Teachers' experiences and perspectives of

Continuous Professional Development in a post primary school.

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ABSTRACT

Continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers has become paramount in most educational systems aimed at improving standards in schools.

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' experiences and perspectives of CPD in a Post-Primary school in Ireland. The researcher examined if teachers experience of CPD is effective, relevant and does it improve teaching and learning. A mixed methodological approach incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods was utilised. The quantitative online questionnaire (n=32) was distributed and a focus group (n=4) was conducted in response to the study's research questions. The data was then analysed using thematic analysis and key themes were identified.

The research found that participants recognised both the opportunities and challenges associated with CPD. CPD that was beneficial for teachers included upskilling, advancing one's career, improving student learning outcomes and implementing new curriculum changes. It was found that it revitalised teachers' enthusiasm for teaching. The challenges associated with CPD that emerged were information overload, difficulty in accessing CPD, the repetitive nature and the quality of CPD provided to teachers. Time poverty and cost benefit of CPD were inhibiting factors that prevented the implementation of CPD.

Recommendations from this small study include the need for more consultation with teachers on CPD with regard the school improvement plan and the school calendar. CPD content should be active, continuous, regular and reviewed. More time should be allocated for teachers to participate in and implement CPD, for teachers to work collaboratively and for reflection.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Glossary

AFL- Assessment for Learning

BERA-British Educational Research Association

CPD- Continuous Professional development

DES- Department of Education and Science

GDPR- General Data Protection Regulation

JC- Junior Cycle

ICT- Information Communication and technology

LYIT-Letterkenny Institute of Technology

NQT- Newly Qualified Teachers

PDST- Professional Development Services for Teachers

SET-Special Educational Teaching

SWOT- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

TY- Transition Year

UCD- University College Dublin

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Quality teaching is essential for both teachers and students. It is imperative that teaching is of the highest quality facilitated by excellent educators, who are adequately prepared for this complex profession. Change is rapid today, demonstrated by advances in technology, the changing needs of young people, high expectations of schools, social media and student's involvement in their own educational goals. The teaching profession must respond effectively to change so that students fulfil their educational goals and journey into adulthood successfully.

Teachers are expected to be dedicated to and recurrently employed in practicing, upskilling, self-monitoring and appraising their individual professional development (Hargreaves, 2003). Teachers should develop continuously to remain an important element in their students' learning course (Adminraal et al, 2016). Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is an individual route towards this greater professional integrity.

According to Hargreaves

> "Schools that are good learning institutions for children must be effective learning organisations for teachers and leaders too" (Hargreaves, 2003, p.20).

1.2 Rationale

Throughout my teaching career I have experienced many forms of CPD; subject specific and non-subject specific CPD in different formats; whole school in-services, conferences, and online courses. In 2010, The Croke Park Agreement (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2010) introduced non-contract extra hours for teachers with the aim of increased performance in the sector. As a teacher my experiences of CPD have been both positive and the negative. I decided to embark on the Master of Arts for Learning and Teaching in LYIT to provide me with the impetus to improve my practice and broaden my knowledge. Lecture content, extensive reading and research projects have extended my knowledge and increased my wisdom and provoked me to change my practice. Completing my Masters has given me an opportunity to reflect on my teaching. It has informed my understanding of praxis. Praxis is the melding of learning theory, pedagogy and practice (Preston and Cuthell, 2012). Praxis is an act or method of doing things considering all conditions and moments that professionals

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encounter (Kemmis and Smyth, 2008). Professional learning nourishes the mind, decreases separation and develops courage for change (Peacock, 2014). It is my master's journey that has rejuvenated my practice, increased my self-esteem, self-confidence and enthusiasm for teaching.

1.3 Research Questions

The motivation to carry out this research emerged from my investigative studies at Masters level and my experience of teaching in the classroom. This research study poses the following questions:

- What are teachers' experiences and perspectives of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in a post primary school?

- Are teachers experiencing effective, relevant and cost benefit CPD?
- Does CPD improve teaching and learning and do students benefit?

