Supporting Teaching and Learning Transformations through the National Professional Development Framework: Establishing and Recognising an Inclusive Community of Practice for All who Teach in Irish HigherEducation[*]

Roisin Donnelly[†]
Terry Maguire[‡]

[†]National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, now based at Dublin Institute of Technology
[‡]National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education now based at Institute of Technology, Tallaght

Abstract

The National Forum (NF) for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning has recently completed an initial implementation of the National Professional Development Framework (PDF) for all who teach in higher education. Prior to the publication of the PD Framework in 2016, there was no mechanism or route in place nationally to give structure, focus and support to individual staff to avail of relevant professional development and utilise it to realise their full potential in their teaching role. This important work is deepening sectoral understanding of the PDF itself and leading towards national recognition of an individual's commitment to their professional development across the universities, institutes of technology and private colleges.

This article is written as a reflective commentary on this key national initiative in Irish higher education. It outlines the challenge in the development of the framework, that it must be relevant in a diversity of institutional contexts and approaches of professional development across the sector. The framework, to be sustainable, required an inherent inclusivity and flexibility that enables all staff who teach, regardless of the context within which they work, to engage with it to support their professional development throughout their career. This paper explores other themes that emerged during the development and subsequent implementation of the framework including: the personal and professional aspects of development for those who teach; change as a means of individual empowerment; an emergent community of practice supporting implementation; and supporting the emergence of transformations at institutional level.

Keywords: Community of Practice, Empowerment, Inclusive, Professional Development Framework, Recognition, Teaching and Learning, Transformation

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1. Introduction and Context

Globally there is recognition that the enhancement of teaching and learning requires structured professional development pathways for those who teach in higher education, and that parity between teaching and research must be addressed by institutions valuing teaching more explicitly. The need to professionalise teaching in higher education was articulated in the High-Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education to the European Commission along with other international reports (European Science Foundation 2012; Norton, 2013; OECD, 2010). The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning was set up against this backdrop, and the creation of the National Professional Development Framework (PDF) for those who teach in higher education has been a core strand of the National Forum's work since its inception. As a first step, the National Forum sought to identify the range and type of professional development opportunities that were already available in the sector, so what the sector had already developed could be used as a foundation. This initial stage in the development of the national framework captured and recorded the wide range of offerings of both accredited and non-accredited PD (National Forum, 2015a). It revealed cross-sectoral approaches to accredited PD by the Learning Innovation Network, and the significant contribution that the Irish Learning Technology Association (ILTA) and the National Digital Learning Repository (NDLR) have made to harnessing the potential of technology for learning impact. It highlighted the different approaches of institutions in relation to the process for the recognition of prior learning, and that providers held different views on the mandatory requirement for the completion of an accredited programme for new staff. Some institutions offered incentives to participation in teaching and learning professional development opportunities including, for example, receiving a time allocation or a fee waiver.

Institutions provided similar types of non-accredited professional development opportunities. Over 40% of all provision offered across the sector was related to building digital capacity. When teachers were asked about their use of technology to enhance learning (National Forum, 2015d), the vast majority held the view that technology would be an essential part of teaching in the future; however not all teachers who responded were confident in their own digital skills. The range of factors that influenced participation in non-accredited CPD included: relevance, personal interest and motivation, department, faculty or institutional priority, the value placed on teaching versus that placed on research within the institution. Communities of practice, and mentoring were identified as important in supporting staff development.

When teaching and learning was reviewed through a disciplinary lens (National Forum, 2015c), what emerged was an understanding of the disciplinary differences. Many identified the signature pedagogies of their discipline. Strongly emphasized was that teachers readily identify with their discipline and often have commitment to their professional body in relation to CPD. The groups highlighted the need for a national framework to foster collaboration, recognise and encourage OER development and promote discipline-based education research. By reviewing international approaches, the Forum gained an insight into how higher education institutions in different countries were supporting the professional development of their teachers (National Forum, 2015e).

The challenge for the National Forum was to develop a framework that built on what the sector had already invested in and to take into account the range of institutional, disciplinary and individual contexts of those who teach across the sector. It was also very important to incorporate the evolving nature of learning in a digital world and integrate existing accredited and non-accredited provision: "There was a strong recognition that a professional

development framework should be inclusive of the wide range of staff who contribute to teaching, learning and scholarship in higher education; it must allow for genuine and personally relevant engagement by participants and should emphasise the importance of 'the self' in learning…and promote collaboration" (National Forum, 2016 pp.5&6). The emerging values-based actions include for example, empowerment of staff, evidence-based transformation of teaching and learning approaches; peer dialogue and support.

