifecycle. The TPJ study is well positioned to address this gap by examining how teachers and stakeholders perceive the strengths and challenges of continuity across ITE, Droichead, and Cosán, and by exploring the policy, institutional, and individual factors that enable or disrupt coherent professional growth across the continuum.

2.4 Supporting early career teachers

International and national research has consistently highlighted the complexities surrounding the transition from ITE into the professional demands of contemporary classrooms. The available international and national literature, as synthesised in TPJ Report 1, provides valuable, albeit incomplete, insights into this question.

Chapter 2 of TPJ Report 1, which presents a scoping review of longitudinal studies focusing on teachers and teaching, indicates that many newly qualified teachers (NQTs) enter the profession with a solid grounding in pedagogical theory and instructional strategies gained through their ITE programmes. However, these studies also show that the transition into full professional practice presents challenges for NQTs, as they adjust to the complexities of real-world classrooms. While the longitudinal studies reviewed show that these challenges can be mitigated through supportive school contexts, mentoring, and collaboration, the report highlights a general lack of studies that follow teachers into the mid-career phase to explore how these initial challenges are addressed and how practice continues to evolve over time.

Chapter 3 of TPJ Report 1, which reviews large-scale international studies such as TALIS, TIMSS, and PIRLS, provides system-level data on teachers' self-reported preparedness, teaching practices, and professional development experiences. These studies consistently suggest that induction supports, school leadership, and opportunities for professional learning are positively associated with teachers' sense of preparedness and confidence in their roles. However, TPJ Report 1 notes that these studies, while providing valuable cross-country comparisons, lack the depth to fully understand the nuances of how NQTs enact teaching in diverse school contexts over time, and they do not explore the longitudinal dimension of teacher practice development in national settings. Furthermore, Ireland's absence from recent TALIS cycles means there is a limited basis for situating Irish teachers' preparedness within an international comparative framework.

Chapter 4 of TPJ Report 1 reveals that the Irish research base on newly qualified teachers (NQTs) is primarily focused on their experiences during the induction phase, with a particular emphasis on the Droichead process. Studies such as Uí Choistealbha et al. (2021) and Nally and Ladden (2020) highlight the significance of Droichead in supporting NQTs' early professional development, pointing to the value that NQTs place on mentoring, observation, and professional dialogue. These studies suggest that such supports assist NQTs in building confidence and developing their professional identities as they navigate the complexities of early career teaching.

However, TPJ Report 1 also underscores a lack of research that explicitly evaluates the extent to which NQTs feel prepared to meet the demands of contemporary classrooms, particularly beyond the induction phase. The report highlights that most Irish studies focus on the

supports provided during Droichead rather than systematically assessing NQTs' preparedness across specific teaching domains or exploring how these initial experiences translate into sustained professional growth over time. Furthermore, the research reviewed is largely situated in primary education, with limited attention given to post-primary or further education, or to diverse school contexts where the challenges of teaching may vary significantly.

In summary, while Chapter 4 of TPJ Report 1 provides evidence that NQTs in Ireland value the structured supports offered through Droichead and perceive them as beneficial to their early development, it does not offer direct evidence on how well-prepared NQTs feel to teach in today's classrooms more broadly. The lack of research on teacher practice beyond induction and the absence of studies exploring the longer-term enactment of teaching in diverse educational settings highlights a significant gap in the Irish evidence base. The TPJ study is well positioned to address this gap by providing insights into how teachers and stakeholders perceive preparedness and the enactment of teaching across the first decade of professional practice in Ireland.

2.5 Teacher supply: attractiveness, recruitment, retention

Research Objective 5 of the TPJ study is *to consider issues relating to teacher supply, diversity, and retention*. Teacher supply has emerged as a persistent and pressing challenge not only in Ireland but across many education systems globally. As reviewed in Chapter 5 of TPJ Report 1 (Conway et al., 2024³), the international literature on teacher supply has expanded considerably over the past two decades, reflecting growing policy and research attention to factors such as recruitment bottlenecks, workforce diversity, and teacher attrition.

Comparative research shows that nearly all European education systems have, to varying degrees, adopted measures to improve teacher supply either across the profession or targeted towards specific subject areas, school types, or teacher groups. This includes interventions aimed at boosting the attractiveness of teaching careers, offering incentives for working in disadvantaged or remote areas, reforming initial teacher education pathways, and strengthening retention supports. It is important to note that retention is a multi-dimensional issue that extends beyond resignation numbers. Here we include issues such as teacher churn and mobility, career breaks and movement between schools, as well as early retirements and graduates changing profession before gaining a permanent post. Internationally, these efforts to improve teacher supply are increasingly informed by both national-level studies and systematic research reviews, underscoring the multifaceted nature of teacher supply and the importance of linking data to policy responses.

³ Available at <https://tpjstudy.ie/all-latest-updates/tpj-report-1-reviews-of-literature/>

Ireland is not immune to these pressures. While entry into initial teacher education (ITE)—particularly for primary teaching—remains highly competitive and demand for ITE places is strong, systemic challenges persist in ensuring a stable and diverse teaching workforce across all sectors. One complicating factor in the Irish context is the long-identified weakness in the evidence base for strategic workforce planning. As highlighted in the *Sahlberg Reports* (2012, 2018), there has been insufficient linkage between teacher supply and demand, coupled with a historic lack of comprehensive data to understand workforce trends. Significantly, in the last decade more data on the teaching workforce are being gathered and analysed to deepen understanding of the dynamics of teacher supply and shortages, e.g. the CSO Signs of Life study. These reports also drew attention to the limited diversity within the Irish teaching profession, particularly in terms of socio-economic background, ethnicity, and gender.

The need for more robust, system-wide data was further emphasised in the *Striking the Balance* report (Department of Education and Skills/Teaching Council, 2015; Teaching Council, 2017), which called for the development of a coherent set of indicators to guide policy and workforce planning. While some information is available—for example, data on teacher retirements and initial employment outcomes for ITE graduates—important gaps remain. These include data on teacher movement between schools, attrition prior to retirement, and the impact of external drivers such as migration due to conflict or changes in class size policies on workforce stability. Moreover, Ireland's absence from recent cycles of large-scale international studies such as TALIS has limited opportunities for benchmarking teacher workforce issues within a broader international context.

Report 3 of the TPJ study offers a unique opportunity to address these longstanding evidence gaps. By capturing the perspectives of key stakeholders across the education system, TPJ can provide rich insight into the 'complex determinants' of teacher supply as experienced and perceived at the macro (policy and system-level), meso (institutional and organisational), and micro (individual and school-level) contexts. The study's design facilitates a nuanced exploration of how systemic factors—such as demographic change, economic conditions, workload, career structures, and working environments—interact with teacher decision-making around entry, continuation, and exit from the profession. In doing so, TPJ contributes not only to a deeper understanding of the teacher supply landscape in Ireland but also to the broader international conversation on how best to build and sustain a high-quality, diverse, and resilient teaching profession.

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review highlights both the strengths and limitations of the current research base concerning teachers' professional lives across the career continuum. Internationally, while there is a growing body of longitudinal and large-scale studies examining early career teachers' beliefs, identities, and experiences, much of this work remains concentrated on the

first few years of teaching, with limited attention to the mid-career phase or sustained engagement with professional learning. This pattern is similarly evident in the Irish context, where the research base is strongest in relation to ITE and the Droichead induction process but lacks depth in examining how teachers continue to develop their practice and identities beyond these early stages.

In particular, the review underscores significant gaps in the evidence relating to teacher supply, diversity, and retention in Ireland, as well as the absence of system-wide data linking teacher supply and demand. Similarly, while the continuum of teacher education in Ireland has been formalised through the alignment of ITE, Droichead, and Cosán, the research base does not yet provide sufficient insights into how teachers experience and navigate this continuum over the course of their careers. There is also a notable absence of research exploring how NQTs are prepared to meet the demands of today's classrooms, especially in post-primary and further education contexts, and in schools serving diverse communities.

These gaps in the evidence base highlight the importance of the TPJ study, which is uniquely positioned to provide longitudinal, system-wide insights into teachers' professional lives in Ireland. By capturing the perspectives of teachers and stakeholders across the first decade of professional practice, the TPJ study will offer new understandings of the factors that shape teacher development, preparedness, retention, and enactment of teaching in a changing educational landscape. In doing so, it will contribute to evidence-informed policymaking and programme design across the continuum of teacher education and professional learning.

3 Methodology

3.1 Aim and research objectives of the TPJ longitudinal study

TPJ design is informed by the overall aim of the study which is:

- To understand teachers' professional journeys by examining the key personal, educational, professional and systemic influences that define and shape their early careers and practice, including the impact of different learning and professional development phases.

This overall aim is further defined by way of five research objectives (see Figure 1.1). These are as follows:

- To examine beginning teachers' attitudes, values, beliefs, and formative experiences in relation to teaching and learning.
- To investigate early career teachers' and other stakeholders' perceptions of their capacity to meet the needs of learners in a variety of school contexts.
- To explore teachers' early professional learning and career experiences as they leave IT and transition across the three phases of professional development.
- To review the ability of ITE programmes, Droichead and Cosán to respond to national policy priorities and practice developments.
- To consider issues relating to teacher supply, diversity and retention.

3.2 Research ethics

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Limerick Educational and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee [EHSREC No: 2024_12_31_EHS]. In line with university policy and national regulations, robust data protection measures were implemented. These included researcher training, secure data storage, ethics oversight, and explicit consent procedures.

Participants were provided with a detailed information sheet outlining the aims, procedures, benefits, and potential risks of the study. The sheet explained that participation involved a one-hour online focus group interview, audio-recorded for research purposes. It also clarified participants' rights, including the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality measures, data protection practices, and the option to withdraw up to the point of data analysis. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to participation, ensuring they understood the scope of the study and how their data would be managed in accordance with GDPR and university policies.

3.3 Design and Implementation of the Stakeholder Focus Groups

Focus groups are a well-established qualitative research method used to explore collective views, experiences, and attitudes within a specific context. They involve facilitated group

discussions that allow participants to interact with one another, respond to shared prompts, and reflect on each other's contributions. Rather than focusing solely on individual responses, focus groups generate dynamic insights that emerge from group interaction, making them particularly useful for exploring complex topics shaped by social, institutional, or cultural factors.

In educational research, focus groups are especially valuable for eliciting nuanced perspectives from stakeholders who engage with policy and practice in different ways. They support the generation of rich, contextualised data that captures the interplay between personal experience, professional knowledge, and systemic influence.

For the TPJ study, focus groups provided an effective means of engaging with a range of stakeholders across the teacher education system, including teacher educators, school leaders, policy actors, and support service personnel. Participants were invited to reflect on their experiences regarding the continuum of teacher education—Initial Teacher Education (ITE), Droichead (induction), and Cosán (teacher professional learning)—as well as broader issues such as teacher supply, professional learning, and the enactment of teaching. The group setting facilitated collegial exchange and collaborative sense-making, enabling the research team to gather insights that would be less likely to emerge through individual interviews.

To ensure consistency and depth across focus groups, questions were developed to align closely with the TPJ study's research objectives and conceptual framework. These questions, supported by an accompanying facilitator guide, explored key aspects of teacher education and professional development while allowing space for open discussion and contextual nuance. The guide included prompts aligned with this report's three foci: (i) Developments in ITE and ITE quality, (ii) the continuum of TE and (iii) teacher supply and retention and ensured coherence across all sessions. The focus group questions and prompts addressed the following three foci:

1. Developments in ITE and ITE quality:
 - . Changes in the duration, structure, and content of ITE
 - . The extent to which newly qualified teachers are prepared to teach in today's classrooms
2. The continuum: ITE-induction-teacher professional learning:
 - . The interaction between ITE and Droichead
 - . The relationship between ITE and Cosán
3. Teacher supply, retention and diversity:
 - . The attractiveness of the profession to a diverse population

. Teacher recruitment and retention

In total, fifteen focus groups were conducted over a four-week period in May and early June 2025. These included four with representatives from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), four with system stakeholders (e.g. support services and policy bodies), one with Irish-medium school stakeholders, and four with representatives from the Further Education and Training (FET) sector. Each focus group was co-facilitated by two members of the TPJ research team, whose roles—such as lead moderator and assistant moderator—were clearly defined in the facilitator guide to ensure consistency in data collection and participant engagement.

All focus groups were held online and lasted approximately 75-90 minutes. With participants' consent, discussions were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The structured yet conversational format enabled the generation of rich, contextually grounded data, revealing both commonalities and tensions across stakeholder experiences in the teacher education system.

3.4 Participants

Focus groups were sampled based on an extensive TPJ stakeholder list prepared by the research team members to ensure a diverse range of perspectives were represented in the data. This list was developed through a comprehensive stakeholder mapping process, identifying key individuals, groups, and organisations relevant to the teacher education-focused research objectives of the study. As such, the stakeholders are characterised by their respective roles vis-à-vis the development of teachers, teaching and teacher education, i.e. directly or indirectly involved in shaping teachers' professional journeys. Across the primary, post-primary and further education sectors, other education stakeholders across the three sectors include parents, children/youth/adults, and the wider public, all of whom have a stake in relation to teachers and teaching. In total, **15 focus groups** were conducted, with a total number of **65 participants**. Participants in the first 4 focus groups were selected from HEIs providing primary and post-primary initial teacher education. Focus groups 5–9 included participants from various education system stakeholder groups, with one group specifically dedicated to Gaeilge stakeholders to accommodate conducting the interview 'as Gaeilge' (in the Irish language). To ensure adequate representation of the FET sector, focus groups 10 to 14 were conducted with a range of FET stakeholders, including FET teacher educators and members from organisations involved in FET education. A final focus group 15 was held with teacher union participants who were unable to attend earlier sessions due to scheduling conflicts.⁴

Participants were selected to represent key stakeholder categories and to contribute relevant expertise to the discussions. A phased communication strategy was used for recruitment.

⁴ Quotations from the focus groups are cited using the following format: (FG number, HEI/ES number of the participant.) Here HEI stands for *Higher Education Institute*, and ES denotes *Education Stakeholder*. For a complete list of participating institution and organisations, see Appendix 3 below.

Initially, a detailed email was sent to stakeholder organisations and agencies outlining the aims and research objectives of the TPJ study. This email included TPJ Report No. 1 and a list of proposed focus group discussion topics as attachments. Following this, targeted emails were sent to individuals identified for each focus group. These emails contained links to the online meetings. To minimise scheduling conflicts and encourage participation, follow-up calendar invitations were sent to secure time in participants' schedules. Both the targeted emails and calendar invites included, as a single file, the Participant Information Sheet, Consent Form, and Privacy Notice. In addition to formal recruitment strategies, the research team supported the project manager through informal networking channels. These played a crucial role in reaching participants who may have been otherwise difficult to reach.

3.5 Analysis

Focus group analysis followed a structured and collaborative process. Each session was attended by two members of the research team—one acting as facilitator and the other providing technical or logistical support. Sessions were recorded and transcribed automatically using the Microsoft Teams platform. Transcripts were then verified by one of the research team members who facilitated the session. The analysis leading to the findings involved the research team using small three-person teams with specific areas to examine and analyse. This division of labour was critical due to the volume of data. Each focus group was initially thematically coded by its respective facilitator (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2022). The research team was divided into three sub-groups, each organised around developing analytical summaries of emerging themes identified from all focus groups. Each team then presented its preliminary findings to the full research team for feedback. This process was carried out via a dedicated MS Teams channel with full team access, enabling rigorous cross-checking and continuing collaboration by all team members. Once all sub-groups identified their emerging themes, a research team meeting was held, where each team presented their draft summary findings. Following the sub-group analyses, a full research team meeting was convened. Each sub-group presented its draft summary findings, which were then discussed collectively to assess validity and reach consensus. Methodological considerations and challenges were also addressed during this meeting to ensure clarity and consistency in the analysis process. Subsequently, the developing themes were reviewed by the study leads with further feedback to each of the three-person teams. At that point, the preliminary analysis was shared with the Project Review and Monitoring Group comprising Teaching Council, DEY and external academic advisors. The preliminary findings were then reviewed and, where merited, further elaborated.

Trustworthiness of findings in qualitative research, as argued by Lincoln and Guba (1986; 1989), rests on the establishment of four parallel criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Each of these four criteria is relevant to the TPJ study.

First, in relation to credibility of this study's findings, that is the veracity of the study findings, the research team drew on their extensive collective knowledge of teaching and teacher education in preparing for the TPJ study. They also engaged with TPJ Advisory Panels, the Primary Education Forum and FET Forum to ensure both extended engagement and persistent observation in relation to the context and data. In addition, the research team undertook peer debriefing during data analysis.

Credibility was further enhanced through two types of triangulation, understood as the use of multiple referents to draw conclusions. First, *space triangulation* was achieved by gathering data across multiple sites from stakeholders in different agencies and HEIs. Second, *person triangulation* was ensured through collecting and analysing data from more than one person in participating agencies and HEIs. To support this latter point, participants were provided in advance with the three overarching focus group foci and sub-themes and were requested to discuss these in advance with their colleagues.

Second, in relation to dependability, that is, the reliability of data over time and conditions, the team undertook numerous checks and re-checks of quotations and their presentation. Feedback from the PRMC on an earlier draft of this report prompted the research team to conduct further audits and re-checks of findings and supporting evidence within the data set.

Third, in relation to confirmability, that is, the congruence or agreement between different team members in their interpretation of the data, the research team adopted a systematic and agreed approach to the framing, administration, and analysis of the focus groups. For example, the team having jointly developed an interview schedule over a series of meetings informed by TPJ research objectives and conceptual framework, adhered to the protocol in the focus group interviews. Importantly, in relation to further education and training interview framing, administration and analysis was adapted to account for the contextual specifics of the FET sector. Furthermore, in terms of analysis, team members first worked individually before collaborating in small groups, each focusing on one of the three focal themes of this study. This process provided opportunity for peer review, debriefing, and extensive discussions, which supported the development of agreed preliminary themes. These themes were then shared with the wider team for review and final agreement on the findings.

4 Findings

The findings are presented in the following five sections with sections 1-3 focused on the primary and post-primary sectors and section 4 on the FET sector:

- Developments in and quality of initial teacher education
- The continuum of teacher education: ITE, induction and teacher learning; readiness to teach
- Teacher supply and teacher diversity
- FET teacher education: Developments in and quality of initial teacher education (ITE)
- Professionalisation of teaching and teacher education and teachers' professional capital

4.1 Developments in and quality of initial teacher education

This section presents the views of teacher education stakeholders on developments in, and the quality of, initial teacher education. Five key findings are outlined below.

- **Finding 1:** The landscape of initial teacher education (ITE) provision has shifted due to two accreditation cycles (AC), enabling a largely welcomed process of review and reimagining of ITE.
- **Finding 2:** There is broad agreement on the positive combined impact of early reforms (2010–2015), which led to the 4-year undergraduate and 2-year PME programmes. However, as reforms have accumulated, views on the value of the 2-year PME have diverged—more between than within stakeholder groups—though concerns about its cost are widely shared.
- **Finding 3:** Accreditation Cycle 2 (Céim 2020) introduced a range of positive and largely welcomed changes, though it is also seen as somewhat inflexible and associated with significant resource challenges, particularly in certain features and sectors.
- **Finding 4:** The combined impact of Accreditation Cycle 1 and school placement changes driven by the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy has made school placement both more significant and more challenging within ITE programmes, particularly as school–university partnership is widely perceived to rely heavily on the 'goodwill' of schools.
- **Finding 5:** Perceptions of current ITE outcomes vary significantly—while many view graduates as very well prepared, others see them as less so, with notable differences across stakeholder groups. However, there is shared recognition that even well-prepared graduates face considerable challenges in an evolving school and societal context.

In presenting these five findings, we begin with an overview of the changes and impacts of early and accumulated ITE reforms over the past fifteen years (Findings 1 and 2). We then turn to stakeholder engagement with, and views on, the second ITE accreditation cycle, Céim 2020 (Finding 3). This is followed by an exploration of the shifting role and significance of

school placement within ITE programmes (Finding 4), and finally, we examine stakeholder perspectives on the preparedness of ITE graduates (Finding 5).

4.1.1 ITE policy changes and opportunities to reimagine ITE

Finding 1: The landscape of initial teacher education (ITE) provision has shifted due to two accreditation cycles (AC), enabling a largely welcomed process of review and reimagining of ITE.

The changing landscape for the provision of primary and post-primary initial teacher education over the last 15 years was strikingly evident in the engagement with stakeholders from both higher education institutions providing initial teacher education, as well as teacher education stakeholders more widely in the education system, including teacher unions, school management bodies, national education bodies/ agencies and other representative groups in the sector. The salience of this changing ITE landscape was strongly signaled by focus group participants' references to the restructuring of ITE from a three- to a four-year programme for concurrent undergraduate ITE and, in particular, with reference to the move from a one- to two-year consecutive initial teacher education, i.e. the move to a two-year Professional Master of Education in 2014 from the over one hundred year old 1-year "Dip" or PDE. It is important to note here that the landmark restructuring of both concurrent and consecutive ITE programmes, with an additional year for each, emanated from the 2011 National Numeracy and Literacy Strategy which was a response to a perceived crisis in standards resulting from PISA 2009 as well as other indicators from national standardised achievement testing. Themes discussed were: review and re-imagining ITE programme design; opportunities and challenges from accumulated ITE reforms: AC1 2011 ITE guidelines to AC2 2020 ITE standards, extended and more structured school placement, new content emphases in ITE: core elements and teacher as inquirer/researcher; and dialogue/conversation on ITE, locally and nationally.

Review and re-imagining ITE: Opportunities with challenges from accumulated ITE reforms

...we actually reimagined the PME programme significantly on the basis of having to go through the process and I think any process whereby you go through that sort of self-evaluation, that review (FG4, HEI23).

PME mean that's the first thing we have to contend with. And I suppose in the early years we were almost using it like two, postgraduate separate years after coming from the one year (FG4, HEI20).