1.4 Structure of Research Methodology

The research used a mixed method methodology i.e. a quantitative questionnaire and a qualitative focus group, which focuses on the teacher's voice on CPD experiences in a post-primary school. The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide background data on CPD in the school. I was conscious of some of the issues around the design of questionnaires, such as closed questions and bias in questions because of my experience of teaching. When interpreted, this data helped determine the questions to be discussed at the focus group, regarding teachers' experiences and perspectives of CPD. The focus group transcripts were coded, then analysed for emergent themes and discussed thematically. It is hoped that benefits from the interpretation of the findings will result in enrichment of CPD provision in the school.

1.5 Research Site

I am a Home Economics teacher in an all-girls secondary school in the North-East of Ireland. The school currently enrols 700 plus students and has 45 teaching staff comprising both male and female. The programmes offered in the school include the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

1.6 Audience

The aim of the thesis is to address the research questions. In the next chapter I will review extensive literature pertaining to CPD. I hope that my interpretation of the findings in this research set within the literature will assist in addressing the research questions. It is envisaged that by addressing the research questions that the school will improve the quality of CPD provision in the school. It may also assist in forming a framework for self-evaluation in preparation for future inspections from the DES. Educators need to keep up to date and the resulting data will provide the information required to bring a change in practice. I am aware from my own experience as a teacher of the positives and the negatives impacts of CPD. I aim to minimise the impact of those values on the findings (Carson et al., 2001). Consequently, any recommendations will be based on the findings set within the relevant literature.

1.7 Structure of thesis

This section introduces a brief outline of the remaining chapters. This thesis consists of five chapters.

Chapter two will review current literature pertaining to CPD and will focus on definitions of CPD, the role of CPD in post-primary schools, the benefits of CPD and the quality of CPD provision.

Chapter three will outline the justification and description of the research methods utilized in the collection of data i.e. the questionnaire design, the focus group, including piloting and administration.

Chapter four will present the findings of the research. The results of the questionnaire and the focus group will be analysed and presented. I will use thematic analysis to address the research questions.

Chapter five will present the conclusions and recommendations. Recommendations will be based on the analysis of the findings.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature pertaining to CPD in a secondary school context. It serves to investigate views on CPD in second level schools and examine quality CPD frameworks. It includes a review of the Teaching Council policies, as it is the professional standards body for teaching and learning in Irish schools. The code of professional conduct by the Teaching Council encourages teachers to continue to learn in their professional practice. Hargreaves's views (2003) are explored, as he examines the changing profession from the teachers' perspective and his arguments are direct and practical. His words resonate me as a teacher. Significant authors such as Guskey (2002) and Whitehouse (2011) are also examined, both of whom have written around frameworks of professional development of teachers.

2.2 Definitions of Continuous Professional Development

There are many varied definitions of CPD; some regarding it as a programme and others seeing it as the development of capabilities that leads to enhanced student learning outcomes (Bubb and Earley 2008). CPD and professional development are interchangeable, and it is a term used in the ongoing education and training of professionals. It is a commitment towards self - development and becoming better practitioners. Professional development is an aspect of personal improvement. The two are interrelated and complement each other (Bubb and Earley 2008).

The Code of Professional conduct for teachers set out by the Teaching Council, states that teachers must reflect upon their professional training and avail of CPD, so that they remain current (The Teaching Council 2012). The Teaching Council demands policy on the range of teacher learning that consists of a variety of educational praxis designed to supplement teachers' expert skills, knowledge and abilities during their teaching career (Teaching Council 2011). The Teaching Council is seeking to adopt an ethos of professional learning based on effective commitment.

The Teaching Council defines CPD as

> "lifelong teacher learning and comprises the full range of educational experiences designed to enrich teachers' professional knowledge, understanding and capabilities throughout their career" (The Teaching Council 2011).

Winkler (2001) argues that professional development is a course that converts teacher's capability into proficiency. With that, the teacher adopts their own theory of learning from their involvement. 'Professional development' refers to learning chances that teachers engage in or the learning that occurs when teachers participate. (Feiman- Nemser 2001).

Along the same lines Hargreaves again states

> "Professional development, rather, is a personal path towards greater professional integrity and human growth" (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 48).