1.1   Meeting the challenge of developing a National Professional Development Framework

The Irish professional Development Framework for all those who teach in higher education was published in mid-2016 (National Forum, 2016). The framework now provides guidance for the professional development of individuals and gives direction to other stakeholders (e.g. institutions, higher education networks, educational developers, policy makers and student body representatives) for planning, developing and engaging in professional development activities.

1.2   Being Inclusive

From the outset, the National Forum sought to develop a professional development framework designed by the sector, for the sector. An initial consultation with the sector in December 2013 urged the development team to recognise the diversity of those who teach and the context within which they teach in higher education in Ireland. A key theme that emerged through discussion was "the importance of recognising diverse professional development needs, depending on stage of development, context and discipline" (National Forum, 2014, p.5).   One of the tensions that became evident through discussion was whether the framework should be explicitly linked to teaching, or to be contextualised around those that support learning. One side of the debate argued that the word 'teaching' should be centre stage, as it gave recognition and supported the view of teaching in higher education as a professional and important activity.   On the other side, many strongly expressed the view that situating the framework in the context of those who 'support learning' took a more inclusive approach, and included all those that were involved in a student's education through their programme. After much deliberation, the National Forum linked the framework to those 'all those who teach in higher education'. This decision was taken to give teaching an explicit voice within higher education institutions in a way that would balance the implicit focus on research activity.   In doing so however, the National Forum recognised that many teachers have emerged within the sector and the singular view of the 'lecturer' as the only teacher in higher education was outdated.   The framework document outlines the inclusivity of the framework that emerged: "The PD framework is flexible, inclusive and can be interpreted and adapted for: academic staff across disciplines; educational/learning technologists; educational/academic developers; research staff; library staff; support staff and students who teach others e.g., graduate teaching assistants and those who engage in peer assisted learning" (National Forum, 2016). Further, the Framework also ensures inclusivity by clearly defining the term 'teach' in broad terms:

Teach' used in this document is inclusive of all the activities involved in the teaching and the facilitation of student learning. The term incorporates the principles of student engagement in the learning process (National Forum, 2016, p.1).

During 2017, the Framework was piloted with over 215 participants from a range of professional identities, who worked together in 22 pilot groups for four concentrated months with the support of 10 expert mentors drawn from a PD Expert Advisory Panel (of

education professionals from across the sector). This was subsequently evaluated by all those who had participated in the pilot implementation phase[1].   Feedback from the evaluation supported the inclusivity of the framework in practice:

I work as casual academic staff and at times it can feel as if you are very much out of the loop with other full time academic staff and staff in the university. The pdf group was extremely inclusive and offered insights from both full-time staff and other casual staff all open to listening to each other's experiences in different disciplines it was most insightful. (PDF Pilot Participant)

> *I am a part-time lecturer. In the context of PDF, it was possible for me to bring my own discipline - specific and lifelong commitment to professional development into constructive and shared engagement with colleagues, each of whom have considerable academic and personal strengths and abilities. This helped to create a very inclusive teaching and learning experience. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

The Librarian group felt that the PDF framework was inclusive, promoted authenticity particularly re reflection, collaboration and learner centredness. We felt less in a silo by participating in the pilot. (PDF Pilot Participant)

> *I did feel that it was very inclusive regarding the academic staff's role. It supported this role well. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

1.3   Promoting Empowerment

The strong focus on research performance on career progression means that teaching does not have equal visibility across Irish higher education. During consultation with the sector, many felt that as teachers, they were disempowered by institutional systems' focus on research, especially in regard to career progression. Wanting to spend time focusing on teaching rather than research was considered disempowering:

> *The university doesn't support this type of activity…so on the one hand I'm caught between wanting to do more and spending more time in the teaching domain…the reality is teaching is weighted like a feather and research is weighted like a gold nugget…if the university doesn't take this seriously we have no hope. It needs to be embedded properly. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

However, there was a sense that having a national professional development framework would help to give more status to teaching:

> *There is a sense teaching is undervalued and maybe the professional development framework will help to change that and get the recognition it needs. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

Engaging with the PDF also brought personal confidence and empowerment. Many of the participants in the pilot groups reported growing confidence, feeling more empowered and supported as a teacher:

> *The process builds confidence, we don't realise how much we do. (PDF Pilot Participant)*

> *The PDF…is important because it's empowering us to do what we do best, we are teachers, here we are also learners. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

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1   Please see (https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/category/blog/professional-development-blog/pdf-pilot-studies/) for full information on the piloting phase of the professional development framework

*It provides a rich range of tools for assessing and understanding one's own development, and forces me to think carefully about how I have developed, and what kinds of skills and tools I have gained, It was exceedingly useful for me in drawing distinctions among the kinds of activities and roles I play, and they ways in which my practice is unique in my institute, and has few parallels in the sector at large. It was empowering to work this out, and has given me lots to consider in planning my progress into the future. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

Working in partnership across institutions, librarians for example, are now actively exploring how to use the PDF and link it to their own professional standards (L2L T&L Enhancement Funded Project, 2015).

1.4   Promoting Personal and Professional Development

To be sustainable, the Professional Development Framework needed to be enabling for staff at different stages of their career, flexible enough to be used by all disciplines, and reflective of all types of professional development that potentially could be completed by an individual. Rather than a top down regulatory approach to professional development, the Irish PDF involved the sector in an intensive consultation process that enabled the development of a culturally appropriate PD Framework that encourages and empowers individuals to take ownership of their own professional development.

The PDF (illustrated in Figure 1) presents a holistic approach to professional development, incorporating the five domains with the individuality of the staff member at its core. The development of the framework took into account the personal and professional aspects of development required by those who teach, initially to learn the art of teaching which is then developed throughout their career. Central to personal development is the understanding of the personal attributes, beliefs and values that each individual brings to their teaching and the way they influence their teaching practice. The importance of 'the self' in teaching was supported by an analysis of nominations from students who described their 'teaching hero' as part of a national student-led learning impact award process. The analysis showed that students valued their teachers for certain kinds of characteristics and behaviours. Characteristics identified include: care, courage, creativity, communication and commitment (National Forum, 2014). A further analysis of qualitative research undertaken by the National Forum to explore the personal and professional approaches to teaching of the first group of Teaching Heroes (2014) identified that many of these traits are innate to the individual. Both those nominating the teaching heroes and the heroes themselves acknowledged the importance of communication in supporting the learning process. The core domain of the Professional Development Framework 'the Self' reflects the need for those who teach to consider and reflect on their personal development. The Professional Communication and Dialogue domain emphasises the need for those who teach to be able to communicate, and collaborate through a range of media.

Figure 1: The five domains of the national Professional Development Framework

Two further domains, Professional Identity and Development and Professional Knowledge and Skills recognise that an individual may have a range of professional identities throughout their career, and ensures the individual reflects on the currency of their professional/disciplinary knowledge to keep it current. During the consultation process, there was no consensus as to whether building digital capacity should be included as an explicit domain or integrated across all domains. However, the explicit inclusion of the domain Personal and Professional Digital Capacity recognises that we live and work in a digital world, and that those who teach must develop their personal digital skills to have the self-assurance to harness the potential of technology for learning impact.

The development of an individual's engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning is an integral component of each of the five domains and underpins an evidence-based approach to their teaching practice.

A key feature of the framework is its flexibility in how it uses this domain-based approach to professional standards in teaching and learning. Each of the five PDF domains are applicable to a wide number of staff roles, all discipline groups, and to different career stages of those engaged in teaching and supporting learning. The domains and elements are underpinned by professional values, all of which emerged from the sector. There was a desire for a transparent set of values acknowledging what the student values in how they learn, and the individual personal and professional values among those who teach in higher education.

By setting objectives and charting progress towards their achievement, identifying strengths and development needs, and enabling discussion of career aspirations, the PDF can support individuals to be responsible for determining what they need to learn, for managing and undertaking their own PD activity, and to consider how best to incorporate innovations to their professional practice. Individuals can interpret the framework in their own unique way, depending on disciplinary background, and can showcase their engagement with relevant domains of the PDF.