Overall, the accumulated ITE reforms over the last fifteen years were broadly viewed as positive with HEI participants noting the significant and valuable opportunities for review and re-imagining ITE. Importantly, participants, both HEIs and other TE stakeholders, also strongly emphasised some significant challenges. In terms of review and re-imagining ITE, Accreditation Cycle 2 (AC2) was significantly more prominent in minds of HEI participants than

AC1/2011 ITE Guidelines, though there was broad recognition of continuity in AC2/2020 Céim from AC1/2011 with the renewed and elaborated emphases on school placement, specification of core elements and teacher as inquirer. We use the term accumulated ITE reform as the focus group participants referred to changes in ITE emanating not only from both AC1 and AC2 but also the landmark impact of the 2011 National Numeracy and Literacy Strategy which mandated an additional year for both concurrent and consecutive ITE programmes. In summary, while both accreditation cycles (AC) provided opportunities for review, reflection and reimagining ITE, Céim¹ (2020) is most prominent and strongly emphasised by HEI participants.

Participants strongly emphasised some significant challenges resulting from the accumulated reforms including the pressure to find extended placements for student teachers and schools' preferences for 'more experienced' student teachers, favouring second year PMEs in particular.

Extended⁵ and more structured school placement⁶

...ultimately the programmes are probably better for the cycle ... of reflection that ... we all probably went through and then obviously there were specific areas within Céim that the programmes had to address (FG4, HEI23).

Participants from HEIs, in particular, emphasised the significant change brought about by the move to a ten-week school placement originating in the 2011 ITE Guidelines. Furthermore, in relation to how placement is seen as more central to ITE, participants strongly emphasised the ways in which the 'press' to have more extended and placement placed strain on ITE providers given the challenges of securing placements. The emphases within AC1 and AC2 on more varied and extended SP experiences, while broadly seen as valuable (see quote above), created the challenge of providing such placements for providers whose placements had previously been of shorter, or much shorter, duration, i.e. between 3-8 weeks. Providers that already had year-long placements were more easily able to address the extended placement expectation.

New content emphases in ITE: core elements and teacher as inquirer/researcher

Participants in HEIs emphasised how the accumulated ITE reforms of the last fifteen years had specified new aspects for consideration in ITE programme design, most notably core elements

⁵ The AC1 2011 TE Guidelines stipulated that "Extended periods of school placement should be scheduled for the second half of the programme with at least one of the later placements being for a minimum of 10 weeks in one school." (p. 15, Teaching Council, 2011).

⁶ It is noteworthy that the 2011 ITE Guidelines emphasised new terminology for the field experience/ placement dimension of ITE: "The Council is aware that the term "teaching practice" is the more widely used term in the Irish teacher education context. However, it considers the term "school placement" more accurately reflects the nature of the experience as one encompassing a range of teaching and non-teaching activities." (p. 5, Teaching Council, 2011).

and teacher as inquirer. Participants from higher education institutions emphasised how both accreditation cycles mandated required elements⁴ in ITE programmes. Significantly, they noted that the 2020 Céim ITE standards policy, in particular, was more specific in identifying seven core elements.

Dialogue/conversation on ITE: locally and nationally

We're talking about standards. So I actually think it brought that language of quality and standards much more to the fore and on a national level. And I think that was very helpful because that then trickles through because it's also something that it wasn't just the remit of those in leadership, this was something that impacted everybody.... So when your adjunct faculty part time, staff placement tutor, everybody was talking about Céim and I think that's healthy when it comes to the quality of ITE in Ireland (FG4, HEI22).

Participants from ITE providers indicated that the accreditation cycles for initial teacher education provided a context for conversation and dialogue between colleagues within individual programme providers, between ITE providers as well as framing the parameters for engagement with the Teaching Council as the regulating body for teacher education.

4.1.2 Positive impact of early (2010-15) ITE reforms & 2-year PME debate

Finding 2: There is broad agreement on the positive combined impact of early reforms (2010–2015), which led to the 4-year undergraduate and 2-year PME programmes. However, as reforms have accumulated, views on the value of the 2-year PME have diverged—more between than within stakeholder groups—though concerns about its cost are widely shared.

There was broad agreement on the significant and positive 'combined impact' of the early reforms (2010-15) leading in 2014 to a 4-year UG and 2-year PME, and now accumulated reforms with differing views between, more so than within stakeholder groups, re the value of the 2-year PME – though strong and broad agreement on cost-linked concerns. Areas identified in relation to impact – positive and/or otherwise – focused on a number of themes. These were greater consistency: locally and nationally, placement experiences, the two-year PME debate, differing views on impact and tensions and balances in complex contexts: *"...there's all those kind of nuances and tricky bits".*

Greater consistency: locally and nationally

Maybe like one of the positives that has come out of it is that there is more consistency across the colleges as to what is expected of the students. So, like because it's based as working towards Cosán and that the criteria that they will have to work towards in Cosán that students are expected to achieve this or meet the same benchmarks, it doesn't matter which college that they're attending... (FG9, ES24).

Participants from ITE providers in HEIs spoke about the ways in which the accumulated reforms of initial teacher education in the last 15 years have both fostered greater consistency within programmes as well as greater consistency and framing of initial teacher education programmes nationally.

Placement experiences: Better outcomes for student teachers

One comment that they did make was that they thought it was beneficial that the students got the opportunity to have placement in a number of different schools, so to experience different ethos, different leadership styles et cetera ... (FG9, ES26).

Participants from ITE providers strongly emphasised how the accumulated reforms have resulted in more varied and extended placement experiences which are beneficial for student teachers. We address this finding in more detail later in this section.

The two-year PME debate: Differing views on impact

Where the masters is very much better now. Now, in the last number of years and... the students definitely appreciate, and we appreciate having the two year for that stage in light of the amount of work that has to be covered in schools. Now, it absolutely needs that amount of time and that input (FG4, HEI3).

When I spoke to my principals... across the board [they said] that they didn't see any difference in the quality of teachers who have completed a two-year PME compared with the teachers who completed a one-year HDip or whatever. They didn't feel that the quality of teachers had changed in any great extent (FG9, ES26).

Considerations around the impact of the move from one-year to a two-year consecutive model of initial teacher education at both primary and post-primary levels featured prominently among all stakeholders, both in higher education institutions and other teacher education stakeholders. It is probably the issue within the focus group data collection that was more strongly emphasised and where there was the most significant variation in views among stakeholders as typified by the two quotes above – the first from an ITE teacher educator participant and the second from a school management representative body participant.

There was notable emphasis by TE stakeholders from teacher unions as well as management and leadership representative bodies for the need to review the two-year PME referring to the rationale for the move, the cost and duration of ITE along with, from some, not seeing the added value in graduates. As a stakeholder from a management body noted:

...a lot of our principals struggle to understand why we have moved, well, we know why we moved. It was an economic thing at the time. Too many teachers went to the system, but why is it still there? Teachers taking six years to qualify as against the combined degree teachers taking four years to qualify (FG9, ES28).

Another stakeholder noted that the duration of getting qualified on the consecutive pathway is impacting recruitment into the profession:

It should be reviewed and looked at again.... it's possibly a disincentive to get into teaching.... in terms of my experience as school principal, I did not see an uplift in terms of the ability of our young teachers coming in from the PME. I don't think it really enhanced their performance within the class at an initial basis (FG5, ES5).

As we noted in relation to the accumulated impact of ITE reform, the changes in the landscape have provided many opportunities, more often than not, along with a myriad of associated challenges. The various reforms and concurrent teacher supply shortages seemed, as evidenced in the focus groups, to mobilise TE stakeholders both in HEIs and more widely within the system to consider the direction of developments and impacts of this notable decade-plus of ITE reforms nationally. Prompted by the many changes in the landscape, one participant's reflections bring together the actual and/or aspired for inter-connections between various aspects of ITE, the cost of ITE, teacher as inquirer and connections between ITE and induction/Droichead:

The Droichead programme has been a huge success within our schools. I think that's a brilliant structure that has supported our new teachers coming in, so I would love to see a year 2 PME which was like a 'super Droichead' year. You know I've seen, for example, in the second year PME where students are being asked to do dissertations and I just question the value of it having read a number of the dissertations, I don't think they have the experience to produce meaningful research on education or teaching and learning.... A supported year 2, working within schools supported by experienced teachers, would greatly enhance their development (FG5, ES5).

Tensions and balances in complex contexts:

So, but then obviously I understand that that then has to be balanced against how you give them then adequate exposure to, you know, training and understanding and special needs and enough exposure in an immersive setting to Irish-medium education. So, there's all of those kind of nuances and tricky bits (FG9, ES27).

There was significant appreciation among participants of the complexity of initial teacher education, schooling and the related changing economic and societal contexts within which

teachers work and live. One ITE stakeholder participant's reflections, for example, capture the tensions that have emerged from the combined impact of accumulated ITE reforms, the new and now valued goal of attaining a more diverse teaching workforce and changes in the costs of living and housing:

So, it's fine it's longer, it costs them money. What that is doing, we have students travelling like from the West, up, up and down. They can't work. That does have an impact on diversity, you know. So if you're in a privileged position where you can say, well, I can pay these massive fees or I can, I can go to college, I can drive and all those things that you know, I suppose my privileged position we take for granted, you know, the student who doesn't have the family, the family support, the financial support, understanding of ITE and what that entail (FG1, HE13).

Evident in the above reflection is a nuanced understanding of the changed environment for all ITE students, though one that varies and is unequal and potentially unfair in its impact on individual student teachers' likelihood of making the journey into, through and beyond ITE.

4.1.3 Céim 2020 welcomed but limited flexibility and resource challenges

Finding 3: Accreditation Cycle 2 (Céim 2020) introduced a range of positive and largely welcomed changes, though it is also seen as somewhat inflexible and associated with significant resource challenges, particularly in certain features and sectors.

Areas identified in relation to this finding were the welcome move to standards in 2020, the limited flexibility for HEIs given requirements specified in Céim 2020 standards policy, the way in which AC2 promoted greater coherence across ITE programmes and emerging and magnified challenges at local and system levels because of accumulated ITE reform.

Welcome move to standards in 2020

As we noted above, the accumulated ITE reforms since 2011 have resulted in a range of positive and largely welcome changes to ITE programme content and approaches. In November 2020, the Teaching Council launched the revised standards for programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*. The standards set out the requirements that all initial teacher education programmes be accredited by the Teaching Council. Céim featured more in stakeholder perspectives than earlier reforms. This may be unsurprising given Céim was so recent and therefore fresh in the memories of many, in combination with the fact that a number of those interviewed were not engaged in ITE at the time of AC/1 and therefore unable to comment on earlier reforms. Stakeholders recognised the value of a coordinated approach to the overall system of teacher education and development:

I think professional standards are really important and I think Ireland is ahead of the game in that and I think that's really important ... And I think it's important for, you

know, education is highly valued in Irish society and in order to maintain those standards, I think you need to have that consistency (FG4, HEI22).

I think it's really important that there's a coherent step-by-step process and even just on a policy level, the move from Céim to Droichead to Cosán it's a great progression, and we're working along (FG8, ES22).

This coordinated approach to the education of future teachers was appreciated in comparison to previous approaches:

Students in initial teacher education are getting a much more similar experience; no matter which college they go to, they're getting a very similar experience of the programme (FG7, ES14).

Limited flexibility for HEIs given requirements specified in Céim 2020 standards policy

Overall, teacher educators appreciated the results of the AC2/Céim 2020 process: *'we all went through it, it encouraged conversations across colleges and I think that's really good for the quality of teacher education in Ireland'* (FG4, HEI22). This shared language had a system-wide effect:

...it brought that language of quality and standards much more to the fore and on a national level. And I think that was very helpful because that then trickles through because it's also something that it wasn't just the remit of those in leadership, this was something that impacted everybody... (FG4, HEI20).

Some, however, expressed caution about ITE programme requirements for accreditation being too formulaic or restrictive:

I would also say that the level of prescription in Céim is probably excessive...the themes are helpful because they provide a degree of coherence, but the extent to which some of the central themes are arguably pertinent in school environments or relevant to wider priorities in the profession might be questionable... (FG2, HEI8).

Overall, despite some feeling restricted, the consistency in experience across ITE programmes was seen as beneficial at a macro level for the education system.

AC2 promoted greater coherence across ITE programmes

The AC2/Céim 2020 process was valued at individual ITE programme level alongside the system-wide benefits. One teacher educator explained:

AC2/Céim encouraged deliberative reflection on purpose, mission of ITE - almost acted as a critical review... it encouraged us, motivated us to take a really deliberative intentional, you know, kind of a look or an interrogation of all of that: What do we really stand for? (FG1, HE11).

AC2/Céim 2020 requirements ensured that some topics which had been neglected were now more central and emphasised in individual ITE programmes. These emphases in ITE were perceived as well matched to the efforts of other system components. For example,

The particular focus around inclusive education and global citizenship education, there's been a lot of work going into that area ...if I was to look at Céim, I suppose the focus on professional identity and agency as something that's a core piece of all the ITE programmes, is something that really maps onto what we're trying to do... (FG8 ES18).

Overall, AC2/Céim 2020 pushed ITE programmes to be more connected to the needs and requirements of schools. Stakeholders defined ITE's 'fitness for purpose' directly in relation to responsiveness to systemic needs. Consultative partnership with stakeholders was seen as an important mechanism to ensure that ITE is '*actually creating the teachers that are needed for our communities and for current and future students*' (HE11, FG1).

Emerging and magnified challenges at local and system levels because of accumulated ITE reform

The overall welcome for accumulated ITE reform was tempered by caution from stakeholders about the time it takes to make changes in ITE content and the tensions that may arise between immediate school need and the capacity of ITE to move quickly to meet these demands. Recent examples related to the inclusion of modern foreign languages in primary schools and the addition of graded school placements in special school settings were examples '*when maybe you need something a lot quicker in the system*' (FG7, ES16). As well as questions about the responsiveness of ITE to system need, the consistency promoted by AC2/Céim 2020 has surfaced some ITE-specific resource challenges, including the preparation of dedicated teachers for special schools and classrooms, and the need for more ITE places for teachers who will work in Irish-language medium settings at primary and post-primary levels. The progress and pace of reform over the past fifteen years has benefited the education system. Still, and possibly motivated by the positive changes in recent years, stakeholders identified specific areas that required attention.

4.1.4 ITE reform-based re-positioning of school placement

Finding 4: The combined impact of Accreditation Cycle 1 and school placement changes driven by the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy has made school placement both more

significant and more challenging within ITE programmes, particularly as school–university partnership is widely perceived to rely heavily on the ‘goodwill’ of schools.

Areas identified were: a strong welcome for the increased emphasis on school-based learning for future teachers the learning of future teachers is resting on the ‘good will’ of schools and for schools, subbing by student teachers on school placement is an asset.

Strong welcome for the increased emphasis on school-based learning for future teachers

Stakeholders’ perspectives on the purpose and value of ITE programmes rested largely on the relationship between ITE programmes and schools. Accumulated ITE reforms since 2011 have made school placement more significant in ITE programmes with *‘benefits of increased placements and more lengthy placements and more varied opportunities for placement as well’* (ES8 FG6). Stakeholders strongly supported this increased emphasis on school-based learning and valued the type of learning this extra time in schools would support. They emphasised that the extended duration is important to provide the space to prepare future teachers for the challenges and complexity of the teacher role in an increasingly diverse classroom environment.

I think the longer placement has been good because I really feel you learn so much on the job, like that's really where you get your experience...that's where a lot of the real learning started to happen when you're in a class and you're just thrown into it... (FG6, ES11)

Changes to the requirements for school-based engagement through AC2/Céim 2020 promoted more consistency in expectations across HEIs that were beneficial for the schools where the placements took place.

It's more about working with community in the school, outside the school environment. There's more emphasis on... a holistic kind of teacher, not just delivery of curriculum (FG1, HEI3).

The complementarity of AC2/Céim 2020 requirements with the needs of schools was perceived as helping to ensure that future teachers were well prepared for their school-based engagements.

The learning of future teachers is resting on the ‘good will’ of schools

School-based learning was central to stakeholder perspectives on the value of ITE, with consistent emphasis on learning in practice. This partnership between schools and ITE was also seen as the greatest risk to ITE. Teacher educators cautioned that ITE is *‘totally reliant on the goodwill of schools, principals, teachers...’* (HEI15 FG3) Given the value placed on schools by these stakeholders, it is unsurprising that they identified *‘the biggest threat to initial*

teacher education is actually school partnerships' (HEI17, FG3). The nurturing of authentic partnerships between ITE and schools, and the support for the role of the cooperating teacher were identified as critical areas that required urgent attention: *'the experience of our student teachers in schools varies hugely depending on the cooperating teacher that they have and the approach taken to them...'* (HEI6, FG2). The redeveloped primary school curriculum (2024) was used to illustrate this risk. Future teachers are learning about this redeveloped curriculum in ITE and being encouraged to implement this on school placements. Lack of professional development support for schools could risk teachers' approaches contradicting future teacher learning.

For schools, subbing by student teachers on school placement is an asset

Schools are a valuable site of future teacher learning, but schools also benefit from the future teacher's availability to support school demands for substitute teachers. This symbiotic relationship between schools and the future teachers operates at a systematic level. Teacher educators are aware of the teacher shortages and system needs and the need to be responsive:

...they see our students as gap fillers in their provision, so they keep schools running, and they're an invaluable critical source of supply for them when there are those crunch times... We're aware of the needs within the system but are also very aware and conscious of the needs of our students and how we need to maintain the integrity of our programme that we feel is fit for purpose (FG1, HEI1).

The lack of supply of substitute teachers plays out for the future teacher's ITE experience differently, particularly at the post-primary level:

We all know there's lots of advantages of being in the classroom, but when that pressure is put on to act as substitute teacher and being the only teacher in that room, so they're not observing other teachers there (FG3, HE14).

...we see an awful lot of people in their second year PME are doing a huge amount of teaching at the moment. In other words, they're the backbone of the subbing system of the country. So they are missing lectures, because they believe if they support the school they're in, they might get a job in that school the following year. So there's a bit of pressure there (FG5, ES1).

There is consensus among all stakeholders about the value and centrality of school-based learning to all ITE programmes. Given the importance of schools in ITE's overall mission, greater attention to the operation of partnership between ITE and schools at both system and ITE programme levels should be a priority.

4.1.5 Teachers on the whole are well prepared; even the well-prepared face challenges in the classroom

Finding 5: Perceptions of current ITE outcomes vary significantly—while many view graduates as very well prepared, others see them as less so, with notable differences across stakeholder groups. However, there is shared recognition that even well-prepared graduates face considerable challenges in an evolving school and societal context.

Areas identified were differing views on level of preparedness, differing views on the level of structure of the PME programme and challenges facing ITE.

Differing views on level of preparedness

When considering the perceived level of preparedness of teachers on graduation from their ITE programme, differing views emerged among stakeholders. For example, participants from HEIs, regardless of whether they worked with primary or post-primary pre-service teachers, were unanimous in their belief that teachers were well prepared on graduation from ITE, as demonstrated by the following responses:

I think students heading out or NQTS heading out are as ready as they can be. And I think that things like that again, you were talking about the year-long placement at primary level, the 10 week placement. That's certainly helps them to get as much of a sense of the reality as you can have (FG4, HEI20).

I think our teachers, our newly qualified teachers, are very well prepared overall to teach in today's classrooms (FG2, HEI10).

Other stakeholders did not hold such strong or unanimous views in this regard. Instead they believed that while newly qualified teachers demonstrated high levels of content and pedagogical knowledge, they asserted that they were not adequately prepared to carry out the other roles expected of teachers.

... it was very, very evident that the newly qualified teachers coming into our school were not in a position to deal with the stresses that were coming at them in terms of demands from parents, demands from students themselves, working as part of a team in or within a department, their own resilience (FG9, ES26).

...they [newly qualified teachers] have felt that they were completely unequipped to deal with the stresses of dealing with, I suppose, not only the curriculum demands, but that extra bit of how to deal with conflict and how to build their resilience in the face ...of challenges and how to, you know, how to how to manage effectively children that, you know, might have more challenging behaviour (FG9, ES26).

Because if I was to score and I might say that most of them are coming out about 6 out of 10 in their level of preparedness (FG13, ES30).

Differing views on level of structure of PME programme

In addition to differing perspectives on the level of preparedness of newly qualified teachers, differences in opinions were also noted in relation to participants' perspectives on the structure of ITE, particularly for the PME programme. In 2011, the one-year HDE/PDE was replaced with the two-year PME, with the first intake of students to the new PME programme in 2014 (Ní Riordáin et al., 2025). The focus groups revealed notable differences in stakeholders' perspectives on the impact of this change on teacher preparedness. Firstly, many focus group participants involved in the design and delivery of these programmes felt that the two-year offering allowed for better teacher preparation and enhanced the sense of professionalism of graduating teachers.

... now see the space that the two-year programme provides. I think ... we're producing far better teachers who are more prepared for the complexity of the education system that currently exists. Society has changed infinitely, and I think the space that the two-year programme affords is resulting in teachers that I think are better equipped to deal with the complexity of schools in the 21st century (FG2, HEI5).

Two years, you come out feeling like a professional, you know what to do. (FG1, HEI3).

On the other hand, other stakeholders interviewed, who were not working in a higher education setting, felt that the additional year offered little value and rather than enhancing teaching standards, it simply served to make teaching less accessible and was another challenge affecting issues of teacher supply.

The cost went through the roof of doing it and the opportunistic cost. So, we have people who are maybe coming through further ed who can't afford to do the two year PME because of the cost... So there's a huge cost to the two year PME and that's one of the problems. (FG5, ES1).

The first thing that they [principals] said to me and this was across the board that they didn't see any difference in the quality of teachers who have completed a two year PME compared with the teachers who completed a one year HDip or whatever. They didn't feel that the quality of teachers had changed in any great extent. (FG9, ES25).

Challenges facing ITE

While it is clear that many stakeholders had differing perspectives on the value of shifting from a one-year to two-year PME programme, there appeared to be a consensus among stakeholders in relation to the array of challenges that ITE faces and the knock-on effect these have on preparing teachers for the classrooms that they will enter. One challenge/concern expressed by a number of participants was in relation to the length of time it takes ITE programmes to respond to societal changes. There was a view among many stakeholders that ITE programmes were reactive rather than proactive and this, combined with the lengthy time taken to complete accreditation cycles, meant that there exists a belief that ITE programmes become dated quickly and therefore are not always preparing students for the classrooms and societies which they were entering.

I suppose the length of time it took to do the second cycle. I think that would raise a slight concern in terms of the changes that were happening in the landscape of education in the context of education at the time, because obviously we went through the pandemic as well. So and now we're dealing with AI, so there's a number of changes that came about and the length of time it took us to actually complete the second cycle (FG4, HE123).