CPD can be described as teachers discovering learning, growing mindful of how they learn, how to utilise theory and knowledge developed in their method to promote student's educational outcomes (Avalos 2011, cited in Svendesen, 2017). An important part of this research is to discover whether this is true. Guskey (2002) illustrates the main purpose of professional development as procedures and undertakings intended to improve the expert knowledge, skills and approaches of educators so to increase student learning. It is a process not an event. Guskey (2000) argues that teacher and student learning are intricately related and that CPD practices undertaken must be transferable to the classroom to be beneficial. He sets out that teacher's attitudinal change precedes student outcomes when they observe change in the students. Teachers value CPD which is more hands-on, builds on their knowledge of academic content and models for them daily classroom practices (Saxe et al, 2001). Williams (2011) describes is as a career long obligation for improvement in the classroom that will improve outcomes for students.

The Looking at our Schools (LAOS) (Department of Education 2016) quality framework document is designed for teachers and for school leaders to use in applying the most effective and engaging teaching and learning approaches in schools. The framework sees high quality teaching as significant on student achievement. It views CPD as central to the teaching profession with collaboration and reflection as core.

2.3 CPD at Post Primary Level

In globalised economies CPD for teachers is encouraged to improve educational standards (King 2016). CPD should be relevant, accessible and available to all teachers. The focus of the CPD is on improving student learning outcomes. Improving the students learning experience is the core of teacher learning (Inspectorate 2016). School Self-Evaluation is an in-house means of development to ensure excellence and develop teaching, learning and therefore school performance (Hofman et al. 2009). Professional learning communities are supported through education centres, subject associations and cluster days. Key priority areas on a national level are numeracy, literacy, ICT, inclusion and the new Junior Cycle. To improve professional development many teachers', participate in the marking of the state examinations, including written papers, oral examinations, project and practical work. Teachers embark on the task to further their own comprehension of the examination procedures and as part of their CPD.

CPD assists professionals to cope with changes in the education system in terms of conduct and practice. Teaching Council Policy affirms that CPD is a right and a responsibility of all educators to participate in CPD (The Teaching Council 2011). Positive change cannot be delayed for a new cohort of teachers. It requires outlay in the current teacher personnel, delivering quality professional development (OECD, 2011). It should be grounded on teachers' requirements within the school (The Teaching Council, 2011). Teachers' views of their identity affect their effectiveness and professional development. It also affects their capacity to manage educational change and advances of their teaching practice (Beijaard et al., 2000).

A key function of CPD is to affirm the teacher's professional role and identity as an educational practitioner (Lawlor, 2014). Hargreaves (2003) emphasises how important it is that teachers today must understand the society in which their students live and consequently prepare them for it. According to Hargreaves,

> "Teaching for the knowledge economy fosters and thrives on creativity, flexibility, problem-solving, ingenuity, collective intelligence, professional trust, continuous improvement and risk-taking" (Hargreaves 2003, p.21).

Research has recognized formal and informal professional development as important for developing teaching methods, pedagogy and improved student learning (Day and Leitch,

2007). As society is changing, teachers must be facilitated in coping with the changing cohort of students by acquiring proficiencies and practices to assist them in this evolving profession.

2.4 Guidelines and framework of quality CPD

The Teaching Council's Policy (2011) on the Continuum of Teacher Education includes the principles of effective CPD. The principles are participative in type, encouraging educators to seriously consider their teaching practices, work settings and to engage in professional collaboration. Quality CPD should be derived by identifying learning needs and recognition of needs leads to greater usefulness of CPD opportunity (Whitehouse, 2011). CPD needs to be creative and innovative (Burns and Lawrie, 2015). This is very relevant for the research questions on teachers experience of CPD regarding if it is effective and relevant. Swanned et al (2010) suggest CPD design to be school based but not exclusively so. The Teaching Council (2011) recommends that CPD should be constructivist in nature encompassing formal and informal learning. The basis on constructivist theory is that learning occurs through experience. Dewey (1938) called the approach learning by doing. Villa (2006) argued that CPD should model constructivist teaching with the focus on the learner. Teachers need opportunities to explore, questions and discuss to integrate new ideas into the classroom. The main aim is to create an active-learning environment on preparing the learner not only for state examinations but also for life after school (Villa 2006). The focus should be on problem solving, collaboration, sharing of ideas, communication and reflection.