The Framework remains accessible at all stages of an individual's career through encouraging individuals to consider how much the PD activity being reflected upon incorporates new learning, a consolidation of existing learning, mentoring or leading learning (Figure 2).

Figure 2:The four types of learning supported by the PDF
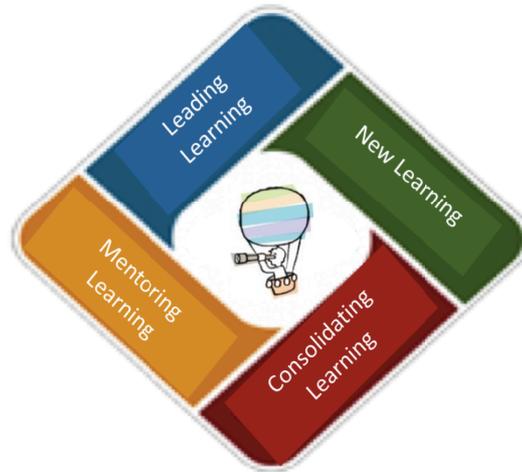
Further, the clear typology of the different types of professional development activity identified provided a common language for PD activities across the sector (Figure 3)

In addition, this typology has been mapped to the CEDEFOP description of formal, in-formal and non-formal learning to support the recognition of prior learning (National Forum, 2016, p.2), enabling those who teach to include prior learning as well as current learning in their professional portfolio as evidence that could be considered for accreditation or certification.

Figure 3: Typology of PD opportunities incorporated in the PD Framework

1. Collaborative Non-Accredited	**2. Unstructured Non-Accredited**	**3. Structured Non-Accredited**	**4. Accredited**
Examples	**Examples**	**Examples**	**Examples**
Conversations with colleagues, peer networking & observations, blogs/discussion forums, mentoring, critical friends engaging in informal dialogue on how to improve teaching	Reading articles, following social media, self-study, watching video tutorials, keeping a reflective teaching journal/portfolio, preparing an article for publication	Workshops, seminars, MOOCs, conferences, summer schools, structured collaborative projects, research project on a topic of professional interest	Professional Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters, PhD, EdD in: Teaching and Learning, eLearning, Leadership in Education; Education Policy

The evaluation of the pilot groups in the initial implementation (with the range of professional identities involved shown in Figure 4 overleaf) highlights how participants support the approach taken in the PDF in terms of personal and professional development, as well as addressing the (often changing) professional identity of individuals throughout their career:

*I am excited and enthusiastic about the framework and the opportunities for creativity in teaching it supports; it gives you a sort of adventurous spirit in your teaching that I didn't have before, like a risk-taking; its changed the way I look at thinking. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

*In Library CPD, consolidating, mentoring, learning & new learning are good indicators in reviewing your learning; however not all four have to be present in all PD that is undertaken. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

*A lot of my work was consolidating learning. However, the pilot project itself provided opportunities to mentor, lead and utilize new learning as well. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

*As I am involved with an academic review of some of our courses, it helped to show colleagues that some of their practices as regards to learning e.g. (new learning', 'consolidating learning', 'mentoring' and 'leading) were in fact valuable tools to them and not as how they were being portrayed by certain members of our academic team. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

*I found the typology useful because it recognises that the value of the work that you undertake when you are in a mentoring or leadership role, that you are enriching the learner's educational experience. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

1.5 Supporting Engagement with the Professional Development Framework through a Community of Practice

A key finding from the initial implementation with the sector shows how the pilot groups (through the feedback they gave and what was observed and commented upon by the expert mentors) suggest that further implementation of the PDF should be supported by a Community of Practice (CoP) approach. As the pilot groups were situated in their unique professional identities, the starting point for their work was their coming together in these groups to carry out activities relating to the national PDF. All participants in the pilot studies volunteered for the pilot study implementation of the PDF, and as such can be considered as a group who share a passion for professional development, and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better.

These groups are characterised by three aspects:

1. Participants interacted with each other in many ways – mutual engagement

2. They all had a common endeavour – joint enterprise

3. They developed a shared repertoire of common resources of language, styles and routines by means of which they expressed their identities as members of the group.

