DEVELOPING AN IRISH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING, IN THE CHANGING HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction to the development of the framework

The context of higher education is changing. The learning environment in which staff are working is in a state of flux as it responds to new socio-economic and political drivers, including the accelerated development of the digital world. In order to be responsive to this change, staff need to be adaptive and to continuously develop new knowledge, skills and attitudes for their own and their students' learning environment. As a consequence of this, there has been much focus internationally on the development of new flexible frameworks for staff professional development (PD). There have been many international drivers for the development of these frameworks, for example, the European Commission Report (2013) and the European Standard and Guidelines (2015).

Most professional development frameworks for teaching incorporate the wider definition of professional development, inclusive of formal, informal and non-formal settings. "Although learning often takes place within formal settings and designated environments, a great deal of valuable learning also occurs either deliberately or informally in everyday life. Policy makers in OECD countries have become increasingly aware that non-formal and informal learning represents a rich source of human capital" (OECD, 2010).

In Ireland, there have also been many drivers (i.e. DES, 2011; HEA, 2014) to support the development of a national framework that both prepares staff for their own changing learning context and is inclusive of a wider understanding of professional development. Therefore, in response to this, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (National Forum) carried out a series of focused primary and secondary research to develop a national professional development framework that would recognise, enhance, inform and support staff in a changing learning environment.

In 2015, the National Forum carried out an extensive nation-wide consultation process, following earlier review of international professional development frameworks (National Forum, 2015a) and an exploration of Irish accredited (National Forum, 2015b) and non-accredited activity (Kenny et al., 2015). As part of the consultation process, participants were asked to read the results of this initial research (hereafter called the 'consultation document',

i.e. National Forum 2015a). 40 written response submissions were received from Irish higher education institutions, organisations (such as student union bodies, AHEAD), networks and individuals. In addition, there were 20 institutional face-to-face consultations (group discussions with staff/students). For different perspectives, seven interview-style meetings were held with professional bodies to learn from their experiences and approaches to PD. The details of the sample and the consultation research methodology are available in National Forum (2016a, pp.19-23).

The data from the interview notes, written submissions and group-discussion notes were analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes emerging can be broadly presented under the following areas and inform the structure of this paper:

- The sector's understanding of the concept of professional development;
- Importance of work-based learning and other contexts;
- Underlying values and principles of the framework;
- Flexibility to the diverse staff and their changing roles over time;
- Key elements/domains for inclusion in a framework.

The sector's understanding of the concept of professional development

The extensive consultation process and other parallel activities of the National Forum have contributed to an emerging understanding of what is meant by the term *Professional Development* in the Irish context. The original *consultation document* had presented definitions, a spectrum of professional development activities and some suggested some models for its implementation (National Forum, 2015a). For example, the *consultation document* presented Dall'Alba and Sandberg's (2006, p384) definition of professional development as encompassing "formal courses and programs in professional education and to the formal and informal development of professional skill that occur in the work place". It also presented Kennedy's (2014) spectrum of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) models that moved from transmission to transitional to transformative approaches. The participants in the consultation process highlighted the value of moving towards either a transitional or transformative approach to CPD, with occasions for some transmission approaches.

There was a strong view in the consultation that accredited programmes of study were a key component of professional development activities. Many re-emphasised the European Commission's report (2013) *Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Europe's' Higher Education Institutions*, that highlights that by 2020 all staff should receive certified pedagogical training. However, the participants also emphasised the value and volume of non-accredited activities that occur outside of the more structured formal sessions/events (National Forum, 2015a). These were identified as collaborative and unstructured non-accredited activities and an emerging framework should also value these types of activities (See Table 1).

Table 1: Typology of accredited and non-accredited professional development activities (National Forum, 2015a, 2016b)

Non-Accredited			
1. Collaborative Non-accredited (non-formal)	2. Unstructured Non-accredited (non-formal)	3. Structured Non-accredited (informal)	4. Accredited (formal)
Learning from these activities comes from their collaborative nature. May stem from an individual's will or need to learn. It is fulfilled through the collaborative often, dialogic process.	These activities are independently led by the individual. Engagement is driven by the individual's needs/interests. Individuals source the materials themselves.	These are externally organised activities (by an institution, network, disciplinary membership body). They are typically facilitated and have identified learning objectives.	Accredited programmes of study (ECTs or other international credits)
Examples			
Conversations with colleagues, sharing research at a conference, peer review of teaching	Reading articles, following social media, watching video tutorials, keeping a reflective teaching journal/portfolio, preparing an article for publication	Workshops, seminars, MOOCs, summer schools. Working on an industry or other teaching/learning related project	Professional Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters, PhD in: Teaching and Learning; eLearning; Leadership in Education; Education Policy, etc.