CPD needs to be sustained (Richardson, 2003). Lawlor points out that short term training events have little impact on transforming change practices (Lawlor, 2014). Ongoing engagements with learning opportunities outcomes are more effective in enhancing teaching practice (Whitehouse, 2011). In post-primary education the subjects are different in their pedagogies and have their own individual emphases. Quality CPD undertaken where possible should be subject specific to be more beneficial to the teacher and the learner (Whitehouse, 2011). Research shows it is effective and successful for the teachers' practice and adds to student learning when it is constant, closely linked to the teachers' work, nurtures relationships and leads to school improvement (Wei et al., 2009). Literature has explored collaboration facilitates and places significance on the development of a code of practice (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). Studies on teacher professional learning show that teacher professional learning is appropriate and valid when involved with resources of practice, when learning experiences

are school based and assimilated in the everyday work of teachers (Borko, 2004). So as educators we must evaluate CPD against this framework.

As stated by Hargreaves

> "Today's teachers therefore need to be committed to and continually engaged in pursuing, upgrading, self-monitoring and reviewing their own professional learning" (Hargreaves 2003, p.16)

CPD is a career long obligation for improvement in the classroom that will improve outcomes for students (Williams, 2011). The teacher becomes the decision maker on how best the CPD support relates to their classroom practice. Quality CPD relies on effective collaboration. Teachers that participate in collaboration in their training and development practices achieve greater benefits from CPD training (Whitehouse, 2011).

In keeping with Hargreaves

> "Professional learning can take many forms, informal learning from colleagues or more formal learning from data and evidence" (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 19).

It is important that teachers collaborate with each other in sharing knowledge obtained to benefit the learning environment for students. Teachers need to tap into the experience and cost-effective methods already in their school (Weston, 2014). Working together with other teachers supports teachers in their professional development (Watts, 1985). This is aspirational because many teachers work in isolation. As Ainscow (2015) concludes teachers that work in seclusion at post-primary level find it difficult to discuss their practice in the classroom. A considerable quantity of literature has explored collaborative CPD and places worth on working with colleagues (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Professional learning involves encouragement, coaching, mentoring and reflection (Ball, 1994). An idea that is purposeful, planned on innovation is a paradigm for school based CPD (Sherrington, 2014). The Teaching Council Strategic Plan (2015-2017) reports that teaching, and learning are successful through positive and constructive relationships.

2.5 Are post primary schools looking at CPD in the right way?

Effective learning is active (Duncombe & Armour, 2004). Liberman (1995) believes that teachers are often passive recipients instead of active ones when external CPD is provided so therefore professional learning cannot occur. It often does not bring about concrete, measured

changes in the classroom (Fullan, 1991). Schools focus each year on a theme for the school improvement plan. The process is taken in steps so that teachers do not become overwhelmed with initiatives. Research implies that it is hard for teachers to create and maintain improved student learning if circumstances do not occur for teachers (Silns & Mulford, 2002).

Learning is a gradual process (Cordingley et al 2003). This is echoed by many writers on education. Once off in-service training does not deliver teachers with the necessary time or framework to learn (Sweeney, 2005). It frequently results in no measured change in teaching practice (Fullan, 1991). It has consequences for the type of actions teachers should take part in one-time seminars and conventions are less likely to make a difference to teaching (Admiraal et al., 2016). The most common expressed reason for inadequate engagement is lack of time. Support for teachers' learning needs to be continuous and concentrated rather than short and infrequent (Richardson, 2003). It also requires teachers to think differently as there is often a predictable decrease in energy and impetus after a time. Feedback of professional development constantly points out unproductiveness of programmes due to not considering factors as to what motivates the teacher and how change happens in teachers (Guskey, 2002). This precedes the research questions for more effective CPD models due to the failings of externally directed professional learning.

Teachers are worn down by the demand of the classroom and the continuous need to deliver proof of their own effectiveness (Peacock, 2014). Effective CPD methods are difficult to maintain. As teaching practices are ever changing the process of CPD must be ongoing and re-evaluated frequently. Training and development supports must be well balanced and evidence based. It requires a change in mind set. Villa (2006) claims that one of the reasons that CPD of teachers has not brought about changes in classroom practice are the issues that motivate teachers. Teachers past beliefs and experiences affect what they learn from the professional development experience. Other inhibitor factors of CPD are the cost, linguistic issues and geographical location (Villegnes-Reimers, 2003).