Participation in the pilot groups, like in a CoP, became the fundamental process of learning about the PDF. Many of the pilot groups were distributed across institutions, the sector itself and around the country, and as a result, were not always in a position to benefit from face-to-face meetings and discussion. A National Forum online learning space was created specifically to support the pilot groups in their engagement with the PDF. It is based on sharing of experiences across all pilot study groups, and was designed to be used for storing

multimedia resources, as a conversation forum, provider of news/events and has the benefits of NF analytics tools (traffic and usage monitoring).

Figure 4: The professional identities involved in the pilot groups situated in their career stage.
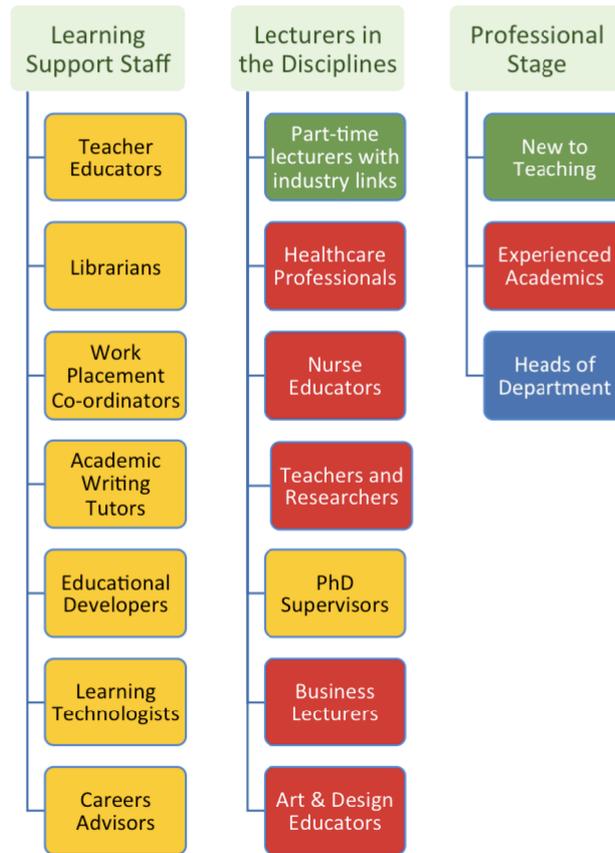
Multiple group forums (public and private) were set up for the pilot groups, and there were 3 different components to the PDF Pilots online learning community:

Table 1: PDF Initial Implementation - Shared Online Learning Community

Sharing Social Experiences	Open Communication	Risk-free expression
	Group Cohesion	Encouraging collaboration
Sharing Cognitive Experiences	Triggering Events	Information Exchange
	Exploration	Connecting Ideas
	Integration	Applying Beliefs
Sharing Teaching Experiences	Facilitating Discourse	Sharing Personal Meaning
	PDP Development	Focusing Discussion

The findings suggest that a CoP approach was built though the vision for an inclusive PD Framework. There is already evidence from the evaluation of the initial PDF implementation that the PDF has helped create early support networks in the pilot groups; participants from

all pilot groups reported the development of a learning community that has a powerful and positive impact on their success in engaging with the PDF:

> *Our pilot group has worked and we're all quite willing to be here and have enjoyed it…we became a learning community. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

> *The pilot project itself created such a community of practice and one that we hope to capitalise upon and continue. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

> *I think I would have really struggled if I had to do this by myself…you really need the group discussion. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

The Expert Mentor in the 'Teacher Educator' pilot group also observed this natural emergence:

> *In my pilot group, building a sense of community is a process that's validated by what they do - they feel special by being engaged in this group. And it has provided a space and a structure for conversation, so it has given them a shared technical language and then they have created networks…One of them said to me - I'm going to go to … to ask for help and we're going to spend the whole week working on this and he's going to teach me this. So they've created their own support networks within the work on the PDF pilot group and it has been very impactful for them.*

In terms of building capacity for supporting further implementation of the PDF across the sector, there is a clear role for the PD Expert Mentor as a CoP Leader, and evidenced by these pilot participants:

> *Meeting with our expert mentor was invaluable to get an overview of the pilot project.*

> *The bonds in our group were strengthened even further with the expert mentor and other academics and personnel involved in the pilot.*

> *My mentor guided me through the process answering any questions and helped when I was struggling with understanding the domains. She also encouraged me to explore other domains and by talking to her I discovered that I had more to include and I also thought about areas in which to improve upon. I found this resource really beneficial. My expert mentor was superb. She met me regularly, emailed me all the necessary information and gave wonderful tips on engaging with the PDF domains.*