The consultation questions emphasised that the framework needed to inform and emphasise good teaching that supports an impact on student learning. However, what emerged both from the consultation and the investigation of the literature is that, in addition, as teaching is evolving the "the scholarship of teaching is important" (as noted by participant 32, i.e. ID 32). The term *scholarship* of teaching grew from the earlier work of Boyer (1997) and was later elaborated on by Schulman (1999) and Glassick (2000). Saiful Bahri et al. (2013, p3) note that "a scholarly teacher selects the teaching method that has the best chance of helping students achieve the learning objective". This, they note, differs to the *scholarship of teaching* which, in addition, requires that staff draw upon resources and contribute to best practices in the field (Simpson et al., 2007; Saiful Bahri et al., 2013).

A helpful articulation of this term came from Shulman, who stated that for a work to be considered the scholarship of teaching: It must be made public; it must be available for peer review and critique according to accepted standards; it must be able to be reproduced and built on by other scholars (Glassick, 2000; Schulman, 1999).

Therefore, it was evident in this consultation that the framework needed to *reimagine* and give examples of what is understood by the *scholarship* of teaching and learning. A first draft of the framework has attempted to initiate a dialogue on scholarship and presents some initial

examples of different forms of scholarship as they relate to professional development (National Forum, 2016b; p.22). Scholarship, for example, can be: staff discussing their teaching with colleagues; having discussions on a peer observation; presentations on teaching; developing teaching resources; researching into teaching and learning and disseminating these in peer reviewed journals. The scholarship of teaching and learning contributes to the "evidence-base of teaching and learning", a phrase that was reiterated by many in the consultation process. The students involved in the consultation process also emphasised the importance of teaching having an evidence-base. There is a growing interest in the scholarship of teaching in the sector, identified in the non-accredited (Kenny et al., 2015) and accredited reports (National Forum, 2015b). Given its emphasis, there is a need to articulate the "scholarship of teaching and learning" in the new framework for professional development.

Importance of wider context and professional practice learning

There was a continued reference in the consultation feedback to the importance of the context of professional practice, in particular the immediate work or day-to-day teaching and learning practices. Very recent literature (Reich et al., 2015) has also emphasised this idea and it links with the framework's *authentic* value (see next section). There was some criticism from participants in the consultation of professional development approaches that *only focused* on events that happen outside of the work practice context, i.e. workshops, accredited programmes. There was a strong message by many respondents that professional development is most valuable as a practice-based activity that also happens *on the job*, i.e. in professional practice. In addition, where staff intended to seek some accreditation for this type of activity, they emphasised the importance of a more formalised system to recognise prior learning (RPL). It was felt that this was currently being done nationally on a more case-by-case basis (National Forum, 2015b).

Some of the respondents who were familiar with the literature also mentioned the importance of the communities of practices approaches (Lave & Wenger, 1991), advocating the *collaborative* non-accredited (or accredited) activities (see Table 1) and supporting the underlying *collaborative* value mentioned in the next section. Some referred to the common break of professional development into formal (i.e. accredited), informal (structured non-accredited) and non-formal learning (unstructured and collaborative non-accredited) (OECD, 2010).

It was reported that many of the models presented in the *consultation document* did not seem to capture the socio-cultural view of learning, where community and collaboration are engaged to at different levels. Nor did the models place emphasis on the socio-political, physical and economic contexts that staff need to respond to, for example, changing student populations, resources, economic drivers, internationalisation, physical environment, etc. A dynamic framework is needed to "fit into the landscape" (ID 13). Therefore, the new framework should represent the individual pathways in practice and the wider context. Based on this feedback, the National Forum devised a conceptual model for the framework that

positions the individual staff member in the middle of the process in the wider context of their changing professional practice (National Forum, 2016a).