2.6 Conclusion

The educational environment is constantly changing in response to curriculum and legislatives reform. CPD should be viewed as an investment so to encourage teachers to be pre-emptive and motivated in their praxis. I have attempted to illustrate the theory regarding CPD and its relevance in contemporary society.

<div align="center">**Chapter 3**</div>

<div align="center">**Research Methodology**</div>

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology that was used to collect and analyse the data. The data collection is based on a mixed method approach. The term 'mixed methods' refers to the use of two or more approaches in a research project yielding both qualitative and quantitative data. It involves a philosophical theory that directs the gathering and analysis of data (Creswell & Piano Clark 2007). Begley (1996) suggests that a combination of research methods can provide a more comprehensive and real representation.

The questions that I hope to address are:

- What are teachers' experiences and perspectives of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in a post-primary school?
- Are teachers experiencing effective, relevant and cost benefit CPD?
- Does CPD improve teaching and learning and do students benefit?

3.2 Mixed methods

Bryman (2012) presents that research is a form of inquiry which is disciplined in nature, following an exact method to solve a problem or provide answers to questions. The best research design is one that will best answer the question asked (Bryman, 2012). The research methodology regarding primary data was a mixed method. I used a quantitative questionnaire and a qualitative focus group with teachers in a post-primary school. I chose this methodology approach to get a better understanding into the experiences and perspectives of teachers of CPD in a post-primary school. The research design had a clear link between the methods of data collection, the techniques of data analysis and the research questions being investigated. The questionnaire is formal, impartial and has methodical process (Burns and Grove,1995). A focus group is a type of group interview commonly used by researchers and is a useful research method in education (George, 2012). Qualitative research is organised, interactive and has a subjective approach (Burns and Grove, 1995). The data generated was set within the literature in the analysis. Secondary data on CPD regarding a literature review began in August 2019.

3. 3 Quantitative Data: Questionnaire

According to Bryman (2012) questionnaires are normally associated with quantitative research. Bryman acknowledges the benefits of including open ended questions as it gives the participants the opportunity to give a personal response based on their own experience. It promotes participants to engage and communicate their opinions on a subject (Creswell, 2012). Open ended questions were valuable when I did not know all the likely different responses. Some of the questions consisted of rating scales which are widely used in research. Closed ended questions are used when there are a fixed number of alternative responses. Questions can use a fixed response format called the Likert-type scale. Closed questions are easy to respond to and easy to quantify (Opie, 2004). I decided to use a questionnaire as it was easy to administer, practical and quick for teachers to respond to (Creswell, 2012). It is a convenient way of collecting information that is easy to analyse. The questionnaire was constructed via google documents and was sent by email to all teachers. Participants were familiar with the topic. An information sheet (Appendix 7) was given to all participants and the research study was mentioned at a staff meeting before it is emailed to ensure a good response level.

Web based questionnaires response rates are low (Creswell, 2012). A reminder announcement at breaktime was used to remind teachers that I was going to forward a questionnaire. I did this as I was gathering the data in a short space of time. I acknowledged that the sample was small of approximately forty-five teachers. However, it provided data that was easily quantifiable. Thirty two of the forty-five teaching staff members of the school completed the online questionnaire representing a response rate of 71 per cent. Full results of the survey are available in the appendix nine.

3.4 Qualitative approach- Focus group

The information gained from the questionnaire facilitated the proposed second method of research, the focus group. Bryman (2012) explains how focus groups pose occasions to delve into topics in more detail. A focus group is a deliberate sequence of discussions intended to acquire insights on a definite area of significance in a non-judgemental, non-aggressive atmosphere (Krueger & Casey, 2009). I developed open ended questions based on the results of the questionnaire which enabled me to investigate deeper into the participants experiences of CPD. Individual experiences and opinions are central to this research. I developed questions

around responses to the questionnaire in particularly regarding the quality of CPD and collaborative CPD. The focus group was selected from those that volunteered from the questionnaire as I asked participants to volunteer to be part of the focus group in question 10 (Appendix 2). The focus group was carried out following the completion of the online questionnaire.