While there is a distinct role for the Expert Mentor in the CoP, peer mentoring was also evident within the groups:

> *I certainly felt I was mentored and supported during the process by the members of my group. I am not sure how much of a mentor I could be myself due to a lack of experience, but I certainly learned a lot from my peers*

> *Our group became like a peer mentoring group and it is envisaged that we might continue as such. This is the best endorsement of the PD framework in this context.*

> *I certainly mentored other people in the pilot itself but I also sought out opportunities to mentor people in my workplace and it helped me think about my co-workers' workplace learning*

Learning communities are already in existence in our HEIs and for some groups, it was helpful to draw upon this experience for their pilot work. Part of the appeal of CoPs is that a seemingly natural formation which enhances learning can be consciously developed, which as argued by Barton & Tusting (2005), is important for those in our HEIs charged with implementing change:

*I am in the fortunate position of working on a relatively small staff where the practice of collaboration is a strong core value, and is increasingly encouraged in practical ways by our management structure. We already mentor and help one another, and tend to cluster around shared interests regardless of disciplinary boundaries. The framework can certainly be used in future to aid this process …of collaboration… in our group, it is already pretty robust, and something I value highly. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

*It was really powerful…for me it created another community that I belonged to within the university. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

*It's a bit like the support pedagogy groups, we've a group here that is just primarily for support from education…no-one judges anybody - that's the key. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

*…my contacts with colleagues who teach full-time in MIC has been a source of great co-operative learning and emotional support. It is the relationships formed with these colleagues and our community of practice approach to a module we teach on which in particular has proven to be an inspiring factor towards participating in the PDF Pilot Project. In our community of practice, we each coached and mentored one another as was appropriate to individual and collective need. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

A CoP approach is well suited for the development and sharing of knowledge and practices across the sector, and has the capacity for supporting both professional autonomy and transformative practice. Sharing participant know-how about engaging with the framework across the professional identities aligns with the Wenger et al. (2002) CoP definition of a group of individuals who share their interests and problems on a specific topic through their regular interaction:

*The PDF facilitates engagement with others and problem solving in our group and together, we share information and problems. (*PDF Pilot Participant*)*

It is important to explore how the CoP was built through the vision for the inclusive PDF. Participants' roles are not assigned formally and are not defined with respect to the CoP activity (Probst & Borzillo, 2008). The roles within the CoP were discussed by a number of pilot participants:

Why the groups work – they have a choice to be there, they volunteered. [There was] no judgement if you have a problem or need upskilling - people aren't going oh he doesn't know what he is doing or she doesn't know; we realise the importance of reflection and being non-judgmental…because teaching is all reflection, always improving, you never get to the end result…it's a bit like the support pedagogy groups in our institution.

Not being with people of our own discipline is important - it's liberating that we're not with people in our own discipline, that we can be free to say what we like. It's really important isn't it - that's vital.

[It is] important not to have people from the same working group in the CoPs together - I think putting structure around it and putting a clear timetable around it with regular meetings and support, the idea of the group meetings I think is great but I think you have got to be very careful in an institutional environment that you don't have the group that you're dealing with is not the same group that you're working with everyday because there are particular relationships and politics that you want to try to break out of and if you're going to have effective group meetings to discuss things like this it should really take in peers from different parts of the institution. So, like it has been done here where you take new lecturers, you take staff who are at particular levels within the organisation but from different faculties or schools or disciplines and make sure there is some sort of

commonality there, but that it is not replicating the same structure that the person is working in on a day-to-day basis.

The PDF is underpinned by reflective practice which was strengthened through the CoP. Participants felt that the opportunity to reflect as part of a group provided a deeper and more meaningful reflection for individuals:

It is important to work on reflection as part of a group - when you reflect in a group, or have these regular interactions with people thinking about the same things, I think you get better or deeper insight out of it. (PDF Pilot Participant)

While the framework helped me to consolidate my own PD, I often found myself reflecting on my own experience and mentoring my colleagues. It became very obvious to me that reflective, open-ended dialogue about our approaches to teaching was invaluable. (PDF Pilot Participant)

Enjoyment of the work is an important factor for a CoP for many of the participants. Positive shared experience strengthened the emerging CoPs:

The PDF gave us the opportunity to do, which is thinking amazingly different fun ways and make great connections with people…to genuinely intellectually grow.