I think that ITE might be a little bit slow in how it reacts to the way education, the education landscape is changing..... to be reactive is not where you need to be either, but maybe proactive and maybe doing a little horizon scan (FG6, ES7).

A second challenge identified by participants in this study was the expectation for ITE programmes to respond to 'national priorities'. While no one argued that this should not be a responsibility of ITE programmes, concerns were raised in relation to the volume of priorities that were being proposed on a regular basis as well as in relation to the lack of input from ITE providers on what these 'national priorities' should be.

Because there is a kind of a feeling starting to emerge that initial teacher education providers' responsibility is to respond in their programmes to national priorities: Who's determining what the national priorities are, where are the voice of the teacher, educators and the teacher education programmes? (FG3, HE117).

...all of a sudden there are new things and every time you turn around somebody is saying "ITE, here's another thing." And it's also schools are going to solve all these ills but it's just as R said, where's the voice of the teacher educator in that? (FG3, HE119)

In concluding this section on developments in and the quality of initial teacher education, it is perhaps the dynamics as well as the impact of the accumulated reforms on teacher education over the last fifteen years that most readily signals how teacher education has

evolved during period that in Ireland. All participants spoke about the reforms providing insights from different vantage points – an issue we return to later in the final chapter. From the perspective of stakeholders, both the early reforms between 2010-15 as well as the more recent have resulted in an important reconfiguration of key aspects of teacher education programmes with school placement becoming more pivotal.

In relation to the more recent developments, AC2/Céim 2020 drew on the expertise and vision of a wide variety of stakeholders from the broader education community and the standards were intended to 'embody collective commitment to quality teaching and learning in all schools for all learners' (Céim, p.7). These findings demonstrate some success in relation to this collective purpose. Much progress has been made. Still, these education stakeholders identified system-level areas that required further attention in ensuring quality teaching and learning for all learners, including the preparation of teachers for special schools and the preparation of teachers for Irish-language settings. At present, the overall success of Céim at system level is anecdotal rather than evidence based; it will take time for the longer-term impacts on teacher quality at a systematic level to result.

Stakeholders emphasised the value of school-based learning in supporting the future teacher's learning to teach. More time in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) was valued for the opportunity to spend more time in schools, and in a greater variety of school settings. The current model of ITE, combining both school-based and university-based programme elements, was affirmed. More school-based learning was valued on the basis that previously it had been underserved. Now, stakeholders appreciated the balance between university-based elements and the opportunity to apply and make sense of this learning in school-based elements of the ITE programme. Concern was expressed, however, that the potential value and benefits of school-university partnership were not currently being realised. Stakeholders called for more supports for this partnership, including dedicated space and time to grow alignment of shared and clear purpose in supporting future teachers across school settings as well as dedicated time and investment in the school-based teacher educator role (treoraí).

Finally, with initial teacher education experiencing such wholesale changes over the past 15 years, the focus groups revealed that the impact and perceived effectiveness of these changes was viewed differently by stakeholders, depending on their role in the ITE process. It was evident that stakeholders who worked outside of the higher education space did not feel graduates of ITE programmes were prepared for the classroom, particularly in terms of their 'soft skills'. Furthermore, they were of the view that the shift from a one- to a two-year PME programme simply presented an additional barrier in relation to access to and participation in the PME rather than producing better prepared teachers. Such views were strongly contested by others.

This first section of TPJ Report 3 findings has focused on the views of teacher education stakeholders on developments in and quality of ITE programmes during the last fifteen years, a period characterised by significant changes in the landscape of initial teacher education and its linkages to the other phases of the continuum of teacher education. In the next section, we turn to the other phases specifically induction/Droichead and Cosán.

4.2 Continuum (Droichead & Cosán) and readiness to teach in schools

Finding 6: Stakeholders highlighted several ways in which the Droichead process interacts with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to extend and deepen newly qualified teachers' preparedness for the classroom.

These themes were perception of Droichead as a continuation and bridge from ITE, awareness and communication challenges during ITE, concerns about superficial engagement and "box-ticking", inconsistency in school-based support, the nature of NQT needs and support, the need for a stronger ITE-Droichead link, the impact of delivery modes (online vs. in-person) and the potential for structural integration and review.

Perception of Droichead as a continuation and bridge from ITE: A significant theme is the view of Droichead as a direct follow-on from ITE, serving as a crucial link into the teaching profession. It is seen as the initial step following ITE, acting to support ongoing professional development. This idea of Droichead building the connection between those on a teacher education programme and those teaching full-time is considered a valuable and essential link. However, there is also an acknowledgment that this connection between ITE and Droichead is not always made clear to students.

I do honestly feel it's a continuation of what we do in ITE (FG1, HEI3).

Droichead, the idea of Droichead and the idea of building that bridge between somebody who was on [a] teacher education programme and somebody who was teaching full time is a very laudable and necessary bridge (FG2, HEI5).

Maybe we don't. We're not really making that continuity so obvious for our students (FG1, HEI1).

Awareness and communication challenges during ITE: There appears to be a varying degree of awareness and understanding of the Droichead process among ITE participants. The introduction to Droichead within ITE programmes often occurs through invited speakers from bodies like Oide and the Teaching Council. These sessions aim to provide a detailed presentation, clarifying and outlining the entire process, and making students aware of the journey ahead. Despite these efforts, some feel that perhaps they do not do enough to introduce Droichead, and there is a sense

that ITE providers might not be promoting it sufficiently or emphasising its value and importance. It is suggested that Droichead should play a larger role in ITE.

We had actually for our final PME 2 day, we had representatives from Oide and from the Teaching Council gave a really good in-depth presentation under it to our students and just kind of demystifying and outlining the whole process (FG1, HE11).

Perhaps we're not, and I'm speaking for myself here. I'm not selling it sufficiently, you know, and promoting it and extolling the value and the importance of it. See, I think maybe I need to do some work around that (FG1, HE11).

Our division engaged with all of the ITE providers and to give presentations to all of the final year students kind of preparing them or making them aware of the journey that's ahead. So, there is already those relationships built between our division and the ITE providers (FG7, ES15).

Concerns about superficial engagement and "box-ticking": A recurring concern is the perception that Droichead can be viewed as a tokenistic exercise. Participants worry that students may see it as an activity they just want to complete and finish. This perception is sometimes highlighted when comparing Droichead to more extensive induction processes in other jurisdictions (like a three-year system in Northern Ireland) or other professions (doctor, nurse) where professional learning is perceived as more continuous. Some feel the process has become very diluted and merely a box-ticking exercise. This can lead to low engagement, with teachers potentially disengaging from online sessions merely to get signed off. The pressure to get through Droichead can overshadow the potential for deeper professional growth and excitement for the profession.

So sometimes you could argue the toss that it is a little bit tokenistic. You know, in our system compared to other professions, especially if like if we forget about teaching for a minute and just talk about other professional programmes, whether you're a doctor or a nurse. You know where it is more continuous, and your learning is more continuous (FG1, HE12).

Some criticised it as a 'box-ticking exercise'. Initially when Droichead was, in its previous life, it was repetitious of what happened in initial teacher education, and they endeavoured to work around that and to change that and it was. You know, some good changes were made, but I'd agree with [participant in focus group] from what I've seen of it now, it's very watered down. And very box tick (FG2, HE12).

I suppose they just want to get through the Droichead and get it over and done with that kind of attitude rather than this is my vocation, I can't wait to have my own classroom. I can't wait to have my own students and that kind of excitement is kind of gone when they realise there's cluster meetings, there's forms, there's more, and again, we all see it as they might see it as a tick box (FG9, HE125).

Inconsistency in school-based support: The quality and effectiveness of the Droichead experience are seen as varying significantly across schools. This variation is described as being very contingent on the school culture, depending on how open and research-informed schools are about the practice of induction. While some schools are noted as being exceptional with wonderful leadership and strongly supporting Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs), others may not place the same emphasis. In less supportive environments, NQTs might feel they are left to themselves, while in stronger cultures, the support inside the schools is considered the aspect of Droichead that works very well. This inconsistency means that the experience and support provided to NQTs during this critical induction phase can differ widely.

It's very contingent really on the school culture that they find themselves in. You know, how open are they? How fundamentally, I think, how research informed are they about the practise of induction (FG2, HE18).

Some schools, Droichead is incredible and there's wonderful leadership and the NQTs would say, you know, it has really helped them in at the beginning of their careers and in other schools, maybe just the same emphasis is not put on it, and you know, it's a tick box exercise. there's not that consistency across schools (FG5, ES3).

Some schools are very good at supporting them at, you know, fostering, you know, the whole climate and culture. Other schools see them as grand that'll fill a gap or whatever else. And they're kind of left to themselves (FG7, ES13).

Nature of NQT needs and support: Droichead is intended to be a very supportive and advisory process, moving away from the previous evaluative process. The collaborative nature, working with colleagues rather than an external assessor, is seen as positive. There is a suggestion for more emphasis on co-teaching as opposed to the traditional mentor-NQT relationship to foster a more collaborative practice. Focus group participants noted that NQTs transitioning into the profession need significant support. A key insight from a survey mentioned was that NQTs were not primarily seeking specific content (like language support in one context) but rather more general support. They wanted a supportive teacher, a mentor in the school. Their needs included practical support with aspects like talking to parents and getting on with staff and how to make relationships. This highlights that extending preparedness through Droichead involves support for the broader social and relational aspects of teaching, not just pedagogical skills.

I think primary teachers would find the process better than the previous arrangements that were in place where the inspector, someone who is external to the school, came in and assessed them, whereas this is a much more collaborative process. They're working with one of their colleagues. Their colleague can see how they're interacting with the students, their work on a daily basis rather than, you know, a couple of visits

over the course of the school year. It's much more collaborative process rather than an evaluative process that it was in the past... (FG9, ES23).

One comment that was made across a number of people was they'd like to see more of an emphasis on co-teaching as opposed to that whole mentor-NQT relationship that you know you have that you have that more collaborative relationship as opposed to, you know, you're the mentor, you're the mentee and you know. ...and I suppose there is huge scope, you know, for everyone across the board to engage in co-teaching and, you know, having that collaborative practise going on in schools (FG9, ES25).

Last year we had a conference for newly qualified teachers that were new to the sector... And even though we've talked a lot about how much language they need, they didn't need language, they wanted support. They wanted a nice teacher, a mentor in the class, in the school (FG9, ES25).

The need for a stronger ITE-Droichead link: A significant theme is the perceived lack of a strong, authentic connection between ITE and Droichead. Some feel that ITE providers were not involved in Droichead and do not really know what goes on except what comes back from graduates. While ITE does not want to undertake the work of Droichead, they see a need for a more authentic link to understand what is on either side of the bridge. This would help ITE providers be clear with students about the extent of preparedness ITE offers, noting that they are not yet finished. A piece of connection is seen as really useful. There is a question about whether ITEs have ongoing contact or follow-up with their graduates once they become NQTs. There is also a perception that ITE providers may not be as involved as they could or should be in stakeholder discussions and policy development, potentially operating in their own silo. However, it was noted that relationships do exist, with the relevant Department of Education and Youth division engaging with ITE providers through presentations.

There is no link at the moment between what we do. We don't want to be doing the work of Droichead. That's a different process. However, if there was a more authentic link between, you know, what we do, how we prepare the students, and what the school system would expect of them. If it's designed to be a bridge where we need to know what's at either side of the bridge in quite an authentic way to build that bridge, what's the purpose of the bridge in the first place, to make that link quite explicit (FG2, HE15).

I think it is about us having sight of the other side of that bridge and us being able to say to the students being very clear, we can get you this far. So, I do think maybe some piece of connection, not us doing the job, but a piece of connection between us and them would be really useful (FG2, HE12).

I suppose it once your students go, is that the end of your contact with them or is there any kind of follow up or I mean you will know exactly what content they got, what the issues are, maybe the challenges, is there ever a check in you know even an online piece where you would say look these are the most up to date things that? (FG7, ES13).

In terms of that stakeholder piece, I wonder is, are the ITE providers around the table as much as they could be or should be ...? Is there more opportunities there for the ITE providers to be part of the conversations? So maybe that's something that could be looked at a little bit more in the future, maybe bring them more into the fold and that they're more aware of what's happening on the ground once the teachers leave as opposed to operating on in their own in their own silo (FG7, ES15).

Impact of delivery modes (online vs. in-person): The shift to online delivery for some Droichead sessions has raised concerns. While NQTs overwhelmingly prefer a blended approach and the convenience of online sessions, the online format is seen by some as leading to a loss of engagement and hindering the development of critical friendships and professional working relationships with others among peers. The online format can make NQTs feel very much on their own. While online delivery is efficient for disseminating information, participants acknowledge that the same sense of community, connections, or relationships are not fostered online as in person, which are valuable aspects of professional development.

How are they developing relationships with their peers? So much is being lost, I don't think it's fit for purpose. I don't think it's delivered the way it was meant to be designed (FG6, ES6).

That idea of creating critical friendships and professional working relationships with others is gone and they now don't have the people to rely on there, so they're very much on their own (FG6, ES7).

Overwhelmingly, the student teachers want a blended approach. They don't want to be driving the two hours to the local education centre when it can be delivered online. But I do fully appreciate that you don't get the same sense of community online as you do are the connections are the relationships (FG7, ES15).

Potential for structural integration and review: Ideas for changing the structure of Droichead and its relationship with ITE were discussed. One suggestion was to connect Droichead to a potential PME Year 2, making it a "super Droichead year". This was raised in the context of questioning the value of dissertations in PME Year 2 and suggesting a more practical, induction-focused approach. Integrating Droichead into a second year was seen as potentially a positive development. There is also mention of an imminent review of Droichead and expected changes in 2025/26, including additional supports.

I think the Droichead programme has been a huge success within our schools. I think that's a brilliant structure that has supported our new teachers coming in, so I would love to see a year 2 PME ... where it's more like a super Droichead year (FG5, ES1).

I've seen, for example, in the second year PME where students are being asked to do dissertations and I just question the value of it, having read a number of the dissertations, I don't think they have the experience to produce meaningful research on, on, on education or teaching and learning. I think it probably achieves a number of things in terms of, you know, research methodologies and encouraging them to be researchers of their own practise and their school's practise but I just question the value of that as an add on (FG5, ES2).

4.2.1 ITE's relatively weak link to Cosán

Finding 7: Compared to other themes, discussion of Cosán was less prominent in some focus groups, suggesting uneven levels of familiarity or engagement across stakeholder groups.

Across the data, several themes emerged regarding how Cosán relates to initial teacher education and the various opportunities that exist in strengthening the potential impact of Cosán. These themes were the relationship between ITE and Cosán, moving from information to connection, the visibility of Cosán within the system, teacher openness to engaging with Cosán, recognition of potential for better continuity moving forward, and differing views on the formalisation of Cosán.

The relationship between ITE and Cosán: moving from information to connection

Various stakeholders considered that ITE has an important role to play in inculcating an appreciation for lifelong learning among pre-service teachers through positive modelling of this practice:

I say to my student teachers, I don't know everything, I'm learning, you know, I think we need to model that... I suppose in ITEs, we need to take and HEIs, we need to take responsibility to see how that interaction is. We need to promote it a bit if we believe in it. I do (FG1, HE13).

... we're extending preparedness because we are ... modelling that growth mindset. And I think if a student graduates from our programme thinking that they have learned everything they need to know, I've really failed (FG1, HE1).

While there was consensus among stakeholders regarding the role of ITE in developing an appreciation of the need for learning across the teaching career, there was more variation in views regarding the appropriateness of introducing the Cosán framework during ITE. ITE stakeholders who acknowledged little interaction regarding Cosán during ITE justified this on the grounds that it was premature:

... all they're thinking about is their finals, final examinations or assessments and Drochead. That's two big things. ... and I don't even know if we introduced Cosán and

you know the work of the education centres and the courses that might be available. Yeah, I don't think it's a bad thing though. I think I think Cosán is for people who have, you know, ... gone through Droichead who have their qualification in ITE (FG1, HEI2).

I think particularly in the ITE phase as the student teachers are very concerned with the next stage which is Droichead. And then when there's a mention of Cosán really is almost this kind of aspirational ideal (FG4, HEI23.)

Alternatively, there was some support for the view that Cosán should be signaled to pre-service teachers towards the end of their ITE programmes. One respondent reported addressing Cosán during ITE through guest talks from NQTs:

... I asked the teachers when three years out tell us about An Cosán, what is it? What have you done? What can you do? Where do you go? (FG1, HEI3).

The findings suggest that the extent of relationship between ITE and Cosán “*is fragmented, support is needed for more dialogue and interaction*” (FG3, HEI17. Moving the role of ITE beyond the promotion of lifelong learning and providing information regarding Cosán, some participants identified ITE practices that could potentially be strongly connected with Cosán:

... your Taisce that it's they're using the same terminology that it's keeping your record of your professional learning and your interactions, and I suppose that that whole thing about becoming a reflective teacher (FG7, ES14).

One respondent highlighted the affordances of greater involvement of ITE in discussions about continuing professional development post-graduation:

I wonder are the ITE providers around the table as much as they could be or should be or why we all talk to each other? And we know what happens post-graduation and they come into the system. Is there more opportunities there for the ITE providers to be part of the conversations? (FG7, ES15).

The visibility of Cosán within the system

Across various focus groups, there was some questioning regarding the extent to which Cosán is being enacted in the same way as Céim and Droichead:

I'm not sure if it's been pinned down fully ... But I just feel and maybe this is maybe this is incorrect, but a personal thing that there's still a question mark over it...whereas like Droichead is there very much and has been enacted at a policy and kind of legislative level, and that's why I think it's. It's hard to actually grasp what is Cosán (FG4, HEI20).

Stakeholders reported uncertainty regarding the extent to which Cosán has not taken off.

I think in the name of being open and loose and giving people as much flexibility as possible, it doesn't do anything. We've changed all the language. You know, we've moved from CPD to teacher professional learning. And somewhere in that it's just gone missing. The idea that a teacher is supposed to continue to learn and grow in the profession, and they have to take their responsibility for doing that themselves. I don't see it in view. We in third level offer teacher professional learning courses and we target practising teachers, but we don't market it as Cosán (FG2, HE112).

Similarly, stakeholders across focus groups queried the levels of awareness of Cosán among teachers:

I'm not sure if it's on many people's radar as a day-to-day, day-to-day item (FG7, ES14).

Do many teachers know about Cosán? (FG9, ES22).

...it may be the practising teachers that are not as familiar with this language or with the framework (FG9, ES23).

Cosán is really not recognised by teachers in the system (FG2, HE18).

There was consensus within one focus group that teachers may not be aware that the professional development courses they complete are addressing Cosán:

It's embedded, like I know any CPD that we designed that falls under the remit of the Department of Education has to have elements like reflective practise embedded into the CPD and that is Cosán. So, the teachers might not know that they're engaging with the elements of the Cosán framework, but those designing the summer course and the department that sanctions it know that those elements are incorporated [Other participant: Yeah] (FG9, ES23).

Teacher openness to engaging with Cosán

Within two focus groups, there was acknowledgement that teachers may not see the merits of engaging in continuous professional development, particularly those that are not mandatory:

I suppose just in terms of post primary, I think a huge amount of work needs to happen around Cosán...I think once they get past Droichead they think, OK, I'm done now, and you know anything that happens after that is because it's compulsory... I think the value of Cosán, and you know that professional learning piece, you know for a lot of teachers in the sector, they just, I suppose they just don't see the value of it. They're caught up with their busy lives as we all are. But I think there's a huge amount of work

that needs to be done, like anybody who has qualified over the last number of years are very familiar with this. Anybody who's in the system and has been teaching for 20 or 30 years do not want to know about it (FG9, ES25).

If anything, the quality of in-service is something that teachers just give out about that. It's not done right, doesn't suit them at their time. They feel that they're being forced into do elective stuff on their on their Saturdays. They do want to do it, but they don't want to give up time with their kids or with their parents. So, in-service is actually a problem, not the mandatory ones, that are done in school because they know they have to do that but stuff they'd like to do, but they don't have the time to do it because of, you know, there's only so many hours in a week (FG5, ES1).

However, within one focus group, one participant observed that “... *there's possibly a difference between primary and post primary teachers, that there would be a huge uptake at primary in professional development, particularly the area of summer courses*” (FG9, ES23). There was agreement among participants that opportunities for post-primary teachers to also accrue EPV (course) days could serve as an incentive:

I feel it would be really good if there was something at post primary because sometimes it's very difficult to get post-primary teachers to come to events ... But I would like EPV days for post primary, that would be great I think (FG9, ES24).

Recognition of potential for better continuity moving forward

Commentary suggested that going forward, stakeholders were more hopeful that the continuum of teacher education would be enhanced. There was a sense that the consistent use of language and structure across Céim, Droichead and Cosán would promote a smoother transition for NQTs than more established teachers in the school system:

There is a common vocabulary maybe, that the students encounter, you know, when they're trainee teachers moving into Droichead and then moving onto the Cosán framework that is useful for them... so I think for teachers who have gone through the process from initial teacher education and then moving on to Cosán versus maybe teachers like myself ...they're already familiar with that language... with the frameworks from initial teacher education, and it's easy (FG9, ES23).

It was proposed that the creation of Oide as an overarching professional development support service would facilitate alignment and support the continuum:

... now you're in, you have to undertake Droichead, and you undertake the Droichead induction via Oide...So I think there is a connectivity there that that perhaps wasn't there before where you're going from (FG8, ES19).

It was considered that the successful implementation of the continuum of teacher education would facilitate teachers to experience the affordances of genuine collaborative practice:

Teaching can be a very lonely profession. You know, it's the teacher in the classroom with the children or young people in front of them and oftentimes it feels very isolated, and I think the work of Droichead and Cosán and the Teaching Council, you know, Oide, obviously with the support of the Department backing, has begun to make a shift in that to helping teachers to feel more involved as part of a community of educators, you know, as a community of practise where there are supports there (FG8, ES22).

However, one focus group suggested that Cosán needs to be updated to take account of changes over time:

It's 10 years old and I think there's a significant body of research around movements in education that that might actually mean. First of all, the substantive knowledge has grown somewhat around what constitutes teacher learning and how to go about that... You know, to what extent are voices from the research community and the teaching community and policymakers, to a degree being listened to in equal measure and being synthesised to actually reflect a contemporary policy that might be more fit for purpose and mutually understandable and recognisable to all parties (FG2, HE18).