Underlying values of the framework

There was strong support in the consultation for having a "values-driven framework" (ID 25), a transparent set of values underlying the framework. Values have been described as "the moral principles and beliefs or accepted standards of a person or social group". A value system is a "set of values according to which people, a society, or organization regulate their behaviour". The respondents highlighted that there was a need for a set of values around the framework itself, but also around the student experience and the importance of acknowledging the individual staff's set of personal and professional values. This is in keeping with some of the professional development frameworks explored as part of the consultation process, for example, the Teaching Council of Ireland's emerging framework. Many of the values that underpin the framework, align in particular with Kennedy's (2005) transformative CPD model (National Forum, 2015a; p.4).

The framework should value *inclusivity*. There was a strong recognition that there was a wide range of staff and, indeed some senior students, who contributed to teaching, learning and scholarship in higher education. It was considered to be imperative that the framework was accessible and inclusive to this wider group who teach in higher education i.e. academic staff, librarians, education technologists/developers, teaching assistants. Many highlighted the need to support the large growing group of part-time teachers who are key contributors to the student learning experience and who may be linked with more than one institution. The framework should allow for different pathways for different staff specialism and changing work contexts. It should be sensitive to changes in staff's roles and responsibilities over their careers, for example, one person noted that "research supervision is teaching". In addition, the framework should support a range of different professional learning opportunities and be applicable to staff at all levels and stages of their careers.

There was an acknowledgement that the framework should encourage *learner-centeredness*, in that it should be driven by the values, needs and motivations of the individual staff learner, i.e. internally driven (Kennedy, 2014). It should emphasise the importance of the "self" in learning. Professional development should strongly align with individual's teaching practice and attempt to be transformative of staff's knowledge and skills. Reflective practice was noted by many as a key lever for interrogating and transforming individual teaching practices over time and contexts. An extension of this concept of (staff) learner-centeredness was that of a student-centred approach to teaching. The framework should support innovative and creative teaching and learning approaches which aim to improve student engagement and empowerment in their learning. There were therefore two learners referred to in this value, staff as a learner and the student as a learner.

The framework, although focused around the individual staff learner, should encourage *collaboration.* It should encourage social learning that is key to learning in the work context and supported by many learning theories. It should encourage staff peer dialogue and support the mentoring of other staff. Although there was a strong emphasis on the role of the individual's institution, the framework should also build on the existing inter-institutional activity for a more efficient and collaborative approach to professional development activities. There was a strong support for the development and recognition of communities of practice that enhance professional learning in local, disciplinary or cross-disciplinary contexts.

The framework should have demonstrable *authenticity,* in that it should be relevant to the individual within their discipline and to the institution(s) involved in their professional development. It should not be a *tick-box approach* and should be manageable in the time available. It was also emphasised that it should be credible nationally and internationally, therefore it should be research-informed, linking with best practices in professional development. For it to be authentic, the framework should be reviewed and the change over time, where appropriate. This would suggest a phased development, piloting and review of the framework over a period of time.

These values should guide the processes used by individuals and institutions to recognise, inform, enhance and sustain professional development, acknowledging the varied approaches required in the different contexts in higher education

Flexibility to the diverse staff and their changing roles over time

Many of the respondents (for example, ID 9 and 11) highlighted the need for teaching staff to be in a cycle of evidence-based reflection and supporting change in practices over the life-long learning process (a spiral model), that was flexible. One respondent (ID 31) highlighted that the teacher should be viewed as an 'adaptive expert' (Bransford et al., 2005). They highlighted that adaptive capacity is a dynamic process that allows for ambiguity and complexity in a time of continuous change, referring to the work of Staber and Sydow (2002). Others participants referred to action research models of change or Temperly's (2011) work from post-primary which emphasises an evidence-based professional learning cycle (Victoria State Government, n.d.). The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland and the Irish Association of Social Workers both emphasised the importance in their PD framework of reflection and peer dialogue, which was supported by evidence-based outcomes. The individual staff pathways, the *spirals* in the model should represent the changing and diverse roles of those in the higher education sector (see National Forum, 2016a for conceptual model).