We enjoyed the group engagement – when you come together as a group…it helps…you learn a lot from each other.

I just found it so refreshing and creative and exciting and it was lovely to belong to that group.

Hodgkinson-Williams et al. (2008) argues that the purpose of the CoP will need to be established early on. The work of Hoadley & Kilner (2005, p.33) is in consensus and emphasises the importance of having a clear purpose (as well as content, conversations, connections and context), as it 'is the reason for which the members come together in the community', creates energy and produces results (p.34) and provides the meta-connection between all the other elements without which 'knowledge building will flounder':

Being part of group helped reduce stress around stressful times like end of term…all those frustrations come to bear at the end of the year and I find it very hard but this year I didn't and I did wonder if this is, it's like a support group, going to meet and talk, like group therapy.

Analysis of the literature on CoPs, combined with findings from the pilot implementation suggest these further dimensions that need to be in place for CoP success:

- The work is relatively easy to fulfill.

- It seems appropriately novel, fun, or energizing.

- It gives members an opportunity to highlight their strengths and professional expertise.

- Engaging in the CoP would not significantly detract from other existing priorities.

- Doing so would fill a reservoir of goodwill that participants might need to draw upon later.

- It would expose individuals to new people who might be interesting or helpful in the professional role.

- Tackling the challenge of engaging with the PDF would enable participants to learn/do something they had wanted to learn/do anyway.

- The recipients are likely to appreciate their peers' time and effort.

The potential impact of operating in a CoP, and to develop capacity to support and be supported by peers was also highlighted by a series of pilot study participants:

From this pilot process, I have decided to get involved in mentoring new staff members in our campus. It's nice to be able to give back and support others.

As I have acquired more confidence through working through the PDF, I would have no hesitation to support mentoring of other staff.

I was very taken with the idea of exploring the ways in which I mentor and interact with students, even though I'm not officially on the lecturing staff.

PDF breaks out of everyday working life...it could encourage all staff to have interdisciplinary groups, this kind of light creative way of working where you listen to each other and bond with people who you don't normally come into contact with...it would have a huge benefit in university-wide level, not just part of the grind of what we're doing, it was properly developmental.

*Enhancing the community of practice among the participants in the pilot was one of the most noticeable impacts for us. (*PDF Expert Mentor*)*

However, a key challenge for the sustainability of the PDF will be institutional support for the maintenance of an inclusive community of practice (CoP):

We feel it could give us a voice; it might provide an opportunity for us then start those conversations around these kinds of tensions at an institutional level.

There is institutional "tension". Funded research gets the priority. It's difficult to measure and quantify what they do in teaching.

It was mentioned that attempts to change in teaching are being blocked by the institution but the PDF helps back them up in their attempts to change; some of us are...getting a brow-beating for trying different things by people who would be coming from a very traditional background...the PDF...it's giving the vocabulary to defend yourself in those situations; it's good to know that there are other ways of doing things and new ideas.

Many of the approaches and good practice captured as part of the pilot implementation will be disseminated across the sector through the National Forum's PD Resource Portal.[1]

1.6   Towards a Professional Recognition Framework

A key output of the implementation and evaluation of the PDF with the HE sector will be the emergence of a national PD Recognition Framework (PDRF). Many in the pilot groups suggested that the national professional development recognition framework currently under development (National Forum, 2017 Forthcoming) would benefit from being underpinned by a community of practice approach:

*Bringing groups together for a joint session would be a really good way to generate discussion and the exchange of ideas...there is much to be gained long term through the generation of an enthusiasm and excitement around professional development that is collaborative. (*PDF Participant*)*

The PDRF community of practice could be used as a valuable opportunity to express and test ideas about professional development in an informal and risk-free environment. In such a context, a CoP could provide opportunities for intra and inter disciplinary discussion with

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1   https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/resources-support-use-pdf/

members of different institutions, where the quality of interpersonal relationships is crucial professionally. It could support new teachers who can be welcomed into an environment where the relationship provides a supportive but challenging forum for both intellectual and affective interrogation of practice (Kennedy, 2014).