Differing views on the formalisation of Cosán

The issue of formalisation of Cosán was discussed in four focus groups. Many stakeholders explicitly supported the promotion of flexibility within Cosán:

I think that the whole point of Cosán is that it's been developed with flexibility in mind and it's not really a case of responsiveness more than it's, it really is open to everyone there. You know that's the whole purpose of it. So, I think it's one of those kind of unique frameworks there (FG8, ES17).

However, analysis revealed mixed views among stakeholders regarding whether Cosán should be mandatory. Stakeholders in one focus group reported apprehension given high levels of engagement presently:

When you make them mandatory and if people are doing it just for the sake of having to do it, it's different than someone, we see hundreds of people coming here in the evening times and webinars and face to face things and getting involved in things at TL21 and doing masters and doing kind of research within their own schools. There's a huge amount happening and you don't want to discourage that (FG7, ES13).

In contrast, stakeholders in another focus group, while acknowledging the potential pitfalls, presented various reasons for more formalisation:

...we're providing so many opportunities, professional learning opportunities for teachers and our numbers are so small. you know, because the system isn't formalised... While we don't want people to be turning up because they have to, again, there has to be some sort of way that teachers can be accountable for their own

professional learning. And that formality, you know, while you know, it's great that there's a flexibility ... there has to be somewhere where it meets in the middle where you know it's part formal, part non formal and that would it will encourage teachers to engage with Cosán [Other participant nodding in agreement throughout] (FG9, ES25).

There was a suggestion from one participant that 'significant CPD' (FG7, ES13) should be included as part of a teacher's Teaching Council profile. Stakeholders in two focus groups spoke of the decline of the take up in master's programmes since the financial incentive was removed and recommended its reinstatement.

4.2.2 NQTs' strong foundational education with notable needs for support

Finding 8: Across primary, post-primary, Irish-medium, and FET contexts, newly qualified teachers (NQTs) were generally viewed as emerging with strong foundational training. However, several areas for further development and systemic support were identified.

Across sectors, NQTs enter the profession with strong pedagogical training and reflective capacity. However, persistent challenges exist in dealing with diversity, managing complex classrooms, navigating ICT, building resilience and professional confidence. Particular attention is given to sectoral specificities, especially Irish-medium and FET contexts, to ensure equity and relevance in teacher preparation pathways.

Themes identified were teaching as a lifelong learning journey, teaching as a continuum, inclusive education, diversity and identity work; and the 'Céim generation', prepared in content and pedagogy, underprepared in soft skills and ICT-ready; the reality of school placement, working with SNAs and managing complexity and difficult behaviour, the need to support resilience and confidence and unique challenges in Irish-medium education.

Teaching as a lifelong learning journey, teaching as a continuum

Quite strongly across all the focus groups, NQTs are widely recognised as being on a professional continuum where teacher education (ITE) lays a strong foundation but is not expected to produce a "finished product". Stakeholders emphasised the importance of developing reflective practitioners who continue learning and adapting throughout their careers (through *Droichead* and *Cosán*). There was a strong emphasis and agreement that the goal of ITE is not to produce fully formed teachers, but to lay strong foundations for a lifelong professional journey. Central to this, the idea of cultivating the mindset of the reflective practitioner, teachers who are open to continuous learning, responsive to change, and committed to evolving their practice over time, was discussed.

They're prepared to teach as newly qualified teachers. But you know, there's a lifetime of learning ahead of them (FG1, HE14).

We do a really good job with the foundations... what we do, we do well, the house will fall down otherwise (FG2, HEI12).

It still is a continuing, a lifelong learning, self-regulated learning kind of journey for them (FG1, HEI1).

Inclusive education, diversity and identity work; the 'Céim generation'

Stakeholders highlighted the need for deeper preparation in areas related to diversity and identity. NQTs struggle not only with celebrating diversity but also with managing identity difference, responding to classroom conflict, and building confidence in navigating sensitive conversations. There is cautious optimism that newer graduates, who experienced the Céim standards, may be more adaptive to inclusive education demands due to its emphasis during ITE.

Not just celebrating diversity... but really making sure that people feel like they belong (FG6, ES8).

Taking anti-racist approaches and challenging gender-based stereotypes (FG6, ES8).

Student teachers... are so afraid to say anything that will offend people, with the result that they oftentimes say nothing (FG6, ES8).

Dealing with identity, difference, diversity is a real area of need... not just for today's classrooms, but to enhance diversity in the profession as well (FG6, ES8).

Recent graduates coming out under Céim... might be a little bit more adaptive (FG8, ES16).

Prepared in content and pedagogy, underprepared in soft skills and ICT-ready: the reality of school placement

Overall, while NQTs are seen as confident and capable in terms of subject knowledge and teaching methodologies, there is a notable gap in their readiness for the interpersonal and relational demands of the profession. Specifically, interactions with parents and collaboration with SNAs are frequently cited as areas where on-the-job experience, rather than ITE, fills the gap. Some participants questioned the depth and realism of school placement experiences, noting that some student teachers are shielded from the full complexity of teaching due to scheduling conflicts or protective practices by schools.

I think they're very prepared in content and pedagogy... it's the softer skills... interactions with parents... what happens with an SNA (FG7, ES13).

They're very confident in what they're teaching... but again it's that support around parent-teacher meetings... or working with an SNA... skills you can only learn on the job (FG7, ES13).

They were very slow to get involved in stuff like Excel, PowerPoint... very nervous about doing that (FG5, ES6).

Do student teachers really get the true real experience when they go out on placement?... Sometimes it's a little bit artificial (FG9, ES25).

Working with SNAs and managing complexity and difficult behaviour

Stakeholders pointed to challenges NQTs face in managing additional adults in the room, particularly SNAs, and handling student behavioural issues. They agreed that the lack of preparation in these areas can negatively impact their confidence and retention.

In some of our classes we would have 5–6 SNAs. So... that's two jobs. I have to prepare the work for my students [and] for my SNA (FG6, ES5).

Numerous colleagues have left the profession for that one reason, management of other adults in the room and not having the skill set or capacity (FG6, ES5).

The need to support resilience and confidence

While pedagogically prepared, participants raised concerns about NQTs' personal readiness to cope with workload, complexity, and the emotional demands of the profession. Building confidence and resilience was viewed as essential to sustaining effective practice and adapting to evolving school environments.

There seems to be a drop in resilience levels... and being able to cope with high levels of workload and conflicting demands (FG1, HE11).

I think in terms of their own competence and confidence, they're not prepared (FG1, HE13).

The resilience of our newly qualified teachers isn't what it used to be (FG5, ES5).

Unique challenges in Irish-medium education

Stakeholders from Irish-medium settings highlighted specific challenges, including inadequate resources to support students with special educational needs in Irish, high stress levels, large class sizes, and lack of sector recognition. The pandemic further limited authentic teaching experiences, and wellbeing supports were noted as insufficient.

More than half of the children may have diagnosed needs... they're not equipped to deal with that (FG9, ES23).

Everyone is playing catch-up... this is the first year the NCSE appointed a dedicated person for Irish-medium education (FG9, ES24).

They felt they were completely unequipped to deal with the stresses... and had to build resilience only through experience (FG9, ES26).

4.3 Teacher supply and retention

4.3.1 Teaching remains an attractive profession in Ireland ... but...

Finding 9: Despite some differences of opinion, teaching was generally viewed as an attractive profession. This perception was supported by references to ITE application numbers and the view that teacher pay and qualifications in Ireland compare favourably with many other countries.

However, several challenges to teacher supply and retention were raised across the focus groups. Emerging themes that participants believe can impact teacher supply and retention included: public perception, cost of living, teacher contracts, teacher workload, school culture and leadership.

Public perception

Several participants noted public perception as something that can impact teacher supply and retention. Many felt that teaching was an attractive profession for which in general there was a positive public perception.

I think in terms of the attractiveness of teaching, I think it's an attractive job (FG6, ES8).

I think the profession remains very attractive because people don't enter into it with anything but a passion (FG15, ES33).

Participants noted strong applications for initial teacher education programmes as evidence of the attractiveness of the profession.

Just to say, I think that the figures speak for themselves. The numbers applying to do the PME and applying for primary teaching are very, very strong. So obviously the profession is an attractive profession (FG5, ES3).

We are attracting some of the best academically bright graduates ... into teaching (FG13, ES20).

Overall internationally, the academic quality that we have coming into teaching is still very high, relatively high to other countries (FG1, HE14).

There's no problem filling spaces on ITE programmes, so probably that's the first thing we should probably acknowledge (FG7, ES13).

It was also felt that students were motivated to undertake initial teacher education programmes as a result of their desire to work with young people, which was seen as a positive.

I do see that we are still attracting a high percentage of students who come into teaching for the right reasons around, you know, wanting to work with young people. And you know we've hugely creative, positive young people, young and older people who have made a conscious decision and made a commitment to come back at significant cost to themselves (FG2, HE15).

However, others felt that teaching was not an attractive profession, noting that at times public perception and the media may negatively impact teacher supply and retention:

I don't think teachers find young teachers or find that teaching is that attractive, and also maybe sometimes they're met with an attitude from parents and media that they have it easy, when we all well, anybody who works in education knows the workload, it, you know, it's very heavy... (FG13, ES20).

...it's a sense that society as mediated by the media doesn't understand actually, what goes on behind [the] closed door of the school gate... for all their amazingness and their education and their professional learning, teachers are the worst people in the world to be able to articulate their experiences (FG15, ES33).

Equally I think though if I was a teacher or if I was someone considering teaching now, looking at the way teachers are treated in the media generally, it is extremely negative. I think there's a very poor perception of the profession that exists there now. Like if you

look at any media report online or any newspaper, teacher bashing just consistently occurs (FG6, ES11).

The lack of opportunities for people to progress, you know, or feel intrinsic motivation, you know, to feel that they are valued, to feel that what they do is important. And I think that's both a school level, a leadership issue and a society issue (FG7, ES15).

One participant noted that the removal of an allowance for teachers who teach through the medium of Irish could lead the public to perceive that perhaps this language is not as valued as it once was.

And I suppose we've been, us and others, have been lobbying for a while for the return of the allowance that did exist for teachers that teach through the medium of Irish. And while it wasn't by any means a large amount of money, ... it was a symbol. It was. It was a sign that they were appreciated and valued. And I think in the absence of that, I think it's definitely less attractive. ... And the narrative is out there as well about that, you know (FG19, ES19).

In one of the focus groups, there was seen to be a difference in the relative attractiveness of primary and post-primary teaching with consequences for the quality of students. One participant teaching in post-primary ITE noted that their programme application numbers have recently dropped, which was seen to have a negative impact on the overall calibre of student intake.

Our numbers are falling, applications are falling, and when applications fall, the quality falls.... we're not choosing the highest academic quality now whereas previously 50% of applicants wouldn't get a place in our programmes. Now we're almost there harvesting or hoovering in anybody who applies.... The highest achieving candidates are not going into teaching So it's the opportunities, there's way more opportunities when an economy is doing well and yeah, we're seeing that now, but we've seen that before. We've you know we've seen it in history that it is cyclical and hopefully it'll come back sooner rather than rather than later (FG1, HEI2).

Cost of living

Many participants raised the current cost of living as a significant barrier to teacher supply and retention.

The cost of living in in certain parts of the country, especially Dublin, it's impacting a huge way on the attractiveness of the profession in the city (FG9, ES18).

Are we paying our teachers enough? Can they afford to live today? (FG1, HEI3).

It's an attractive profession. I think the difficulty is finding the right job in the right place. I suppose there's plenty of opportunities on the East Coast, Dublin, Kildare, Meath, but it's the cost of living there that's keeping people out of those counties (FG7, ES13).

Then the cost of living. Now we've come a long way, you know, it's hard to believe 10 years ago they were earning only 20 something thousand. Now we're you know, by the end of this pay deal the starting salary will be 50,000. But it's still not, doesn't seem to be attracting them (FG5, ES1).

If you're paying more or less all of your salary to live in a house nearby or not able to buy a house, you're just not going to take that position (FG5, ES5).

High academic achieving students who are thinking logically about their future they're not necessarily going to head towards [a] profession where they won't be able to get a job or they won't be able to afford housing or they won't be able to start a family (FG1, HEI4).

Linked to the cost of living was the cost of studying to become a teacher, including the expenses associated with school placement and student accommodation. Some participants noted the duration and associated costs of studying to become a teacher, particularly for those going through the PME route, which requires two years postgraduate study after completion of a four-year undergraduate degree in most cases:

So, if you take the cost of becoming a teacher, that that is part of the recruitment issue and recovering the costs. So like we did a survey - 78% do not believe they could become a teacher today, it's so expensive (FG1, ES1).

We have to remember as well that the two-year commitment at PME level is after a four-year commitment usually at undergraduate level. So, it used to be three and one and now it's four and two. So, it is I think that ... has a serious impact on recruitment to post-graduate ITE programmes (FG1, HEI2).

One participant highlighted the cost and lack of availability of accommodation as not only a particular barrier to student recruitment, but also to the delivery of initial teacher education programmes.

Accommodation is a huge factor for our students, and they are, I suppose, they're also thinking well, can I commute? Is my college within drivable distance because they're more or less resigned to the fact that they're not going to be able to secure

accommodation, and then that puts pressure on us in terms of the delivery, the programme delivery model (FG1, HE11).

Participants also noted potential retention issues in areas such as Dublin where the cost of living was deemed to be higher.

Teacher retention in Dublin is a huge issue, less so again in down the country.... What I'm hearing is they come and stay [in Dublin] until they want to buy a house or until they want to have children and they don't want to raise their children in Dublin. So they look to move down as a result of that. What I'm hearing from principals down the country is the calibre of candidate that they're getting applying for teaching is exceptionally high. People who have AP ones and AP twos applying for just teaching positions (FG13, ES20).

Teacher contracts

Several participants raised concerns around teacher contracts, which at times it was felt could negatively impact teacher supply and retention. In particular, timely access to permanent contracts was seen as an important consideration.

We talk about teacher shortage in the school system and I think that's actually not entirely accurate. Because, you know, there are a lot of teaching jobs there, but some of them are for precarious contracts in a very small number of hours which are not feasible for people to work and, you know, we talk about cover, you know, for teachers who are missing. Who wants to end up working precarious contracts which don't allow you to have a reasonable standard of living? And I think we need to address that as well. So once they get through the two year programme, then we need to give them secure employment contracts that will keep them in the system to make it attractive to stay there (FG2, HE15).

But then our teachers, they are recognised as being very, very good. So they can be offered permanent jobs in Australia (FG5, ES1).

One participant raised concerns around contracts of employment within the Irish-medium context and the barriers this places on teacher recruitment and retention.

Focusing on the Irish-medium context and an awful lot of our schools are quite small schools in the Irish-medium space, you know, I'm thinking of, you know, our five island schools, for example, where you know, if we're talking about recruitment and retention of teachers, very often those teachers can't be offered contracts on full hours or they're offered, you know, half hours or even less than that. And that is not attractive to a young person, you know. And again, that's something that could lure them away from

the Irish-medium space and into the English-medium space where they will get a contract for 22 hours (FG9, ES17).

I would see and the principals would have commented that they see a challenge with attracting teachers to Irish-medium schools particularly given contracts, limited hours, the competition of the English-medium school down the road, you know, where they're not going to have to spend time translating resources, they're not going to have to spend time upskilling their Gaeilge (FG9, ES17).

Participants also noted better working conditions in other jurisdictions as an attraction away from teaching in Ireland.

And even if the best job in the most lovely school was offered to them in a permanent contract, they still wouldn't take it because they're saying no, this is just my time to travel. And I suppose maybe acknowledging that, but then ensuring that we have things in place to ensure that they do come back because right now it's difficult for people to come back because there's such better conditions ... better working conditions overseas (FG5, ES5).

The lack of opportunity for promotion and career progression within the teaching profession in Ireland was also raised by participants as a potential barrier.

There's limited opportunities for actual going into leadership and management positions... There's very little upward mobility in the profession as well, and that may impact on people staying in the profession when they realise that it is limited (FG6, ES11).

It's very difficult when you're slogging away in you know the West, the West Coast of Ireland, in the rain and your friends are in Dubai and you're reading about them getting, you know, middle management posts after being two or three years out (FG2, HEI10).

Teacher workload

The increased workload associated with the teaching profession was raised as an area of concern for many. For some the increased workload was linked to an increased accountability and performativity culture creeping in, noting that

It's that treadmill of performativity (FG1, HEI3).

What is making teaching unattractive for teachers is the workload...And it's not just the workload....It's about the fact they are continually having to innovate in response to policy dynamics (FG15, ES33).

So the whole idea of workload and work intensification is definitely making the profession less attractive. You then have the whole add on to that... I certainly think believe that the workload issue and the work intensification issue in schools is becoming a bigger and bigger problem and it's one of the things we see (FG5, ES1).

So until we really cut down and really look at the workload that's been put upon our principals, we're going to fall into the trap (FG6, ES9).

One participant felt that perhaps other jurisdictions might have better working conditions and supportive workloads.

You've watched teachers on teacher talk or whatever and they say we're in Australia and we've got time to plan and they love that, they value it and it's a time to be with their colleagues and to work together (FG9, ES20).

However, another participant disagreed with this:

Sorry for cutting across, the teachers have time for planning... Sorry, it is. It is featured in the contract. You have 22 hours... We have Croke Park hours and we have for in secondary school we have professional time. If that's 22 hours in a year plus another 33, that's 55 hours in a year for that the teachers are paid for (FG9, ES18).

School culture and leadership

Both school culture and leadership were highlighted by participants as areas that can impact the recruitment and particularly the retention of teachers, either positively or negatively depending on the circumstances. School culture was seen as essential to making teachers feel welcome in a school environment, especially during those first few years after joining.

Your sense of belonging has a massive impact in where you see yourself and if you're really happy in a school, like I know teachers who I used to teach alongside in Dublin, who delayed their move back to the country by two or three years because they were so happy in the place that they were teaching,... And that comes from obviously an overall school culture is very important, but having those critical people in your first year or two of teaching is just huge (FG6, ES7).

If a school culture is not open and welcoming to all, this was noted as a potential barrier to teacher recruitment and retention.

I think we all would pretty much agree that it's probably quite middle class, Irish, predominantly female. ... There are barriers, and it's probably school culture and they're very hard to shift (FG7, ES13).

Leadership within school settings was seen as essential for driving culture, in supporting teacher motivation, in prompting teacher value and worth in the profession.

Can I just mention there? I think if I was to give an answer to that, a school level factor is leadership. Leadership is key, if you like. I know from experience some students [say] I want to go to this school. The principal is lovely. The deputy principal is lovely. They really helped me. They're interested. So leadership like, leadership is or sorry, inclusion is a culture. So in terms of being in a school, again, from an inclusion lens, it depends on the leadership, all right and it will be, we're very small in Ireland. We all know each other in the primary school sector. I don't know about post primary, but it's one of the enablers to attract teachers and for teacher retention it is leadership definitely (FG1, HEI3).

The leadership is crucial in that because if they don't make you feel valued and important in the system, it causes an awful lot of conflict (FG7, ES15).

Participants also acknowledged the enormity of the principal role and the fact that principals need further support if they are to successfully fulfil their role.

Our principals are in dire need of support and I think if we see that support we will see a plateauing of retention and a possible upspike again in retention of teachers in our schools because they'll have time to build the culture, they'll have time to engage with their teachers and engage with them in a meaningful way (FG6, ES9).

4.3.2 Other noteworthy issues: teacher burnout, Irish language requirements and the resourcing of teaching

Finding 10: Less frequently raised in some focus groups, but still notable, were concerns around teacher burnout, Irish language requirements, and the resourcing of teaching—issues that were often context-specific.

Teacher burnout

The challenge of teacher burnout and the need to support teacher wellbeing was raised by a number of participants. Concerns were raised around the demands of the teaching 'job' and how this can lead to teacher burnout.

We're foisting an extremely difficult job on them that is resulting in massive burnout and then they will just leave the school, if not leave the profession (FG6, ES11).

Participants argued for greater support for teacher wellbeing to combat potential teacher burnout and to promote longevity in the profession.

...it's clear that there is a lot of burnout among teachers. And I think that, you know, obviously has an impact on retention and levels of satisfaction. So I do really believe that we need to, you know, formalise more support, more mental health resilience, support for teachers (FG9, ES19).

Teachers should be mandated to try and mind themselves better, and I think we'd get longevity in roles, better longevity than we have now, particularly in schools where there are more challenging circumstances (FG2, HE112).

Irish language requirements

The Irish language requirement was seen by some as a barrier to recruitment in the primary school sector.

Irish can be a huge barrier for say, even any teacher who's registering with the Teaching Council who if they've qualified abroad and it's the Irish language requirements that can be kind of a turn off. Even going out to the career fairs where we were trying to recruit people from different sectors and different backgrounds, it can be a huge thing, that they might be the best teacher in the world but the Gaeilge is obviously a barrier (FG7, ES14).

We put a barrier like Irish in place. So for some who might have an exemption from Irish for a variety of reasons, they're immediately precluded from going into the profession., They have to find other routes, they go outside of the country, they go to the UK, the North and so on to get a primary school teacher education (FG2, HE112).

...graduates who have qualified overseas, they're coming to Ireland. They never studied in the Irish language. They don't have that qualification. But it is a requirement with the Teaching Council to have met that condition (FG6, ES7).

Participants advocated for targeted courses to support teachers who may not meet the Irish language requirement for registration to help enhance teacher recruitment and supply in Ireland.

I think we need to set up particular courses that are specific to the Irish language that they need for teaching... targeted specifically at teachers that qualified outside of

Ireland but wish to teach in Irish schools with that language that they need for teaching because yes, you can learn Irish in all sorts of different courses. But the Irish you need for the classroom is different than the Irish that maybe you need just in general (FG9, ES16).

The resourcing of teaching

Adequately supporting and resourcing teaching as a profession was seen as an important factor in promoting teacher supply and retention, particularly in Irish-medium ITE and schools.

In attracting anyone to the teaching profession, that's one thing. But you know, putting the supports in place at initial teacher education stage, you know, to support people with the language that is the only way that we are actually going to, you know, broaden the range of people who want to actually come and teach in an Irish-medium setting (FG9, ES17).

Participants noted that teachers in Irish-medium settings often dedicate additional time developing resources for their classes due to a limited availability of publicly accessible materials. Advancement in the provision of resources specific to Irish-medium settings was seen by some as an opportunity to help advance teacher supply and retention in this context.