Many mentioned the developmental aspect of a person's career and how it was important that any framework should take into account their early, middle and later careers. The novice to expert language had mixed reactions from those in the consultation process. Some professional Frameworks, such as the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Support Learning and the Irish Computer Society, link in with the concept of either Fellows or their current academic professional titles. However, if the new Irish framework is

to be inclusive of different professional groups this approach may not be suitable. The first draft of the framework presents these learning phases as Tyro, Practitioner, Mentor, and Leader (National Forum, 2016b). This progression, however, is not presented as a linear approach as, for example, although some may be Leaders in their later careers they may be new to an area such as educational technology, i.e. a Tyro in this context. Therefore, there may always be elements in a career that require staff to up-skill or revisit, similar to the layers in an onion which is inclusive of earlier levels (see National Forum 2016a for conceptual model).

Key elements/domains for inclusion in the framework

Most professional development frameworks identify overarching domains (or elements) that assist in the articulation of the key areas for consideration in professional development. Based on the consultation process by the National Forum, five domains have been identified that represent some of the key areas in teaching, learning and scholarship and a first iteration of the indicators in these domains are highlighted on the National Forum's first draft of the framework (2016b).

The first domain is that of *Personal Development: The Self.* This represents the intrinsic individuality that the person brings to their teaching. It makes transparent the importance of the personal values of the individual, it underpins the human interaction needed for teaching. Personal values have been identified in the literature and in the consultation process as important to the teaching process. An additional element to this domain is the increasing recognised role that positive and negative emotions play in teaching, i.e. confidence, anxiety, anger (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). "Therefore, the emotional aspects of teaching should be dealt with during pedagogical training, alongside theoretical and practical information concerning teaching and learning" (Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011, p810)

The next domain, *Professional Identity, Values and Development,* emphasises the importance of the professional identity of the individual learner. Based on their professional identity and its associated roles and responsibilities, the person develops and self-evaluates their actions plans. This domain also includes the scholarship of teaching and learning, including critical reflection on teaching, gathering and sharing of evidence of their teaching approaches.

The *Professional Communication and Dialogue* domain emphasises the importance of the skill of communication and the dialogue with others in the professional learning process. This also links with the framework's value of collaboration.

The *Professional Knowledge and Skills* domain addresses the design and implementation of their teaching and learning approaches. An extension of this domain, but separated out given its national strategic significance, is the person's *Professional and Personal Digital Capacity.* This domain will draw on themes used in National Forum's funded project on digital skills development, i.e. All Aboard (http://allaboardhe.org).

Feedback from the consultation process highlighted that these domains need to be clearly described and expanded for different phases in the careers of staff in higher education, i.e. the tyro, practitioner, mentor, leader. The descriptors and elements need to be useful in different context. It was also emphasised that they should not be overly prescriptive and should emphasise the life-long learning concept.

Conclusion

Based on an initial thematic analysis, the following were the key findings:

- The sector was in favour of a more transformative professional development approach, which acknowledged the spectrum of accredited and structured/unstructured/ collaborative non-accredited activity.
- There was a strong view that professional learning happens, not only happens in structured events, but within the context of professional practice. In addition, the wider institutional and socio-political context strongly influences professional development.
- There was a need for values-driven framework. Based on the consultation process, the values underpinning the framework were that it should be encourage inclusivity, authenticity, scholarship, learner-centeredness and collaboration.
- The model for the framework should represent the changing pathways of the diverse staff involved in teaching in higher education. Staff should engage in a cycle of reflection, based on evidence-based practice, as they move through the different phases of their professional development.
- Five key overarching domains were identified for inclusion in the framework: Personal Development: Self; Professional Identity, Values and Development; Professional Communication and Dialogue; Professional Knowledge and Skills; and Professional and Personal Digital Capacity.
- The institutions have a primary role to play in their staff's professional development, based on national framework

This paper sets out some of the key themes that emerged from a national consultation on an emerging professional development approach in Ireland. It emphasises the importance of being responsive to the complexity and changing context of practice. Reich et al. (2015, p.139) maintained that in developing a professional development framework:

> *"..The challenge is to work out ways of capturing and representing learning in more dynamic ways (as described above) and to develop CPE/CPL frameworks that acknowledge this complexity and messiness of professional practice; the collective nature of learning and practice and the dynamic and ever-changing organisational work environment–as well as appreciating the professional association and employing organisation's position."*

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