A social theory of learning will underpin the emerging Professional Recognition Framework, recognising that learning within a community of practice will happen as a result of the membership community and its interactions. It can be a powerful site for the creation of new knowledge by having the combination of many individuals' knowledge through practice. For the PDRF community of practice to be successful, it can be argued that the members should be able to exert a certain level of control over how the membership organisation will be run, thereby creating its own understanding of the joint enterprise. An ultimate measure of the success of the CoP will be if it can act as a powerful site of transformation of teaching and learning in Irish HEIs, where the sum total of individual teacher's knowledge and experience is enhanced significantly through collective endeavour in PD. Some of the identified critical success factors for this new community are having a domain of shared inquiry that energises the core group, and align it with strategies of high relevance for HEIs today. Along with adequate resources, it will also be important to have support from a skilful and reputable co-ordinator/expert/peer mentor, and to find a balance on achieving the right rhythm and mix of PD activities.

1.7   Supporting the Emergence of Transformations at Institutional Level

We believe that the nature of how the PDF was formed holds the potential for it to be both empowering for the individual who teaches, as well as transformational for teaching and learning across all institutions in the sector. The PDF and the emerging PDRF will provide ways of supporting the interrogation of the purpose and potential outcomes of PD structures in HE institutions.

Within each of the five PDF domains and their elements, there is significant potential for all who teach to transform their practice as a result of engagement with the PDF.   A key question to ask is, how can such engagement influence both the transformation of an individual's practice and an institution's approach to T&L? From the evaluation of the recent initial (pilot) implementation of the PDF, a number of examples of transformation were captured. A range of short-term and potential long-term impacts from engagement with the PDF have been identified (Table 1):

Table 2 Short-term and potential long-term impacts of engaging with the PDF

Strongly agreed/Agreed	Short-term impact: engaging with the PDF…
93%	increased my confidence in my professional role
87%	supported the development of my T&L skills
88%	increased my engagement with PD activities
78%	enhanced dialogue and discourse about T&L in my institution
85%	enhanced my T&L practices
	Long-term impact: the PDF has the potential to impact positively on…
93%	student learning
78%	organisational practices and systems in my institution
72%	the culture of enhancement at my institution
79%	discipline and professional groups nationally

Looking specifically at what the pilot participants identified as the power of the PDF domains to transform practice reveals significant potential:

Domain 4 'Professional Knowledge and Skills'

> *I'll now reset the assessment as I'm going to change my whole philosophy around active learning and bringing in actual clients to engage with my students. This work has given me a brand-new energy.*

Domain 5 'Personal and Professional Digital Capacity'

Sharing knowledge about digital skills can transform how individuals approach their teaching into the future:

> *This is an opportunity to think about the things that we do in our practice – it can give breathing space to help me think how could I can implement that into my classroom.*

The PDF encouraged participants to push boundaries and explore technologies:

> *I'm a social scientist and I've been lecturing in communication for a long time, so my expertise has always been people, not technology, and I decided, 'I'm going to push myself out of my comfort zone for this pilot study and I'm going to move into exploring more about technology…*

Engagement also helped participants learn about other universities and research models:

> *One thing that worked really well for our pilot group was because we had participants from both the IOT and the University sectors as well as both teachers and researchers and what was really useful was that we were learning about each other's institutional realities… there are sectoral differences for example in terms of the workload model where researching takes place, there are commonalities too.*

2. Conclusion

The extensive consultation that supported the development of the Irish Professional Development Framework has ensured that the framework is culturally appropriate to the Irish context, is <u>inclusive</u>, and reflects the diverse needs of those who teach within our higher education sector. It is a PD framework that has been devised by the sector for the sector. It <u>empowers </u>individuals to drive their own professional development and take responsibility for their setting and achieving their own personal goals at their own pace. It advocates the notion that professional development is not a once-off activity, but one that is an integrated and essential component of the entire professional career of those who teach. The pilot implementation of the framework has highlighted that it has the power to <u>transform</u> teaching and learning in Irish higher education. It has also pointed to the strength of a <u>community of practice</u> approach to supporting those engaging with the framework across the sector. The diversity of opinion about what the national framework would look like (the form it took and its content) means that the PD Framework as developed may not be considered perfect, but importantly it is accepted by all those who teach in the sector as usable for their practice.

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