There will always be a shortfall in terms of, you know, what's available to teachers in English-medium schools and what's available to teachers in Irish-medium schools. For example, with senior cycle reform there's a pause on putting out resources through Gaeilge until, let's say the first cohort has gone through with the English resource to see did they work well for teachers Were teachers happy with them? And then at that point, they'll get translated so there's always that kind of catch-up period (FG9, ES17).

,...even with new senior cycle when they talk about new books being available in biology, we only might get a chance to translate one, the budget isn't there (FG13, ES20).

4.3.3 Teacher supply and teacher diversity: Teaching is not a diverse profession

Finding 11: There was broad consensus among teacher educators and stakeholders that the teaching profession in Ireland lacks diversity in terms of ethnic, cultural, and social class backgrounds, resulting in a noticeable mismatch between the teacher workforce and the student population.

We're still seeing white Irish coming through in the vast, vast majority of applicants. And so we're not seeing the diversity we're talking to them about in teacher education that they're seeing in the schools they've come from (FG2, HEI6).

Individuals with disabilities were noted by some focus group participants from HEIs and education stakeholder groups as being underrepresented in the teaching profession, with participants emphasising the importance of neurodiversity in the profession. Challenges included rigid expectations of what defines a "good teacher," which negatively affects neurodivergent individuals. Additionally, the impact of exemptions from Irish on entry eligibility for many of these students in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) was highlighted as a significant barrier.

It's really difficult for them [neurodiverse student teachers] because of the inflexibility of the school culture and the expectations of the beginning teacher to be a particular way, like there's a real performativity, an expected performativity ... from a lot of school leaders that you should be a certain way. You should be really social. You should be really proactive. You should be dynamic. You should be making eye contact. You know, you should be seeking out leaders for chats. ... There's a real schema around what a beginning teacher at second level should look like. And I think that's really, really challenging for our more diverse students (FG1, HEI1).

We do have many and a growing number of neurodivergent children, but you know that's not been modelled by their teachers. But unfortunately the way the system is at the moment, and in particular the way the system of exemptions from the study of Irish has gone out of control altogether. We are giving a very clear message to young people that if you are neurodivergent, the Irish language isn't really for you, so you should just secure yourself an exemption and have an easier life (FG9, ES19).

The lack of diversity was attributed to a number of factors, namely, ITE entry requirements, the denominational structure of primary schools, teacher registration procedures and school culture. The high points requirements for course entry and the requirement to have Irish for primary ITE courses were seen as limiting access to those who had done well in the educational system, usually from middle-class backgrounds.

If you look at the number of people now coming into teaching who have got into a lower points degree because academically they couldn't meet the higher points. So they might do an Arts degree of sorts in a technological university and then they go in and do the PME and some of them are turning out to be our best teachers because they have a focus on, a priority on relationships. They actually have struggled a little bit themselves in school so they understand (FG13, ES20).

We put a barrier like Irish in place. So for some who might have an exemption from Irish for a variety of reasons, they're immediately precluded from going into the profession, they have to find other routes (FG2, HEI12).

The continued predominance of Catholic schools at the primary level was viewed as a barrier for individuals from minority faith backgrounds or those with no religious affiliation seeking to enter the profession.

It's a huge challenge for people who maybe are attracted to teaching but do not wish to teach in a denominational school and this is more of an issue, at primary level, of course, but you know, there are many people who would feel like there's a small pool of schools that they could teach in and that are aligned to their personal values (FG5, ES5).

The need to have a certificate in, in religious education to teach in a Catholic school that is potentially a barrier as well for a whole cohort of teachers. It's something that possibly again could be looked at (FG7, ES14).

The lengthy and complex processes involved in registering as teachers, along with language barriers, were perceived as obstacles to access for migrant teachers.

There are a huge number of migrants in the country who are qualified teachers who, you know, could teach in our schools but there are so many barriers that they have to overcome to be able to teach in that school through just everything from red tape and paperwork to language (FG5, ES5).

As mentioned earlier, school culture was also seen as a pressure for student teachers to self-present in a way that is consistent with the status quo and thus to mask their diversity.

We say to them "you need to be aware you're going into a conservative profession". We talk about it in terms of dress, in terms of behaviours within a school and in many ways, we socialise something that's already fully embedded (FG2, HEI12).

I'll give you one quote from a teacher... And she said to me, "I won't tell them [teachers in the school] I'm a Traveller because I want to make friends" (FG1, HEI3).

We've also an issue with acceptance of people from minority communities as teachers, not just of [teaching] subjects in Irish, but also teaching subjects through English, where the teacher, the accent might be different, the teacher might look different, the teacher is not from the community maybe that the school is based in and some of these teachers are really struggling to be accepted by the general school community (FG9, ES18).

There's such a dominance of homo-sociability in the profession of middle-class white Irish people that you kind of don't speak to your diversity because it might be seen as something in an interview where there's white Irish people on the panel that you might get rejected (FG2, HEI7).

Fewer participants spoke about the consequences of lack of diversity for school students. However, those that did highlighted the consequences for inclusion in the classroom as well as the reproduction of the status quo because of a lack of role models for certain groups of school students.

A lot of the people in the system say "the system worked for me, it's very fair" and it's a major problem. But I found that the biggest resistance actually was in primary teachers, because they're even more middle class, more high achieving and very little understanding that there are certain people that it doesn't and that are not catered for or comprehended in the system (FG13, ES20).

Well, I've never seen anybody like me teaching, so why would I consider myself as a teacher? (FG6, ES7).

Suggestions for improving diversity included broadening the pathways into ITE and actively recruiting less represented groups.

...creating videos of teachers from diverse backgrounds to try and entice children from those backgrounds to join the teaching profession (FG9, ES16).

Costs, particularly around school placement, were seen as a particular barrier for students from more socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with the need to provide financial support.

We have to support them with some sort of financial aid at the placement time (FG2, HEI12).

Other suggestions related to HEIs being more supportive to student teachers from underrepresented groups.

I think it's highly unethical for us to constantly be thinking ... we appreciate diversity and we support diversity and then we don't necessarily actually have the backup to support that diversity. And so it is something that we need to look at. So UDL within the ITE and beyond into the primary and secondary education systems (FG1, HEI4).

The importance of teacher educators reflecting on their own prejudice was highlighted to signal to student teachers that:

we have respect and understanding (FG1, HEI3).

One participant emphasised the significance of exploring various dimensions of diversity and tackling the specific challenges faced by different groups, rather than using a blanket approach.

In order to increase diversity amongst all of those groups, you have to recognise that ... there's different barriers for each of those groups and each of those different barriers will need to be identified and addressed (FG6, ES10).

4.4 Further Education and Training

4.4.1 A complex landscape distinct from primary and post-primary with some opportunities and many challenges

Finding 12: The research findings from focus groups with FET sector stakeholders and HEI providers reveal a complex landscape of opportunities and challenges within the FET sector in Ireland, making it distinct from the primary and post-primary sectors.

Findings from focus groups with Further Education and Training (FET) sector stakeholders and Higher Education Institution (HEI) providers of FET programmes are presented separately to the findings from primary and post-primary focus groups due to significantly different structures. Findings are presented in relation to key themes generated from discussions and include FET qualification pathways; FET teacher professional identity and parity of esteem; recruitment and retention in the FET sector; CPD opportunities; and diversity and inclusion. The term 'teacher' is used in the context of FET to refer to instructor, practitioner, coordinator, educator, tutor, or resource.

FET Qualification Pathways

The qualification pathways for FET practitioners were described by participants as diverse, reflecting the broad range of services, programmes and providers within the sector, including Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programmes, Youthreach, apprenticeships, community and adult education. While some challenges resulting from diversity are outlined in the remainder of the section, having staff from a variety of backgrounds was seen positively, as providing access to '*a wealth of learning*' (FG12, ES24). The diversity of provision and staffing also means that the terms used to describe staff differ:

The word FET practitioners, and I'm really reluctant to call them that because they have a great difficulty in being referred to as tutors or practitioners, and yet the division between the word "teacher" and "tutor" and "practitioner" is based on qualifications and it's normally driven by the conversation around the teacher and then the others (FG12, ES29).

This participant further suggested that a hierarchy of titles exists for FET teachers, and explained:

There is a historical belief that ... if you haven't put two years in or four years in, or if you haven't put that effort in and that you haven't followed the process that's there to be a qualified teacher, then you aren't really fit to be called a teacher (FG12, ES29).

In the discussion regarding the qualification pathways for FET teachers, participants stressed the relatively recent growth of formal ITE qualifications within certain areas of the FET sector. This growth followed the implementation of *Further Education: General and Programme Requirements for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Qualifications* (The Teaching Council 2011), informally referred to as the 'Purple Document'. There was also emphasis on the need for Teaching Council registration, particularly for individuals who were granted Teaching Council registration without completing initial teacher education. Implications of the mix of formal and informal routes were discussed.

Formal ITE provision for FET

Participants reported that the numbers undertaking formal FET ITE are increasing, although one HEI provider mentioned that two HEIs would be pausing their formal FET programmes. Participants suggested that Teaching Council registration requirements, and a desire for professional development are motivators to engage with formal FET ITE, as illustrated by two HEI representatives:

A lot of the experienced practitioners who have in many cases been teaching for years... come into the ITE programmes to tick the box of Teaching Council registration (FG10, HEI24).

Lots of them are doing it because they have provisional registration with the Council and ... they must achieve a qualification within three years (FG11, HEI27).

Others spoke of the desire for professional recognition, which they perceived came with a formal FET qualification, which developed andragogy skills in preparation for FET teaching:

...we've certainly seen a wish for, I suppose ... more professionalisation in terms of the teaching profession (FG11, ES28).

The impression I'm getting is that ... new teachers coming in, who've done ... the PME [FET TEQ], that it's been very effective in, I suppose, informing those teachers of what the role [is]. Because heretofore all you needed was a degree to register as a FET teacher. So you were coming in with a degree level of expertise in your own subject area. But you're relying on your life experience and your personality to teach. So what I'm hearing from the FET principals is that this FET PME is having a significant impact on the quality of what's going on in their classrooms (FG13, ES30).

Another HEI participant raised the impact that formal ITE provision can have on FET practitioners' professional identity:

If you look at outside of the primary, post primary and on into further ed. and into early years, there's pressure on both of those sectors to bring in those conceptual underpinnings and understanding. And actually, it's an important contribution to the identity of educators, practitioners, resource workers. They're working in those spaces that they begin to see themselves, not say on a par because you're not in that space, but of having that capacity to engage at that other level. But it can be, and I certainly know the initial couple of years on our programme, it was one of those areas that was really kind of tense (FG10, HEI26).

4.4.2 Teaching Council registration and its implications

Teaching Council registration for sectoral experts was mentioned by several participants as a challenge. They described a lack of alignment between the requirements for many teaching posts and the needs of colleges and learners. Teaching Council registration requirements do not require FET teachers to have a degree in a particular specialist field. Colleges can employ sectoral experts who do not have teaching qualifications but only on a short-term basis, which leads to considerable turnover.

There is a demand for sectoral experts. So they don't align with the traditional teaching routes or qualifications. So if you're doing a FET programme on auctioneering, there is no degree in auctioneering to get Teaching Council registration for auctioneering, you need somebody who potentially has worked in the sector for a period of time, but they may or may not qualify for Teaching Council registration, but they're eminently qualified to deliver a programme in a FET college so it's a major problem for them (FG 13, ES30).

Similarly, another education stakeholder shared the perspective that, particularly for vocational programmes, sector-specific expertise and skills outweigh formal qualifications. However, ES29 noted that practitioners often feel undervalued in comparison to teachers, despite their extensive experience:

The lovely part, though, is that if you're going to be teaching something about stone masonry, for example, and you're going to be teaching that apprenticeship and you're needed for that period, it'll be less about all of your qualifications and more about your expertise and your experience and your ability to show that you're qualified to teach that particular subject, which is much more of a practical nature (FG12, ES29).

Another participant, a HEI provider, indicated that the profile of applicants to FET teaching programmes is changing, in that it is attracting those who do not necessarily bring sectoral expertise to their teaching, but who subsequently attract credibility by having the qualification and Teaching Council registration:

The profile has shifted somewhat. We're tending to attract a younger, sorry, somebody with less post-qualification experience, post-undergrad experience.... business, for example, we'd like to see that they have experience from industry, from the commercial side of things. So that they can have the credibility and they can have the war stories..., as we say (FG11, HEI27).

The Teaching Council registration criteria for FET teachers (Route 3 registration) includes a level 8-degree qualification and completion of a recognised teacher education qualification (TEQ). Participants discussed the flexibility of Teaching Council registration through Route 3 as a 'double-edged sword' (FG10, HEI25), signifying that sectoral experts appear to lack adequate support during their transition into teaching:

Interviewer: And for the sectoral experts, I mean, someone could come in and they could be the best in their fields, but are they given support to actually be the best at teaching in that field or is there an induction process?

ES30: "No" is the simple answer, no they will have some sort of an induction process but because it's hamstrung by the post-primary teaching contract. Teaching is an isolated job so they would get a little bit of support, little bit of instruction and then off you go. And those who are reflective may ask for a bit of help. Those that aren't reflective may struggle (FG13, ES30).

Several participants, including representatives from higher education institutions and education stakeholders, expressed confusion regarding the Teaching Council registration process. They noted that the lack of clarity surrounding this process led to feelings of apprehension.

So, I think the Teaching Council stuff has caused a lot of fear over the last two decades. Really it was very unclear who needed it [TEC]. It was very unclear what was required.

There was a lot of misinformation and that was coming from both the Teaching Council and from management within the VECs and then ETBs and then among their practitioners themselves, a lot of misinformation. So, people, you know, going back to do courses that didn't actually need it. People fighting for Teaching Council numbers that didn't need it, then people losing their jobs because they didn't have one (FG14, HEI30).

Teaching Council responsiveness to change

There was a perception from some participants that the Teaching Council is somewhat misaligned with the ethos and diversity of FET. While many acknowledged that the challenges facing the FET sector are systemically broader than its alignment or otherwise with the Teaching Council, several participants highlighted a mismatch between the requirements for registration and the skills and methodologies needed for working with adult learners. This view was articulated by one HEI participant who originally qualified as a post-primary teacher, but who has spent the past 30 years coordinating various FET programmes, such as horticulture for adults with mental health needs.

So, you get people who get [for example] my degree with History and English, you know, I haven't taught that, you know, for 30 years, but if I registered, that will be on my mind. But I could be teaching something completely different. So, the Teaching Council notion of what is the knowledge of an adult educator is very different to what the knowledge is, which is very curricular defined or subject defined for a post-primary school teacher, I think (FG14, HEI28).

A quote from one HEI participant in the largest FET focus group (FG14) is reflective of the sentiments shared by the five other participants in the group:

I feel it [the Teaching Council] really isn't the right avenue for us, shall we say for FET, because they don't understand FET at all. They don't understand who the people are, ... for instance, I'm registered with the Teaching Council for 10 years and the subjects I did my degree in, I've never taught those subjects. That's not how the sector works..... And we also get no benefits for it. I pay my registration fee, but I have no voice and I've no CPD and I've no anything. You know, ... I think there's a problem there with that. That they're just maybe not the right organisation. (FG14, HEI31).

This participant went on to suggest that

... it would be great if there was an organisation that could create those pathways for us and that understood and respected the sector and came from the sector rather than having people who don't really understand that (FG14, HEI31).

Strong concerns around the need for Teaching Council guidelines for ITE providers in the FET sector to be reviewed and revised was raised by several focus group participants:

I think one of the big issues is time, and the time it takes for change to happen and so you know, all of the current ITE programmes for FET were developed on that initial purple document... it was still built on the purple document. But the world has moved on to a huge extent since the 2011 purple document. You know, so the extent of emphasis on things like technology and teaching, inclusion, all of those kinds of things. So, we've all adjusted our teaching to suit that. We've all adjusted the content of our programmes, but the kind of the fundamentals have to stay pretty close to what our accreditation was based on, and our accreditation is still based on something that was written in 2011 (FG 10, HEI24).

Participants indicated that ITE providers in the FET sector have been asking for revised guidelines for some time and would welcome active engagement with the Teaching Council:

They've been crying out for.... They're not responding. They're not wanting. They're not hungry. They're not. We're not at the top of the list... I mean, it's odd that we're willing to open ourselves up in some ways. You know, it'd be lovely to kind of say "it's nice and safe. We'll stay where we are" ... normally people are not in a hurry to do this. We just feel that there's space. I mean, even in the likes of special education, for example, there's been a huge increase in the number of learners in FET who are on the autism spectrum, huge increase in people with diagnosis of dyslexia. There is a huge need there for expertise or at least basic understanding among trainees and FET teachers of how to handle that, how to handle diversity in the classroom that we've never had before (FG10, HEI25).

In the same focus group, one participant mentioned that securing funding posed a challenge in this area and emphasised that adequate resources would be necessary for implementing changes:

Funding even to complete FET courses is significantly less than ITE in other areas as well. So, I mean, you know, we're playing catch up even on the basic level, let alone on the SEN and the need is huge. And it's quite interesting. I have a lot of people applying for our programme this year who have actually done qualifications in SEN in various different contexts and are now adding the FET on as opposed to the other way around, you know. So, it'll be a positive development, but there won't be enough of it for a long time (FG10, HEI24).

FET education stakeholders and HEI providers of FET programmes indicated a need for change to accreditation pathways, suggesting more incremental pathways to accommodate teachers from various backgrounds, such as those in hair and beauty or electricians who may not have a primary degree/ Level 7 in their core specialism. There was a recommendation from several participants for greater recognition of prior learning (RPL). One participant indicated that

while RPL is recognised for entry to ITE programmes, it still requires entrants to have a Level 7 degree.

But you know for the hair and beauty people and the electricians and all of those out there, who may not have a primary degree in their core specialism, ... something a little more incremental would be great..... But you still need the level 7 degree, so. So maybe in time that that level 7 degree there could be, I know, certain other colleagues would ...could talk a lot about this. They'd like to see some more opening up there. But of course, the Teaching Council, the Teaching Council would say, well, you know that perhaps the HEIs themselves can look at that and there's nothing stopping a HEI from awarding credit or awarding or even making a full award. I think that all of that legislation and all of that, all of the policy infrastructure is there to allow that (FG11, HEI27).

Another HEI participant wondered if there could be an alternative to full reaccreditation of the ITE FET programmes:

Just wondering is there some type of a halfway house that isn't the full re-accreditation that is actually coming from the sector rather than coming from the Teaching Council. Now I know the Council is informed by the sector, but ... you don't necessarily have to wait for a full re-accreditation for changes, but there's some mechanism for altering those and not just an individual going, but that there's a triggering point at some point that you may put in some amendments to your programmes and go through a lighter accreditation process (FG10, HEI26).

4.4.3 FET teacher professional identity and parity of esteem

The positive impact of formal ITE provision on FET teachers' confidence and professional identity was mentioned by some participants. Formal ITE qualifications are considered to enhance the professionalisation of the sector. However, concerns were raised about 'imposter syndrome' among FET teachers who received Teaching Council registration without an ITE qualification.

Lack of parity of esteem between FET and other parts of the education system as well as variation in terms and conditions within the sector were spoken about across all focus groups. These included lack of access to Croke Park hours, or exceptional closure days for staff. Furthermore, the introduction of a new adult educator contract was seen as further reinforcing the precarity of many staff in the sector, an issue discussed further below. The absence of formal induction for FET teachers and its importance for maintaining the quality of FET provision and supporting new teachers/ educators was also brought up by several participants.

A lack of comparable systemic infrastructure to support FET teachers was stressed by several participants, an issue that is discussed below in the section on CPD opportunities.

There isn't that structure that's there in the other sectors, there isn't parity of esteem or parity of contracts or parity of support.....all of the stuff that's there for primary and post-primary teachers in terms of support, in terms of ongoing professional education or professional development and stuff like that, like it just isn't really there except if they go seek it out themselves and you know, create their own professional development. There isn't that structure around it (FG 10, HEI25).

Several participants underlined the parity issue with reference to the inherent 'contradiction' or double standard in the system, whereby primary and post-primary teachers can be permanently employed in FET, but FET-trained teachers can only assume temporary/substitution contracts in primary or post-primary sectors.

People from primary, post primary can slot in there [FET] and that's okay from the ETB's point of view, so there's a contradiction in terms of what they're saying, you know, the fluidity between the things is kind of a bit mixed up... So there's no fluidity going up and down and maybe that's correct because they are separate sectors, but it doesn't seem to work. Anyone can go into FET but not the other way around (FG 10, HEI25).

It's about this transferability where the person holding the PME can teach in the FE side of the house, but the inverse does not apply. In other words, the holder of an FE qualification, it doesn't qualify them for anything else beyond FE (FG11, HEI27).

Another participant expressed that a disparity in esteem related to the perception of qualification routes, but also noted that FET teachers are being specifically trained to teach solely within the FET sector:

...but because Route 3 is a general pedagogy qualification, there's kind of a sense maybe that it's not as weighty, not as valuable as some of the other qualifications, so that the boundaries ... are permeable in one direction and not the other, which then of course makes it tricky (FG 10, HEI24).

Recruitment and retention in the FET sector

In discussing the extent to which FET teaching is an attractive profession, participants mentioned the satisfaction that practitioners gain from seeing how much they can support their students and the impact they can have on people's lives. Nevertheless, the sector is seen as undervalued and misunderstood, with limited career progression and precarious employment. Participants emphasised the considerable challenges faced by FET teachers,

such as precarious working conditions, poor pay, and a lack of job security. These factors can result in a lack of diversity within the profession.

Positive Factors Impacting on Teacher Recruitment and Retention: Several participants indicated that a '*pipeline of graduates*' (FG10, HEI24) existed in the sector, and that the availability of interested and qualified graduates is a positive factor, ensuring a steady flow of candidates for FET positions.

From the perspective of the sector, there's a pipeline of good people coming through and there are choices because there are lots of people applying for any given job..... You have a lot of interesting and interested graduates going for the jobs that do exist. So they do get good teachers into FET who do a good job (FG10, HEI24).

I believe that we are delivering a really high-quality delivery because of the practitioners that are there with a variety of learning that they have (FG12, ES29).

Local loyalty was also mentioned as a factor positively influencing recruitment and retention in FG 10 by two participants (HEI24, HEI25), who indicated that positive factors are visible at a local centre level attempting to retain good student teachers following graduation. It was also noted that FET teaching can bring enormous job satisfaction when teachers see the positive impact on their learners, but career path challenges were also noted:

I think it is a very attractive career in terms of the satisfaction that people get out of the job. I think a lot of people go into teaching in adult and further education and get a huge amount of satisfaction out of the role.... They love the contribution that they're making to their learners. It is immensely satisfying, satisfying at a personal level. It's horrendous as a career path (FG10, HEI24).

Teachers get an opportunity to come in and do things differently and feel differently and get a chance to bring their own passions along the way.. They get a chance to influence curriculum (FG12, ES29).

Several participants spoke of a strong values-based approach to provision, with a strong emphasis on social justice, inclusion, community-based and learner-centred approaches. Furthermore, participants believed that many FET teachers are motivated by personal experiences and a desire to give back. One HEI participant felt that this values-based ethos is embedded in training, and influenced by the historical foundations of vocational education rooted in sociology and theology:

Very strong values base to that provision, and I think that's replicated within the training.... strong emancipatory liberation theology kind of approach... (FG14, ES31).

Negative Factors Impacting on Teacher Recruitment and Retention: There was a sense that working conditions for FET teachers were poor, and one participant felt they were deteriorating, especially in the area of community education, with the introduction of new adult education contracts.

There's a new contract that was brought out kind of in the last 12 months. That is now being called an adult education contract, and it's anybody coming in new will be offered an adult educator contract and anybody who didn't have a CID has been put on to an adult educator contract. You don't get a CID until you've tipped into your fourth year..... But the contract actually makes sure that they do not have parity with teachers and which is what they wanted. They wanted parity (FG14, HEI30).

More broadly, significant challenges in recruiting and retaining FET teachers were identified in discussions with participants. Recruitment challenges exist in fields reliant on sectoral experts arising from the lack of alignment between the requirements for teaching posts and the needs of colleges and learners.

There's no problem recruiting English teachers into FET or communications teachers as they call them, but dental, nursing or anything like that. They have a major problem recruiting those types of people to deliver in the FET college (FG13, ES30).

One HEI participant observed that the absence of distinct career pathways and promotion opportunities greatly affects recruitment efforts. Without clear advancement routes, potential teachers may not perceive long-term career development within FET. This point was emphasised by a participant who highlighted the necessity for a framework for FET teachers that encompasses:

... registration, recruitment, retention and promotion as a vision of a teacher, right. And I'm wondering if that promotion piece needs to be put in there. So what are the possibilities of moving through the sector? Because you have to sell those as well. And if you look back into the early years, for example, one of the big problems that they're having right now is that people are coming out with an undergraduate degree, are moving beyond recruitment and retention really quickly into promotion into management roles within [a short time], you know, they're leading a room. They're doing that. ... But it doesn't appear to me to be very clear to prospective candidates or applicants or people who are thinking about a career in FET, that there is a not just a retention piece but a promotion piece (FG 10, HEI26)

In four focus groups, key factors that significantly affect recruitment and retention were identified, including role isolation, precarious working conditions, inadequate pay, and lack of job security.

It's very precarious like to bank on it as something that's going to pay your mortgage. Like it's OK if you're the second career in the household, but if you're the first it's very precarious (FG10, HEI25).

Being a FET tutor can be a lonely existence.... you could be dropping out to a kind of like a centre on a Tuesday morning. And again, you might not have that kind of peer support (FG14, ES31).

I think as you creep up OK past early years, but as you creep up primary contracts, if you get one, they're solid, you get into post primary, you've got a problem depending on your subject areas, where you're living, et cetera. ... there is an understanding for many people who have come up through the system that there's a process to get your foot in the door, ... you're fairly sure that you'll be kept at some point, and that's the process of getting in through. You have to stay at home while you're doing it, etc. But there's an understanding that there's a way to get security in post primary, but that just unravels completely in the FET sector (FG10, HEI26).

One of the issues, and it pertains [to] the attractiveness of the profession is the scarcity of permanent teaching posts (FG11, HEI27).

Challenges were raised in relation to the retention of sectoral experts, given the short-term nature of their contracts:

You can employ a sectoral expert, but what you can't give them is tenure and you're paying them an unqualified rate. So, they're basically treated like second-class citizens, even though they're the ones that are attracting the students, keeping the college alive. So, what has happened is you tend to hang on to them for a year or two. They get fed up and they move on because they're not paid during the summer, they're not paid, they're paid on contact hours, which is a casual contract (FG13, ES30).

The panel system can be a barrier for new applicants, with some missing the application window, making it difficult to secure positions, and others who are placed on the panel but may not secure a job. According to one HEI participant:

So, from the perspective of the sector, there's a pipeline of good people coming through and there are choices because there are lots of people applying for any given job. From the perspective of the applicants, it's tricky to get in. A lot of the positions are

filled. You know, a lot of the ads are for panels. A lot of the ads are for panels. So, you know somebody wants to work in September, they get on a panel. Then they can't get work for another two years. They still get it because they're on the panel. But if they didn't apply for the panel on time, well then, they don't get it at all. And you know, it's quite a tricky space to get into. (FG 10, HEI24).

Other HEI participants spoke of advising a potential ITE FET applicant against choosing FET teaching as a career pathway on moral grounds, stating:

I'm sure we've all counselled people away from the programme too, you know, because morally you're looking at somebody who's working in it. He's got three young children. He's commuting from [x] or whatever, and it's like, you know, really think very carefully about this because you're giving it up for. You're giving up whatever tens of thousands ... for maybe a few hours a week. You don't know like what you're going to get. So, you know, it's too much of a risk (FG10, HEI24).

All focus groups raised significant concerns about FET career security and working conditions in their responses. The disparity in contract terms was clearly articulated by one participant, which was representative of many participants, who said:

...you know, two people doing the same job in the same building and getting different pay and conditions. One of the huge issues at the moment is with the move towards the colleges of FET and these integrated one campus centres where all of the different kinds of FET are provided. You have this happening every day. Two people sitting down for tea in the staff room and they're doing the same module with two different groups being paid different money. It's heart breaking (FG10, HEI24).

One participant believed that poor pay, lack of job security, and contract conditions are starting to impact on the quality and numbers entering FET.

And I think that is starting to really impact on the numbers of people going into teaching and further education and on the quality of the people going in, not that the people going in are not good, but we're actually losing a lot of potential teachers because they are not and it's the same as in second level, they're coming out of sectors where they have security, where they're well paid and they are willing to bring all of their expertise to further and adult education (FG10, HEI24).

CPD opportunities

Participants highlighted that CPD in the sector is largely unstructured, self-motivated, and reliant on local resources. There exists an informal, loose, and unstructured CPD framework

for FET teachers, which relies on intrinsically motivated teachers and local resources to facilitate engagement with CPD. This approach can be particularly challenging in rural areas.

One HEI participant mentioned the Further Education Support Service (FESS) as an avenue for CPD but did not elaborate on its role. The Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) Hub, established by ETBI and funded by SOLAS, is another avenue to access CPD; the hub was developed to bring about consistency and a level of standardisation to professional learning and development across the sixteen ETBs, as illustrated by one education stakeholder, who explained:

But there was no real coordinated approach across the 16 ETBs. Because as you can imagine the 16 Education and Training Boards across the country are run completely different. They're like their own little fiefdoms, and they're incredible. Like I don't want that to come across as if they're not doing great work, they are. But they are all...it's all dependent on how the leadership runs. So, some of them will see that professional development is so important (FG12, ES29).

This education stakeholder went on to explain how ETBI centralises professional learning and development opportunities across the ETB FET sector, which supports a community of practice approach, consistency and the sharing of resources, materials and policies.

By creating this hub and spoke idea where you'd have the hub where the central requirements that's required would say for the FET strategy to deliver on the capabilities of teaching or the capabilities of the FET practitioners would then be documented in a document to say this is what we expect from all ETBs, and then by putting it into ETBI, we've been able to centralise the approach (FG12, ES29).

FET teachers have access to a range of short CPD sessions, online webinars, seminars, lunchtime sessions, and access to guest speakers etc. Certain ETBs sometimes lead out on various programme developments, and share resources, materials and programme outlines with other ETBs. Others added that ETBs provided many CPD opportunities. However, one participant (FG13, ES30) highlighted that competition between colleges (and courses) was in tension with attempts to build professional learning communities.

The PL&D Hub, the Professional Learning and Development Hub, was established in ETBI, funded by SOLAS. And the idea behind that was to centralise professional learning and development opportunities, service-wide across FET (FG11, ES28).

So, over the last nine months that we've been doing in ETBI through the PL&D hub is that we've been offering sort of monthly calendars with various teams that answer to strategic priorities and ... where we offer ... live events as such over webinars on lunchtimes, we'd record them. We have a sacred space on our digital library for FET and that reaches the

entire sector. So, then that just improves the access of how people you know can access those back in their own time and so kind of flexible delivery to a certain degree (FG11, ES28).

We do know that locally ETBs, they do have lots of CPD, they invest a lot in CPD provisions (FG11, HEI27).

Other participants felt that there was a lack of sector-specific CPD, particularly in support of meeting the diverse and often complex needs of learners, as illustrated by one HEI representative who said:

There'll be trauma-informed training for children, but not for adults (FG14, HEI31).

In the same focus group, a participant highlighted the success of FET teachers in catering to the diverse learner populations across various provisions, including Youthreach, therapeutic settings, and prison education services. They highlighted that teachers were engaging with both young people and adults facing complex challenges such as post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse and recovery, mental health needs, as well as additional learning needs and disabilities. The discussion included the implications for teachers and their professional development in addressing the educational requirements of such a complex and varied range of needs.

The importance of lifelong learning and the need for FET teachers to continuously develop their skills was emphasised.

We do try to inculcate the idea of the lifelong learning profession and that they're by no means the finished article when they graduated, that it's really only beginning for those who haven't been teaching before (FG11, HEI27).

The dilemma of dual professionalism surfaced as an issue related to Teaching Council registration for sectoral experts coming from industry. Some participants spoke of the dual professional CPD/ training requirements and the demands this places on FET teachers' time, resourcing and the subsequent tension/ dilemma in selecting professional learning priorities. Teachers often engage in CPD related to their vocational areas due to professional requirements (which are mandated), but there are no such requirements from the Teaching Council. The discussion considered whether mandatory CPD should be a requirement from the Teaching Council, and it was felt that more formal 'opportunities' rather than 'requirements' for CPD would be a more effective way of supporting in-service teacher learning and development.

Where people are dual professionals, they're engaging with the CPD requirements/opportunities in the vocational area because they're required to do so and because they need to keep up with their discipline. They are not actually required to do anything other than continue to pay their fees to keep up their Teaching Council registrations (FG10, HEI24).

Participants noted that CPD is embedded in FET teachers' practice, despite the lack of formal CPD frameworks, budgetary constraints, and opportunities to engage with CPD. Teachers pursue professional learning and development out of personal interest, indicating a strong commitment to professional growth.

It's usually a case of a teacher going to a manager and saying I want to do this. I want to do a course in blended learning.....and depending on who they're asking and the budget and the availability of all the resources, they will get support to do that. But there may not be enough available for them to be able to do that (FG10, HEI24).

They come and they do them because they want to know how to work with a particular group of learners or how to work in a particular space (FG10, HEI24).

Budget and systemic limitations were identified by participants as obstacles to engaging with CPD. These constraints restrict access to CPD opportunities and affect teachers' ability to enhance their preparedness. Unlike early years, primary and post-primary educators, FET teachers do not have any government funding available for formalised CPD (e.g. PGDSEN/LINC).

...the system isn't supporting, it would be my own experience of it anyway (FG10, HEI24).

While a SOLAS Professional Learning and Development Statement of Strategy exists, participants identified a need for a formal CPD Framework for FET teachers to support in-service CPD and FET qualification pathways. While engagement with CPD is positive and valued, it needs to be systematised.

I think if there was a framework coming from above that showed that this was valuable. That said, this is something we want you to do, that it's not just about re-registering and paying your fees, that actually there's something in this ongoing development as a teacher. I think it would help them because they wouldn't be then you know, sacrificing their own time, their own money, their own energy to get these qualifications. There might at least be something that recognises that they're doing all of this (FG10, HEI24).

It might be about opportunity as opposed to requirement because, you know, if you look at PME graduates, most of them engage very happily in Droichead and they get a huge amount out of it. I've just finished supervising a student on a masters who was looking at experiences of Droichead and they were broadly positive. So, I think FE teachers, graduates of ITE programmes in FE would love to engage in that and maybe longer serving teachers would love to engage in it. But there has to be opportunity, or it would be beneficial if there was a structured opportunity as opposed to [a] do it yourself kind of approach (FG10, HEI24).

Diversity and Inclusion

FET teaching was not seen as homogenous as the primary and post-primary teaching bodies, given that a variety of pathways into FET draws in teachers with a range of backgrounds. However, there was a consensus that *'I don't think it's diverse enough'* (FG12, ES29) and around the need for more inclusive recruitment practices to better reflect the learner population. Participants emphasised the importance of connecting with learners from diverse backgrounds to improve engagement and outcomes and the need for greater diversity in the teaching profession to enable that connection.

I think we can do better in FET with our diversity amongst our practitioner staff and I think that would be equally recognised across the sector through senior management (FG11, ES28).

The FET teacher identity and the FET identity more broadly is hugely diverse... We need to reflect that in the people who teach them (FG10, HEI24).

Particularly in Community Ed, again, I'm going to go back to Community Ed and literacy because that's probably not uniquely, but it's probably where we see the most diversity ... in our learner population (FG11, ES28).

4.4.4 Sectoral Identity

In the largest FET focus group, which included five representatives from various higher education institutions and one education stakeholder, a discussion emerged regarding sector identity and the terminology used to define it. The term "FET" is perceived as imposed and does not accurately represent the sector's core values. Additionally, there is a strong desire to prioritise educational values rather than economic or vocational perspectives.

And I think it did more than just name the sector. It decided to leave off names. Do you know it left behind words and ethos and histories and it focused in on the one that is most closely aligned with that kind of progression work economy. So, it's kind of like the economy over society and that... (FG14, HEI30).

Participants were encouraged to propose alternative titles, leading to a consensus that the favoured terminology should encompass “Adult, Community and Further Education.” When discussing “Training,” they acknowledged that the philosophical and sociological foundations of education are essential for any training that is integrated within an “Education” framework. Participants drew comparisons between the FET sector and the primary and early years sectors, rather than the post-primary sector, emphasising that the focus on andragogy - though not explicitly mentioned - was more crucial than specific content knowledge. However, knowledge and skills are equally acknowledged as essential. The acronym “FACET” (Further, Adult and Community Education and Training) was proposed.

And even the “T” part like, you know, you were talking about the training part.... And I was thinking, yeah, we do have more in common with kind of early years and primary because it's what you're doing in further education is you're facilitating learning in different spaces with different groups as opposed to teaching something specific (FG14, HEI30).

The field of practice is there isn't a subject. It is a varying time. It's an ontological vocation whatever way you want to talk about it, but it's not about a subject (FG14, HEI28)

Participants also felt it was important to declare a space for naming of roles within the sector.

4.5 Professionalisation of teaching and teacher education and teachers' professional capital

In reviewing the entire data set, two further findings are important to note in capturing some important features of teaching and teacher education in Ireland: (i) the prevailing discourse on teaching and teacher education, and (ii) the collective political and professional capital of teachers and teacher unions.

4.5.1 Professionalisation of teaching and teacher education

Finding 13: The professionalisation of teaching and teacher education is the prevailing discourse in relation to teaching and teacher education in Ireland among the relevant stakeholders, i.e. there was no evidence of any drive for deregulation.

While we did not ask participants directly how they would describe the prevailing discourse on teaching and teacher education in Ireland, there was broad agreement that the professionalising focus of contemporary policies were generally seen as positive and supportive of teachers and teacher education. Significantly, there was no advocacy for the

system to move toward the deregulation of teaching or teacher education. Rather, the emphasis was overwhelmingly on robust engagement with, and contestation of, ideas, policies, and practices as a means of enhancing the profession. Where a somewhat different emphasis emerged, it was among FET participants, who advocated for a stronger sectoral identity and more robust structures to address their expressed marginal status compared to the primary and post-primary sectors. Nonetheless, the prevailing discourse across sectors was one of professionalisation, albeit it with distinct contextual emphases in FET compared to the primary and post-primary sectors.

4.5.2 Professional capital of teachers and status of teaching

Finding 14: Teachers and teacher unions were perceived as possessing substantial professional capital within the education system, in a context where teachers and teaching are highly respected in society.

One teacher union participant conveyed this particularly powerfully, urging the TPJ study to pay attention to how teachers and teacher unions are positioned in terms of professional and political capital:

...you would really need to factor that in if you're trying to understand the teachers because it's at a collective level, the political capital which their profession has...the collective impact of the political capital of the teacher unions on education policy, on working conditions of teachers on how to teachers feel about that (FG15, ES33).

In order to understand the distinctive position of teachers and teacher unions, the participant argued that the collective impact of the political capital of teacher unions is very significant, and that there is a noteworthy presence of teachers in important spaces in the education ecosystem including, for example, their involvement in curriculum policymaking.

But I do think we need to remember ... there is still a high demand for teachers. It's a very well-respected profession and we've a lot of work to keep it like that. But at the moment there is high demand (FG3, HEI14).

Teaching is not valued in other countries in the same way that it is traditionally in Ireland, and I think it's something we do underestimate. You know, there's a great sense of pride when a student, you know, finishes, maybe their post-primary education and they go on to a teacher education course. It's still valued in society, in in Ireland, we have very low attrition rates from teaching even compared (FG4, HEI20).

.. the education workforce is still valued highly as being experts, they are well respected. And that's not and that's something that other countries actually struggle with in terms of recruitment. It is still valued, it's a valued profession in this country (FG8, ES23).

4.6 Conclusion: primary and post-primary

In relation to primary and post-primary teacher education, participants acknowledged several push and pull factors impacting the attractiveness of the teaching profession in Ireland. On balance, it was felt that at present teaching continues to be an attractive profession in Ireland but that there exist significant and potentially rising barriers and deterrents that militate against teacher supply and retention. Participants noted broader barriers such as the cost-of-living challenges, precarious working conditions, teacher workloads etc., as well as acknowledging contextual factors around school culture and leadership. There was broad agreement that there is a lack of diversity in the Irish teaching profession. Removing structural barriers was seen as a prerequisite for promoting diversity in the teaching profession. However, participants also recognised that there is work to be undertaken to advance more inclusive expectations around what defines a 'good teacher'.

4.7 Conclusion: FET teacher education

The research findings from focus groups with FET sector stakeholders and HEI providers reveal a complex landscape of opportunities and challenges within the FET sector in Ireland, making it distinct from the primary and post-primary sectors. The growth in formal Initial Teacher Education (ITE) qualifications is seen as a positive development, enhancing professional identity and addressing the need for professional recognition. However, challenges such as the lack of alignment in Teaching Council registration requirements and the precarious working conditions are viewed as impacting on recruitment and retention, indicating a need for systemic reforms. The absence of parity of esteem between FET and other educational sectors further exacerbates these issues, highlighting the requirement for equitable contract terms and support structures. Although CPD opportunities exist, they are often informal and reliant on personal motivation, underscoring the need for a structured framework to support continuous professional development, and participants highlight the lack of a systematic approach to induction. Additionally, the sector's diversity and inclusion efforts need to progress to better reflect the diverse learner population, improving engagement and outcomes.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This report has drawn on focus group and individual interviews with a wide range of teacher education stakeholders spanning primary, post-primary and further education and training (FET). This concluding chapter highlights the main themes generated from the interviews, namely, the impact of policy developments over the last fifteen years and the quality of initial teacher education, the greater focus on the role of school placement, the continuum of teacher professional development, teacher supply and the lack of diversity in the teaching profession. Because FET emerges as quite distinct from the primary and post-primary sectors, the main themes that centre on the diversity of qualification pathways and employment structures within the sector are addressed separately.

5.1.1 Prevailing professionalisation discourse on teaching and teacher education

The prevailing professionalisation discourse on teaching and teacher education is an important context for this report and the entire TPJ study. First, it points to the significance of the wider political and policy environment for teaching and teacher education. Second, as we outlined earlier in this report, how a system responds to the four issues of regulation, standards, curriculum of teacher education and accountability provides a landscape within which stakeholder perspectives need to be located and from where they can be better understood. Third, the prevailing professionalisation discourse is likely to impact the views of teachers in their first decade. TPJ Reports will be published annually in 2026, 2027, 2028 and 2029 based on the findings of surveys of the three cohorts along with individual teacher case studies. These annual reports will provide insights into how the wider discourse influences the professional journeys of early career teachers.

5.1.2 Teacher education as a site of policy prioritisation and policy intervention: lived experience, consensus (or not) and questions of quality

Over the last thirty years, both teaching and teacher education have become policy priorities and the focus of significant policy interventions for governments around the world (Darling Hammond, 2021; OECD 2005; Biesta et al, 2021). In the context of that unmistakable international trend, teaching and teacher education in Ireland have, over the last twenty years, been characterised by policy prioritisation and policy interventions. Perhaps the most significant finding from this TE stakeholder study is that participants provided very significant evidence of both policy prioritisation and accumulating policy interventions vis-a-vis teacher education in Ireland.

As such, the findings of this TPJ teacher education stakeholder component of the wider TPJ longitudinal study of teachers' professional journeys strongly points to how stakeholders have experienced the last fifteen years as a period of significant change in relation to initial teacher education, as well as the extent to which ITE is linked to induction in the context of the continuum of teacher education. This overarching finding is evidenced in a number of ways by stakeholders including: (i) their accounts of participating in the early period of reform (2010-15), (ii) the broad consensus around the direction of TE over fifteen years, with detailed accounts of both early and more recent phases of ITE reform, (iii) the increased prominence placed on school placement in ITE and associated challenges in and opportunities for cohering ITE, (iv) diverging views on both the value of the second year of the PME and, to a lesser extent, ITE graduates' readiness to teach, (v) stakeholders' overarching perceptions that teaching in contemporary classrooms at primary and post-primary level is, in many ways, even more complex than heretofore, and (vi) perhaps, most notably, stakeholders' investment in, and at times exasperation with, the dynamics of teacher shortages/supply.

Specifically, a diverse range of teacher education stakeholders provided an array of insights into the design, processes and outcomes of ITE. Underpinning participants' perspectives on the design, processes and outcomes of initial teacher education are views about teaching quality and associated necessary features of initial teacher education. In that sense, we agree with Darling Hammond (2021) that "in the debates about how best to prepare teachers, definitions of teaching quality often lurk under the surface and only occasionally come explicitly to the fore" (p. 295). As such, the question of quality in relation to both teaching and teacher education was consequentially evident in stakeholder discussions in various ways in this concluding chapter in which questions of quality are interwoven with many discussion points. At this point, while acknowledging the myriad of challenges associated with defining and evidencing quality (Fenstermacher and Richardson, 2005), we note some overarching quality-related issues as they arose in the context of the diverse TE stakeholders interviewed for this report. First, there was broad agreement on the valued roles that both higher education institutions and schools currently play in relation to initial teacher education in terms of their respective contributions to ITE. Significantly, there was no indication that stakeholders were, for example, arguing for an exclusively school-based design of ITE as has been the direction in some jurisdictions internationally. As such, it is reasonable to conclude that stakeholders concur with the university-based model of teacher education endorsed in both the Teaching Council accreditation cycles (Teaching Council, 2011; Teaching Council, 2020), the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategy (Department of Education, 2011) and in both Sahlberg reports (Sahlberg et al, 2012; Sahlberg, 2018).

Second, questions of quality were especially prominent in relation to discussions about new configurations of ITE (perhaps most notably the role of school placement), the perceived readiness of ITE graduates and perspectives of stakeholders on the overall policy directions of ITE in Ireland within an international context.

Third, questions of quality were evident in stakeholder discussion of the need for programme-level studies of initial teacher education to understand ITE programme outcomes.

Fourth, questions of quality were particularly evident in the diverging discussions vis-à-vis whether the 2-year PME was actually adding value or not to PME graduates compared to the 1-year PDE which had been the consecutive model of ITE for nearly a hundred years up until 2014. Fifth, significant points were noted by stakeholders in relation to gaps, tensions and resource challenges that speak to aspects where the quality of ITE and its graduates might need to be addressed. The next phases of the TPJ study commencing in Autumn 2025 which will follow the professional journeys of three cohorts of ITE graduates (2019, 2022 and 2026) will provide important system-level opportunity to deepen understanding of these three aforementioned issues, namely, the roles that both higher education institutions and schools play in relation to ITE, questions of quality vis-à-vis teaching and teacher education along with gaps, tensions and resource challenges, among a range of other issues pertaining to ITE within the context of the continuum focused on the first decade after ITE.

5.1.3 The 'practice turn': A prioritisation of school-based learning

Emphasis on school-based settings as a prioritised site for future teacher learning is a defining feature of contemporary reform of teacher education. This emphasis on practice-based learning creates distinctive opportunities for future teacher learning that are 'likely to position student teachers differently, reframe the knowledge-practice relationship and provide some shared as well as distinctive learning opportunities at the system level' (Conway and Munthe, 2014, p.148). Stakeholders emphatically valued the increased emphasis on school placement in ITE. The high value placed on more and varied school-based learning points to the prioritisation of practice as a source of learning and application. Stakeholders, however, affirmed the current model of ITE that combines both university-based and school-based elements. Their perspectives did not support the mirroring of moves in other countries towards disruption of the current system, or deregulation. Instead, the value placed on the increase in school-based learning evident now seemed to relate to rectifying a previous perceived deficit of opportunity to observe and apply university-based learning elements to practice.

The 'obviousness' of teaching as a practical activity and the undisputed need for school-based experiences as part of the learning process for future teachers can, however, mask some important complexities in framing both teaching practices and the process of learning to teach (Conway and Munthe, 2014). The involvement of future teachers in supporting schools during teacher supply shortages is one recent example that has tested the positioning of future teacher learning within the system. This example demonstrates that intentional action is needed to ensure that future teacher learning is protected and that intended learning

results at both a local and system level. The stakeholders expressed concern that more action is needed in relation to the current gap between the potential value and operation of school-university partnership. They called for system-wide investment to ensure alignment of purpose between schools and universities. Their call aligns with a recent thematic review of school-university partnership in Ireland which was critical of the lack of investment and attention to the partners within the school-university partnership (Farrell, 2023; Sloan and Dolan, 2025). Sustained support for school-based teacher educators (treoraí) is essential to ensure that future teacher learning, regardless of context, is visible; systematically attended to and prioritised (Mitchell, Young, Hayes and de Paor, 2024). Sloan and Dolan (2025) concluded:

This is important in the context of policy and guidelines only being able to go so far in supporting student teachers as ultimately individual relationships are required in partnership development and enhancement. But of course, this can only be achieved if partners receive sufficient support and resources, the ones they have been requesting for three decades (p.18).

It is important to consider what direction these findings about the value stakeholders place on school-based learning can provide for the TPJ research study. First, the partnership between early career teachers and the programmes they leave merit interrogation with consideration of how early career teachers' entry into the teaching profession is scaffolded and how continuity of learning is promoted. Findings may contribute to current debates related to lack of investment in partnership between schools and universities. Without sufficient investment and support, there is a risk that authentic mentor support will not be available to early career teachers either. Second, concerns are expressed for early career teachers' learning being masked or lost in the busyness of schools if not prioritised. Paying attention to how both the system and school levels promote, enable and authenticate early career teachers' learning relative to other aspects of their teacher role can provide insight on how the system operates, or not, to support early career teachers' development.

5.1.4 The 'well prepared' newly qualified teacher... adaptive expertise

Any discussion of how well prepared newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are will inevitably address their preparedness for ambitious teaching in increasingly diverse classrooms. Of course, this twin challenge - complex classrooms and enacting new curricula - arise for all teachers, not only those at the beginning of their careers. As such, numerous questions are worth considering here, for example:

- How well prepared are NQTs and early career teachers to enact inclusive classroom practices to meet the needs of all learners, supporting those with English as an Additional Language (EAL), Special Educational Needs (SEN) and other forms of diversity?

- To what extent are early career teachers through ITE, induction, or professional learning supported to teach in different contexts?
 - For example, primary versus post-primary, mainstream versus special settings, DEIS versus non-DEIS settings?
- Across all three sectors, that is, primary, post-primary and FET, how prepared are early career teachers to support the student learning in classrooms with high number of students from different ethnic backgrounds with perhaps varied levels of English?

Two points are noteworthy here. First, the view expressed by the focus groups participants and reviewer feedback on the draft report raised important questions about how we understand and frame 'preparedness' as a concept? As one reviewer noted:

"...very well prepared' to do what? Teaching is obviously a very complex activity involving different content areas and activities and different contexts.... For example, were they well prepared for teaching literacy and numeracy but not for handling behaviour? Were they well-prepared for the inclusion of pupils with SEN in the mainstream classroom? Were they well prepared for teaching mainstream classes but not for special classes or for mainstream schools? Well-prepared for non-DEIS contexts but not DEIS contexts?"

Second, the TPJ research with teachers in their first decade will provide an opportunity to address these and related questions about preparedness to teach both in terms of both its meaning and its enactment in different contexts. Rather than thinking of preparedness in binary terms (well prepared vs not-well prepared), it is more productive to frame it in terms of 'adaptive expertise'. Significantly, the 2020 *Céim* standards for initial teacher education (Teaching Council 2020) explicitly introduced the concept of 'adaptive expertise' (Hatano and Inagaki, 1986; Le Fevre et al., 2016).

The important question of early career teacher preparedness is closely tied to the fundamental question of teacher quality. As Anthony et al (2016) observed, in many parts of the world, the desire to ensure the preparation of 'quality' teachers has led to:

"unprecedented and politicized attention to teacher preparation/certification and the policies and accountability systems that govern them and measure their effectiveness" (Cochran-Smith and Villegas, 2015, p10.)

In the New Zealand context, Aitken et al. (2013) make a strong case for linking adaptive expertise to expectations of graduating teachers, arguing that teachers should be "...inquiring professionals who are focused on better learning for themselves and their students" (p. 30) and that effective teaching is inherently context-dependent with "adaptive expertise as the hallmark of a professional teacher" (p. 4).

Framed from an adaptive expertise perspective, future TPJ data collection with early career teachers will provide an important opportunity to develop a nuanced understanding of how teachers grow in their capacity to enact ambitious curriculum in complex classrooms.

5.1.5 Recognising and supporting the continuum but advocating for a stronger and more authentic relationship across ITE, Droichead, and Cosán

In alignment with previous international and national research (Darling-Hammond, 2017; O'Gallchoir et al., 2024), commissioned reports (Sahlberg, 2012; 2019) and policy texts (Teaching Council, 2017; 2020), there is a broad agreement and acceptance among the stakeholders interviewed of the teacher education continuum as the guiding framework for lifelong professional learning. Stakeholders considered, however, that more strong and authentic communication across the three stages is needed to strengthen and support teachers' development. Interestingly, while there is an appreciation of *Droichead* as a continuation of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), they caution about lack of awareness of this continuity or alignment for student teachers, to the extent that it is considered as compliance-driven rather than developmental.

There is also agreement of the important positioning and role of ITE in developing an awareness for student teachers of the need for learning across the teaching career, but some considerations are made for the need for "more authentic links", in particular with *Cosán*. The findings suggest that the relationship between ITE and *Cosán* is fragmented, sometimes non-existent and support is needed for more dialogue and interaction. Finally, stakeholders highlighted the need to create stronger communication patterns and connections, beyond stakeholders' invited talks in ITE, to know more about the goal and reality across the continuum.

The need for ITE stakeholders to have a more prominent role in stakeholder conversations about continuing professional development post-graduation, and policy development, was highlighted. Further, they pointed to potential ways to create stronger links across ITE, Droichead and Cosán, in particular to support teachers in their role as teacher researchers. Some caution was expressed in relation to the extent to which ITE employers, given the nature and time commitment of this type of work, would value this type of support and stronger connections in the continuum or not. In summary, stakeholders believed that there is space to create stronger linkages across the continuum of ITE, Droichead, and Cosán, and this would strengthen and support teachers' professional journeys.

5.1.6 The varied professional landscape: Navigating diverse paths in teacher professional development and support

Pre-service and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) encounter notable diversity and variability across various aspects of their professional development, including Initial Teacher Education, School Placement, Droichead, and Cosán.

Stakeholders highlighted that student teachers' experiences during School Placement can vary, both due to the diverse nature of the school contexts in which placements take place and the differing structural approaches adopted by ITE institutions. Each institutional model brings its own affordances and challenges. While much of the stakeholder commentary focused on inter-institutional variation, the literature also supports the value of intra-individual variation in placement experiences. Bartholome (2017) notes that exposure to a range of teaching contexts - such as different grade levels, student populations, and levels of supervisory support - can help student teachers develop a broad and adaptable skill set. Similarly, Ní Chróinín and O'Sullivan (2014) advocate for the importance of "low-stakes" teaching placements, which allow student teachers to experiment, take risks, and receive constructive feedback in a supportive environment.

The Droichead induction programme, while viewed by some as a positive and necessary bridge into the profession, was frequently criticised for inconsistency. Participants referred to the quality of the Droichead experience as being highly dependent on the culture within individual schools; some schools offer "incredible" leadership and support, while others place less emphasis, leading to a lack of consistency across settings. Despite these criticisms regarding inconsistency, a study by Uí Choistealbha et al. (2021) found that most NQTs reported a positive and supportive experience with Droichead, identifying professional conversations, professional learning activities, and observations as the most worthwhile aspects. A high percentage perceived Droichead as a high-quality process, and many felt their motivation as a teacher had been further developed by engaging in it.

Similarly, Cosán demonstrates significant variability in teacher awareness and engagement, with many educators performing professional development activities that align with its principles without explicitly recognising them as part of the Cosán framework. This engagement is notably inconsistent across different teacher demographics; newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are more familiar with Cosán's language and competencies, while more experienced teachers often show resistance and suggest a lack of perceived value. Furthermore, differences exist between the primary and post-primary sectors, with the greater uptake at primary level largely driven by EPV (Extra Personal Vacation) days, alongside general critiques of in-service quality and time constraints, contributing to a non-uniform professional development landscape. Conversely, the common vocabulary and consistent

competencies introduced by Céim are seen as beneficial, potentially providing a familiar framework as teachers progress from ITE through Droichead to the Cosán framework. The findings highlight additional unique challenges across the continuum for newly qualified teachers in the Irish-medium sector. For example, within initial teacher education, the relatively limited availability of courses to prepare teachers who wish to specialise in Irish-medium education was identified as problematic. Equally the extent to which those pursuing these courses receive adequate support with the language was questioned. Across the continuum, there was an acknowledgement of the increased demands of teaching in the Irish-medium sector relative to the English-medium sector. For example, stakeholders highlighted the workload attached to teaching in the sector due to the additional competencies required, the vast discrepancy in terms of the teaching resources available, alongside the need to communicate bilingually to parents etc. Given these demands, stakeholders identified the importance of newly qualified teachers in the Irish-medium sector valuing and embracing the affordances of Cosán and availing of various bespoke professional learning opportunities beyond Droichead. Within TPJ, it is essential that the lived experiences of newly qualified Irish-medium teachers are captured to gain a complete picture regarding the unique demands and challenges that this subgroup of newly qualified teachers face.

5.1.7 Teacher supply is an on-going (growing) challenge, teaching remains an attractive profession

Acknowledging the challenges to teacher supply raised by participants, at present teaching was broadly seen as continuing to be an attractive profession by stakeholders. Participants noted that, for the most part, application numbers are still strong for programmes of initial teacher education, suggesting that teaching remains attractive as a prospective career. The steady increase in undergraduate ITE student numbers and consistent numbers undertaking taught master's programmes (including PME) were highlighted by Conway et al. (2025) in Report 1. However, there was a sense of mounting barriers facing the teaching profession. One participant suggested there had been a drop in the calibre of applicants for post-primary teaching in recent years. Participants were apprehensive about the perceived intensification of teacher workloads and about the impact that the rising cost of living is having on the retention of practicing teachers in Ireland and on student teachers' ability to complete their ITE programme of study. Linked to potential increased workloads and demands of the teaching job were concerns around teacher wellbeing and the potential for teacher burnout. This is reflective of the previous findings of Morgan and Nic Craith (2015) who explored the workload, stress and resilience of primary teachers in Ireland.

There were concerns for the future attractiveness of the profession linked to perceived growth in negative media representations, apparent better working conditions in other jurisdictions, and salaries not keeping pace with rising costs. As highlighted by Harford and Fleming (2023, p. 42), cost of living challenges are not unique to Ireland and a common barrier

to teacher supply can be “the cost of housing particularly in urban areas”. Mirroring the challenges noted by Harford and Fleming (2023), participants feared that newly qualified teachers will be prohibited from purchasing a house or starting a family. Higher Education Institution (HEI) stakeholders noted that by international comparison, Ireland was still attracting strong candidates into initial teacher education and recognised the high academic standards maintained. They also observed that student teachers were entering the profession for the ‘right reasons’, the privilege of working with children and young people. However, this must be balanced against participants’ concerns around precarious contracts and conditions for many newly qualified teachers, perceived limited opportunities for promotion and progression, as well as the apparent attractiveness of conditions and opportunities in other countries.

The importance of context when considering teacher supply and retention was stressed by many participants. The uniqueness of school contexts and associated school culture was noted as holding significant potential to impact teacher supply and retention. School management and in particular principals were seen by many as essential to the development of school culture. A welcoming and open school culture was advanced by participants as a prerequisite for student teacher learning and successful progression over school placement. It was also seen as fundamental to the recruitment and retention of in-service teachers. On the other hand, negative school culture was understood to potentially discourage applicants from applying for posts and holds the potential to damage teacher retention. Mannix-McNamara et al. (2021) also noted that a poor workplace culture is linked to an increase in teachers’ desire to leave.

The geographical location of schools was seen as another contextual factor that can impact teacher recruitment and retention. Reflecting the work of Harford and Fleming (2023), participants noted that counties and areas with high costs of living and limited accommodation options can struggle to recruit teachers. Equally, very remote areas can present challenges for teacher recruitment and retention. Participants also noted unique contextual challenges across primary and post-primary schools, as well as for Irish-medium settings. For example, participants observed the potential for the Irish language requirement to be a barrier for entry to primary school teaching. Some concerns were raised around the quality of applicants for post-primary initial teacher education and the ability to recruit teachers for certain subject areas. A lack of tailored resources for those teaching in Irish-medium settings was highlighted as a challenge.

5.1.8 The teaching profession is not diverse in Ireland

Reflective of previous research findings within the Irish context (Darmody and Smyth, 2016; Heinz and Keane, 2018), there was broad agreement across participant groups that the teaching profession in Ireland is not diverse. Participants postulated several reasons for this

lack of diversity. Some of the proposed reasons were structural such as the entry requirements for and cost of completing initial teacher education courses, the denominational structure of primary schools and the requirement to have Irish, as well as the teacher registration procedures. Other reasons for the lack of diversity were attributed to school culture and broader socially constructed perceptions of what characterises a 'good teacher'. One of the ten characteristics of a good teacher identified by Miller (2012, p. 37) was "a teacher who knows grammar well and who can explain something on the spot if necessary". Such rigid expectations can act as a deterrent to the recruitment of neurodiverse teachers, for example. Consequently, unchallenged social and cultural expectations around what a teacher should be were seen as a barrier to the promotion of a more diverse teaching profession in Ireland.

Participants' suggestions for addressing some of the structural barriers impacting teacher supply and retention generally centred around the early provision of permanent contracts, enhanced salaries to address cost of living challenges, greater opportunity for progression within the profession, reduced workloads, enhanced supports for principals and school management, as well as further supports around teacher wellbeing and resources for teachers. Selection into teaching and the lack of diversity of the profession were seen as closely intertwined, with suggestions centring on the development of alternative pathways and financial support, as well as broader support and mentoring for underrepresented groups. The tackling of structural impediments was seen as essential to helping break down social and cultural barriers to teaching over time.

5.1.9 FET as a distinct TE sector - welcome for ITE qualifications yet mismatch of structures

The FET sector emerges from stakeholder accounts as distinct from the primary and post-primary sectors. The diversity of provision within the sector has resulted in staff having a variety of qualification pathways and being subject to varying terms and conditions. Stakeholders point to the lack of parity of esteem between FET and other education sectors (see McGuinness et al., 2014) as well as variation within the sector on the basis of qualifications (Rami and O'Kelly, 2021). The development and growth of formal ITE qualifications for FET is seen by stakeholders as a positive development, enhancing the skills of practitioners entering the profession. At the same time, this has had unintended consequences for sectoral experts, who do not possess the qualifications for Teaching Council registration and thus are ineligible for permanent contracts, leading to staff turnover. Furthermore, teachers with post-primary ITE qualifications have the flexibility to move into FET teaching but there is no equivalent recognition of qualifications for those qualified in FET ITE.

The approach to professional development also differs markedly from that in the primary and post-primary sectors. There is a lack of formal induction processes with practice seen as

varying across ETBs and colleges. A Professional Learning and Development (PL&D) Hub has been established by ETBI and funded by SOLAS (Mullen, 2022). Nonetheless, engagement in CPD is seen as unstructured, based on the motivation of practitioners rather than reflecting a systematic and well-resourced approach at local level. Competition between providers is viewed as constraining the potential to develop communities of practice in the sector. For sectoral experts, occupational CPD is often prioritised over teacher/ curriculum-related CPD.

Overall, the research findings point to a mismatch between the needs of the FET sector and the structures in place for the attainment and recognition of qualifications, opportunities for initial and ongoing professional development, contractual arrangements and scope for promotion. Teaching Council registration covers only part of the system, excluding sectoral experts within FET colleges and other provision such as apprenticeship and adult and community education, in some ways mirroring the distinction between those on legacy post-primary contracts and all others. To date, the sector has not developed systematic processes for professional development analogous to Droichead and Cosán.

5.2 Conclusion: Valuable insights, positioning of stakeholders and longitudinal insight from teachers themselves

This Teachers Professional Journeys' (TPJ) study report highlights the valuable insights offered by stakeholders into the nature of initial teacher education (ITE), professional development and teacher supply for teachers in the primary, post-primary and FET sectors. In concluding, it is worthwhile locating their perspectives within the broader TPJ study.

In the first instance, the findings point to a number of research questions that can be addressed through the survey of, and interviews with, teachers themselves. A recurring theme in the focus group interviews was the variation—or lack of consistency—in experiences of school placement, the nature of Droichead supports within schools, and access to professional learning opportunities. The forthcoming teacher survey and interviews will enable an assessment of how such variation affects teacher experiences and outcomes, and which dimensions of this variation are most significant.

The findings also point to challenges in teacher recruitment from the perspective of principals and other stakeholders. By focusing on the first decade after ITE, the next phase of TPJ will generate insights into the key factors influencing job application and retention decisions, as well as the school-level characteristics that support long-term engagement in the profession. The nature of the interviews with stakeholders meant that they were often characterising the system as a whole, though most did point to important dimensions of variation in the system. Research with teachers will allow us to explore in greater detail the way in which context – of ITE, of school placement, of first employment and beyond – shapes teacher experiences and

trajectories, allowing for a more precise identification of what best enhances practice and professional learning and development and under what conditions.

The second issue relates to the positioning of stakeholder voices within the study as a whole. Findings from TPJ will be based on triangulation, integrating insights from different perspectives, those of stakeholders and of teachers at different stages of their career. It is worth noting that, by necessity, the stakeholder voice is that of an insider, someone well established in HEIs, unions or management bodies, and relates to part of the system, e.g. ITE versus management. Teachers themselves may take a different perspective, for example, on their preparedness to enter the profession and on the supports that enhance their development. Even more importantly, the longitudinal nature of the study means that we will capture the dynamics of integration into the profession and how teachers themselves experience the transition from ITE to employment and Drichead and hence to ongoing professional learning.

Third, the TPJ design—as a longitudinal study—offers significant potential to illuminate the nature of teacher learning and development across the continuum from ITE to induction and into continuing professional development (CPD). This stakeholder-focused report has drawn attention to the comparatively under-explored phase of teacher development following induction. TPJ findings will therefore not only address the transition from ITE to newly qualified teacher (NQT) status but will extend to the less well-researched period from years three to ten post-ITE (as outlined in the scoping review presented in *TPJ Report 1*).

Finally, this report contributes a unique dataset that enhances our understanding of initial teacher education and how it has evolved. It captures how stakeholders—drawing from diverse vantage points—perceive the origins, trajectories, and emerging impacts of a period of significant transformation in Irish teacher education across the primary, post-primary, and FET sectors.

References

- Akiba, M., Byun, S., Jiang, X., Kim, K., and Moran, A. J. (2023). Do teachers feel valued in society? Occupational value of the teaching profession in OECD countries. *AERA Open*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584231179184>
- Ahn, J., Wang, Y., & Lee, Y. (2023). Interplay between leadership and school-level conditions: A review of literature on the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 53(3), 681-703.
- Aitken, G., Sinnema, C., & Meyer, F. (2013). *Initial Teacher Education Outcomes: Standards for Graduating Teachers*. A paper for discussion. Auckland: University of Auckland.
- Anthony, G., Hunter, J., & Hunter, R. (2015). Prospective teachers development of adaptive expertise. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 49, 108-117.
- Barber, M., & Mourshed, M. (2007). *The McKinsey Report: How the world's best performing school systems come out on top*. London: McKinsey & Company
- Bartolome, S. J. (2017). Comparing field-teaching experiences: A longitudinal examination of preservice and first-year teacher perspectives. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 65(3), 264-286.
- Baxter, J., & Clarke, J. (2013). Farewell to the tick box inspector? Ofsted and the changing regime of school inspection in England. *Oxford Review of Education*, 39(5), 702-718.
- Beauchamp, C., and Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(2), 175-189.
- Beijaard, D., and Meijer, P. C. (2017). Developing the personal and professional in making a teacher identity. *The SAGE Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*, 1, 177-192.
- Biesta, G., Takayama, K., Kettle, M., and Heimans, S. (2021). Teacher education policy: part of the solution or part of the problem? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 49(5), 467-470.
- Bransford, J., Darling-Hammond, L., & Lepage, P. (2007) Introduction. (1-39) In (eds) Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (Eds.). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Hayfield, N. (2022). 'A starting point for your journey, not a map': Nikki Hayfield in conversation with Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke about thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 19(2), 424-445.

Brennan, C., Bowles, R., & Murtagh, E. (2023). The best of both worlds? The impact of the initial teacher education physical education specialism programme on generalist teachers' self-efficacy, beliefs, and practices. *Education 3-13*, 51(4), 695–709. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2021.2001557>

Bronkhorst, L. H., Meijer, P. C., Koster, B., & Vermunt, J. D. (2014). Deliberate practice in teacher education. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(1), 18-34.

Call, K. (2018). Professional teaching standards: A comparative analysis of their history, implementation and efficacy. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, 43(3), 93-108.

Ceylan, E., and Özbal, E.Ö. (2020). The effects of extrinsic and intrinsic factors on teachers' job satisfaction in TALIS 2018. *International Online Journal of Primary Education*, 9(2), 244- 259.

Cochran-Smith, M. 2005. The new teacher education: For better or for worse? *Educational Researcher* 34 (6): 181–206.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Villegas, A. M. (2015). Framing teacher preparation research: An overview of the field, part 1. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 66(1), 7-20.

Collie, R. J., Malmberg, L. E., Martin, A. J., Sammons, P., and Morin, A. J. (2020). A multilevel person-centered examination of teachers' workplace demands and resources: Links with work-related well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 626.

Conway, P. F., and Artiles, A. J. (2005). Foundations of a sociocultural perspective on teacher performance assessment. In F. Peterman (ed.) *Designing performance assessment systems for urban teacher preparation*, 21-48. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Conway, Paul; Leavy, Aisling; Smyth, Emer; Calderón, Antonio; Fitzgerald, Johanna; Hourigan, Mairéad; et al. (2025). *Teachers' professional journeys during the first decade longitudinal study: reviews of literature*. University of Limerick. Report. <https://doi.org/10.34961/researchrepository-ul.28399763.v1>

Conway, P. F., and Munthe, E. (2014). The practice turn: Research-informed clinical teacher education in two countries. In Smeby, J., Sutphen, M. (Eds.) *From vocational to professional education* (pp. 146-163). Routledge.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher education around the world: What can we learn from international practice?. *European journal of teacher education*, 40(3), 291-309.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2021). Defining teaching quality around the world. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(3), 295-308.

Darmody, M., and Smyth, E. (2016). *Entry to programmes of initial teacher education*. Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute.

Ensign, J., Mays Woods, A., Hodges Kulinna, P. (2020). My Turn to Make a Difference: Efficacy Trends among Induction Physical Educators. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 91(1):115-126.

Ellis, V., and Childs, A. (2023) Introducing the Crisis: The state, the market, the universities and teacher education in England. In edited by, V. Ellis. *Teacher Education in Crisis: The State, the Market and the Universities in England*, London, Bloomsbury Academic.

Farrell, R. (2023). The school–university nexus and degrees of partnership in initial teacher education. *Irish Educational Studies*, 42(1), 21-38.

Fenstermacher, G. D., and Richardson, V. (2005). On making determinations of quality in teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 107(1), 186-213.

Findlay, M., and Bryce, T. G. (2012). From teaching physics to teaching children: Beginning teachers learning from pupils. *International Journal of Science Education*, 34(17), 2727-2750.

Fitzsimons, S., & Smith, D. S. (2025). “Just plough on and pretend it’s not happening”: Understanding burnout in teacher educators in Ireland and the United Kingdom. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 9, 100491.

Foley, C., & Murphy, M. (2015). Burnout in Irish teachers: Investigating the role of individual differences, work environment and coping factors. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 50, 46-55.

Goodwin, A. L. (2021). Teaching standards, globalisation, and conceptions of teacher professionalism. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(1), 5-19.

Greenberg, J., Putman, H., and Walsh, K. (2014). *Training Our Future Teachers: Classroom Management. Revised*. Washington: National Council on Teacher Quality.

Guba, E. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1989), *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA.

- Guo, L., and Wang, J. (2021). Relationships between teacher autonomy, collaboration, and critical thinking focused instruction: A cross-national study. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 106, 101730.
- Harford, J., and Fleming, B. (2023). Teacher supply in Ireland: anatomy of a crisis. *Irish Educational Studies*, 44(1), 41–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2023.2222709>
- Hatano, G., & Inagaki, K. (1986). Two courses of expertise. In H. W. Stevenson, H. Azuma, & K. Hakuta (Eds.), *Child development and education in Japan* (pp. 262–272). New York: W H Freeman/Times Books/ Henry Holt & Co
- Heinz, M., and Keane, E. (2018). Socio-demographic composition of primary initial teacher education entrants in Ireland. *Irish Educational Studies*, 37(4), 523-543.
- Hordern, J., & Brooks, C. (2023). The core content framework and the 'new science' of educational research. *Oxford review of education*, 49(6), 800-818.
- Hordern, J., & Brooks, C. (2024). Towards instrumental trainability in England? The 'official pedagogy' of the core content framework. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 72(1), 5-22.
- Ingvarson, L., Elliott, A., Kleinhenz, E., & McKenzie, P. (2006). *Teacher education accreditation: A review of national and international trends and practices*. Melbourne: AITSL.
- Kelly, A. E., & Leavy, A. (2013). The design space of student learning: who is accountable and accountable for what?. Research in Education Related to Teacher Accountability [Special Issue]. *Irish Educational Studies*, 32(1), 1-6.
- Killeavy, M. (2001). Teacher education in Ireland: The induction and continuing professional development of primary teachers. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 24(2), 115–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760120095525>
- Kitching, K. (2009). Teachers' negative experiences and expressions of emotion: Being true to yourself or keeping you in your place? *Irish Educational Studies*, 28(2), 141– 154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03323310902884201>
- Kitching, K., Morgan, M., & O'Leary, M. (2009). It's the little things: Exploring the importance of commonplace events for early-career teachers' motivation. *Teachers and Teaching*, 15(1), 43–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600802661311>.
- Kozina, E. (2013). Newly qualified teachers' reflections on the quality of initial teacher education in the Republic of Ireland. *Action in Teacher Education*, 35(5–6), 405–417. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2013.846182>

Lammert, C. (2023) How do teachers use inquiry and advocacy as curriculum? A longitudinal study, *Action in Teacher Education*, 45(3), 203-221.

Lazarides, R., Watt, H.M.G., Richardson, P.W. (2020). Teachers' classroom management self-efficacy, perceived classroom management and teaching contexts from beginning until mid-career, *Learning and Instruction*, 69, 101346.

Le Fevre, D., Timperley, H., & Ell, F. (2016). Curriculum and pedagogy: The future of teacher professional learning and the development of adaptive expertise. *The SAGE handbook of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment*, 2, 309-324.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985), *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 1st ed., Sage Publications Inc, Newbury Park.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1986), "But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation", *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, 30, 73-84.

Louden, W. (2000). Standards for standards: The development of Australian professional standards for teaching. *Australian journal of education*, 44(2), 118-134.

Ma, A., McMaugh, A. and Cavanagh, M. (2022). The development of teacher self-efficacy from preservice to early career teacher: a systematic review of development and methodological quality in longitudinal research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 45(5), 450-465.

Mannix-McNamara, P., Hickey, N., MacCurtain, S., and Blom, N. (2021). The dark side of school culture. *Societies*, 11(3), 87.

Mayer, D., & Mills, M. (2021). Professionalism and teacher education in Australia and England. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(1), 45-61.

Menter, I. (2022). Maintaining quality in teacher education: a contemporary global challenge? *Child Studies*, (1), 87-105

McGuinness, S., Bergin, A., Kelly, E., McCoy, S., Smyth, E., Whelan, A., and Banks, J. (2014). *Further education and training in Ireland: Past, present and future*. Dublin: ESRI.

Martell, C. C. (2013). Learning to teach history as interpretation: A longitudinal study of beginning teachers. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, 37(1), 17-31.

Martell, C. C. (2022). A longitudinal study of beginning elementary teachers' beliefs and inquiry-based practices in the history classroom. *Teacher Development*, 26(5), 627-643.

Maulana, R., Helms-Lorenz, M., and van de Grii, W. (2015). A longitudinal study of induction on the acceleration of growth in teaching quality of beginning teachers through the eyes of their students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 51, 225-245.

Maulana, R., Helms-Lorenz, M. (2016) Observations and student perceptions of the quality of preservice teachers' teaching behaviour: construct representation and predictive quality. *Learning Environments Research* 19, 335–357.

Miller, P. (2012). Ten characteristics of a good teacher. *English Teaching Forum*, 50(1), 36-38.

Mitchell, E., Young, A. M., Hayes, M., and de Paor, D. (2024). A moral madness between policy and practice in the caring role of the cooperating teacher in school placement in Ireland. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 47(5), 988-1004.

Morgan, M., and NicCraith, D. (2015). Workload, stress and resilience of primary teachers: Report of a survey of INTO members. *Irish Teachers' Journal*, 3(1), 9-20. <https://www.into.ie/app/uploads/2019/07/IrishTeachersJournal2015-1.pdf>

Jerrim, J., Morgan, A., and Sims, S. (2023). Teacher autonomy: Good for pupils? Good for teachers?. *British Educational Research Journal*, 49(6), 1187–1209.

Mockler, N. (2022). Teacher professional learning under audit: Reconfiguring practice in an age of standards. *Professional Development in Education*, 48(1), 166-180.

Mullen, J. (2022) <https://irelandseducationyearbook.ie/downloads/IEYB2022/YB2022-FET-04.pdf>

Mutton, T., & Burn, K. (2024). Does initial teacher education (in England) have a future? *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 50(2), 214-232.

Nally, M., & Ladden, B. (2020). An exploration of an induction programme for newly qualified teachers in a post-primary Irish school. *International Journal for Transformative Research*, 7(1), 19-25. ISSN: EISSN-2353-5415

Ní Chinseallaigh, E., Shipsey, M., Minihan, E., Gavin, B., & McNicholas, F. (2025). Burnout Persists in Teachers in Ireland Post-COVID-19: A Qualitative Follow Up Comparative Study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 22(4), 641.

Ní Chróinín, D., and O'Sullivan, M. (2014). From initial teacher education through induction and beyond: a longitudinal study of primary teacher beliefs. *Irish Educational Studies*, 33(4), 451-466.

Ní Chróinín, D. and O'Sullivan, M. (2016). Elementary classroom teachers' beliefs across time: Learning to teach physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 35(2), 97-106.

Ní Ríordáin, M., Neville, C., Prendergast, M., Dennehy, N., and Murphy, B. (2025). Perspectives of graduates and principals on master's level initial teacher education in Ireland. *Irish Educational Studies*, 1–23. DOI: 10.1080/03323315.2025.2479441

O'Gallchoir, C., Young, A. M., and MacPhail, A. (2024). Guerrilla Teacher Educators: Identity Considerations of School-Based Teacher Educators in Ireland. *Irish Educational Studies*, 1-17.

O'Sullivan, D., & Conway, P. F. (2016). Underwhelmed and playing it safe: Newly qualified primary teachers' mentoring and probationary-related experiences during induction. *Irish Educational Studies*, 35(4), 403–420. [hQps://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2016.1227720](https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2016.1227720)

Paine, L., & Zeichner, K. (2012). The local and the global in reforming teaching and teacher education. *Comparative Education Review*, 56(4), 569-583.

Pillen, M., Beijaard, D., and Den Brok, P. (2013). Professional identity tensions of beginning teachers. *Teachers and teaching*, 19(6), 660-678.

Qi, L.I.N., and Bin, Z. H. O. U. (2022). Can increasing teachers' teaching autonomy help improve instructional quality? — Based on the Results of TALIS 2018. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 17(2).

Sahlberg, P., (2019). *The Structure of Teacher Education in Ireland: Review of Progress in Implementing Reform*. Dublin: Higher Education Authority. <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/05/HEA-Structure-of-Teacher-Education.pdf>

Sahlberg, P., (2012). *Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland*. Dublin: Department of Education and Skills. <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/05/Review-of-Structure-of-Teacher-Education.pdf>

Santoro, N., Reid, J. A., Mayer, D., & Singh, M. (2012). Producing 'quality' teachers: The role of teacher professional standards. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(1), 1-3.

Sawyer, A. G. (2022). The delayed influence of a teacher education program. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 49(4), 72-94.

Scales, R. Q., Wolsey, T. D., Lenski, S., Smetana, L., Yoder, K. K., Dobler, E., Grisham, D. L., and Young, J. R. (2017). Are We Preparing or Training Teachers? Developing Professional

Judgment in and Beyond Teacher Preparation Programs. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 69(1), 7-21.

Sloan, C. and Dolan, R (2025). The continuous call for school university partnerships: a thematic review of policy in the Republic of Ireland, *Irish Educational Studies*, 1-21. DOI: 10.1080/03323315.2025.2514495.

Sloane, F. C., Oloff-Lewis, J., & Kim, S. H. (2013). Value-added models of teacher and school effectiveness in Ireland: wise or otherwise?. *Irish Educational Studies*, 32(1), 37-67.

Tatto, M.T. (2006). Education reform and the global regulation of teachers' education, development and work: A cross-cultural analysis, *International Journal of Educational Research*, 45 (4–5), 231-241.

Tolgfors, B., Quennerstedt, M., Backman, E., & Nyberg, G. (2023). A PE teacher's tale: journeying from teacher education to teaching practice in physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 30(1), 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2023.2281389>

Tondeur, J., Pareja Roblin, N., van Braak, J., Voogt, J., & Prestridge, S. (2016). Preparing beginning teachers for technology integration in education: ready for take-off? *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 26(2), 157–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2016.1193556>

Thomson, M.M., Huggins, E. and Williams, W. (2019). Developmental science efficacy trajectories of novice teachers from a STEM-focused program: A longitudinal mixed-methods investigation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 77, 253–265.

Thomson, M. M., Walkowiak, T. A., Whitehead, A. N., and Huggins, E. (2020). Mathematics teaching efficacy and developmental trajectories: A mixed-methods investigation of novice K-5 teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 87, 102953.

Teaching Council. (2017). *Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework*. Maynooth: Teaching Council of Ireland.

Teaching Council. (2020). *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*. Maynooth: Teaching Council of Ireland.

Torrance, D., & Forde, C. (2017). Redefining what it means to be a teacher through professional standards: Implications for continuing teacher education. *European journal of Teacher Education*, 40(1), 110-126.

Uí. Choistealbha, J., N. Dhuinn, M., Kaur, T., and Garland, S. A. (2021). DEEPEN (Droichead: Exploring and Eliciting Perspectives, Experiences and Narratives) Final Report. The Teaching Council. <https://www.tara.tcd.ie/items/273b9d46-e857-4bee-8b36-4e998435dd14>

Woo, H., LeTendre, G. K., Brezicha, K., Bergmark, U., & Ikoma, S. (2024). Coherence and fragmentation: Global influences on Nordic and East Asian teacher policies. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 139, 104352.

Appendix 1: TPJ Report 1 Abstract

Context: *Teachers' Professional Journeys (TPJ): The First Decade (2024-2030)* is an accelerated longitudinal mixed-methods study focused on understanding the dynamics of teacher learning and development from the final year of initial teacher education (ITE) through the first nine years of teachers' work within classrooms and schools in the context of the wider education system at primary, post-primary and further education (FE) sectors in Ireland. The purpose of this first report is to document several reviews of literature undertaken to support subsequent phases of the TPJ study and, in particular, the second report which will be focused on study design and instrument development as the basis for subsequent phases of the study.

TPJ Study Aim and Objectives: The overarching aim of the TPJ study is "to understand beginning teachers' professional journeys, by examining the key personal, educational, professional and systemic influences that define and shape their early careers and practice, including the impact of different learning and professional development phases". Flowing from that overarching aim, the five TPJ study objectives are:

1. To examine beginning teachers' attitudes, values, dispositions and formative experiences in relation to teaching and learning.
2. To investigate early career teachers' and other stakeholders' perceptions of their capacity (knowledge, skills, experience, preparedness) to meet the needs of learners in a variety of school contexts.
3. To explore teachers' early professional learning and career experiences as they leave ITE and transition across the three phases of professional development.
4. To review the ability of ITE programmes, Droichead and Cosán to respond to national priorities, policy and practice developments.
5. To consider issues relating to teacher supply, diversity and retention.

Reviews of Literature Method: Four literature reviews and three scoping reviews were undertaken. An issues paper was also drafted. All three scoping reviews were conducted using the guidelines in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA ScR) with searches undertaken via Scopus, EBSCO and Web of Science. The objective of the scoping reviews is to understand the extent and type of evidence in relation to (i) longitudinal studies on teaching 1970-2023, (ii) large scale cross-national studies of teaching 2000-2023 and (iii) research on teachers in Ireland (years 1-9) 2000-2023 across primary, post-primary and FE. A teacher supply issues paper, drawing on relevant national and international literature, addresses a range of issues related to teacher supply in the Irish context.

Findings: Main findings of the three scoping reviews report on respectively are: (i) the growth over the last 15 years in longitudinal studies on teaching, spanning the five TPJ objectives,

with a diversity of designs incorporating qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (based on a review of 207 full text studies published 2010-2023), (ii) the range of large-scale cross-national informative quantitative designed studies with foci and findings spanning the five TPJ objectives (based on a review of 202 full text studies), and (iii) the overall small number of studies in Ireland on teachers' work in years 1-9 at primary and post primary levels and not much literature on FE (based on a review of 39 full text studies involving over 9,000 participants). The teacher supply issues paper presents a teacher supply framework, identifies data gaps in Ireland and notes key insights from the burgeoning literature on a growing challenge globally.

Conclusion: The literature reviews collectively provide a range of research insights on teachers' professional journeys during the first decade, drawing on purposefully chosen diverse research literature. These insights span the framing of studies, research questions, study designs, instruments, findings and policy implications in a context where wider external system factors are increasingly influential in shaping teachers' professional journeys in addition to the long-recognised (though less well-understood) dynamics of schools' organisational cultures.

Appendix 2: TPJ Report 2 Abstract

The purpose of this report is to provide an account of the conceptual framework and research design of the *Teachers' Professional Journeys' (TPJ): The First Decade* longitudinal study (2024-30). This second report presents the TPJ conceptual framework in the context of the TPJ study aim and research objectives and together these underpin the research design and data collection instruments developed to investigate the evolving professional lives of teachers in Ireland in the primary, post-primary and further education and training sectors (FET). The study explores how newly qualified teachers navigate their first decade in the profession, with attention to beliefs, competencies, school and classroom environments, system influences, and broader career trajectories. Informed by cognitive and sociocultural perspectives on learning and development, and conceptualising teaching as a socially situated practice, the TPJ study employs an accelerated longitudinal design, integrating validated international scales, as well as custom instruments, to support analysis over time and across cohorts. This report details the rationale behind the selection of survey instruments, interview protocols, and focus group approaches, as well as the ethical and methodological considerations informing the study. Teachers' professional journeys are inevitably and consequentially shaped by a wide range of policies vis-a-vis curriculum and assessment, special education needs, educational disadvantage, Irish language, teacher education among others. Importantly, for example, while the study is informed by continuum of teacher education national policy and its constituent frameworks, i.e. Céim, Droichead, and Cosán, the TPJ study is not an evaluation of policy implementation per se. Rather, it seeks to understand the lived experiences of teachers and the myriad of complex factors shaping their professional journeys encompassing teacher background and experiences, the wide landscape of relevant policies, school culture along with the changing dynamics of current and future education. Emphasis is placed on coherence across data sources, attention to inclusivity, and strategies to ensure quality, trustworthiness, and relevance. The TPJ conceptual framework in in this report, informed by the aim and research objectives of TPJ, provides the foundation for data collection, analysis, and engagement in subsequent phases.

Appendix 3: List of HEIs and education stakeholders that participated in the study:

HEIs:

Atlantic Technological University,

Dublin City University,

Hibernia College,

Marino Institute of Education,

Maynooth University, Mary Immaculate College,

Munster Technological University,

National College of Art and Design,

South East Technological University,

Trinity College Dublin,

University College Cork,

University College Dublin,

University of Galway,

University of Limerick

Education Stakeholders:

Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland,

DEY: Department of Education and Youth,

INTO: Irish National Teachers' Organisation,

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta,

CPSMA: Catholic Primary Schools Management Association,

Education Support Centres Ireland,

Education and Training Boards Ireland,

FET: Further Education and Training,

JMB: Joint Managerial Body,

National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education,

National Association for Principals & Deputy Principals,

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment,

National Council for Special Education,

National Parents Council,

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna, Teaching Council.



Teachers' Professional Journeys

A longitudinal study of teachers in their first decade