Focus groups are homogenous, purposeful samples of participants that have something in common with each other and foster thoughtful listening (Kreuger and Casey, 2002). The teachers all work in the same school and so are familiar with each other as they work together. The focus group was conducted to gather the range of opinion of teachers of CPD and the lived experiences of teachers' engagement with CPD (Keuger and Casey, 2002). As stated by Willig (2008) such viewpoints are open to interpretation however they are genuine for the participants. It commends the individuality of participant(s) with the changing world and the people who interact with it (Cohen et al, 2007). Smaller groups used in research are inclined to produce less exact estimates than larger samples (Polit et al, 2001). Creswell (2014) describes that participant's opinions on a subject area are best created during discussions. Therefore, I decided to conduct a focus group.

I had to be aware of interview bias (Gibbs, 2007). This style of interview permits matters to be discussed and the phrasing of questions to be left to the researcher's judgment (Bryman, 2003). Participants reflected and discussed their experience of CPD which is a very broad straight forward question. I had to focus on objectivity. My own experience of CPD both negative and positive in the education system could cloud my judgement. At all times I wanted to elicit the views of the participants as opposed to my own. I had questions prepared to assist in the development of the research data (Appendix 3). This allowed the participants to reply openly and honestly. It enabled me to probe and make clarifications of answers for a more comprehensive investigation (Heritage, 1984).

Participants were aware that the discussion was recorded and field notes were taken by me. Field notes recorded individual responses and non-verbal reactions to identify possible personal biases. The opening conversations with participants focussed on confidentiality and anonymity, along with how and where the research results would be published. During the focus group I took note of facial expressions, hand actions and general manner that enhanced the interpretations of participants spoken words (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009).

The advantages of conducting the focus group was that I had access to the participants quickly after conducting the questionnaire. This also allowed me as a facilitator to respond to anticipated developments such as expanding on a point made by a participant. Bryman (2012) explains that there are challenges to focus groups such as management of the group, the direction of the interview, the quantity of data recorded and transcriptions notes. Data may be difficult to analyse and organise. I was aware of issues that can occur during the focus group such as one or two participants dominating the conversation which can skew the data. I encouraged all four teachers to talk and let the conversation flow. I kept it focused on the topic which was a challenge as we all work together and have experienced CPD together. I was also aware of the observer effect of reactivity as described by Parahoo (1997) such as participants providing responses, they felt I expected, as opposed to giving their true feelings on an issue. I had difficulty taking notes because so much was discussed. Conducting the focus group during lunch time helped me keep the discussion on topic as we only had a limited time of forty minutes. I placed a notice on the door so we would not be interrupted. I encouraged all teachers to talk and give their opinions. Another challenge was that I was not an experienced facilitator, so I was quite nervous. I overcame this by being really prepared.

3.4.1 Organisation of the focus group

The focus group met in the Home Economics kitchen at lunch time because of logistical issues. Lunch was provided for the teachers. It was private and free from disturbances. It is recommended to use a minimum of three to twelve participants (Kruger & Casey, 2009). I used four participants. It is important the participants feel safe and comfortable to talk (Kruger & Casey, 2009). I wanted to create a safe environment where teachers could express themselves naturally and I felt comfortable interpreting want they were expressing. There was a sense of ease among the participants. The plan was that the participants would do all the talking. An information leaflet regarding the function of the research was distributed. Participants were informed that some of the data would be circulated in the LYIT library (Appendix 5) and that they could withdraw from the study up until the data has been transcribed. I saw it as my role to

'listen, observe with sensitivity and to encourage' (Charmaz, 2006 pg. 25).

The first participant, a female, has 18 years teaching experience, has a leadership role in the school and has a post graduate qualification in Education. The second member of the group, a male, has a post graduate qualification in Education and a guidance qualification with 10 years'

experience. The third contributor was a newly qualified teacher. The fourth teacher has over 30 years teaching experience, has a post graduate qualification in Education and a leadership role in the school.

In preparation, I familiarised myself with the results of the questionnaires. The questionnaire results set the agenda for the focus group. Questions relating to the advantages and disadvantages of CPD, teachers experience regarding relevance and application of CPD in the classroom were asked. I also questioned collaborative CPD in depth. The focus group was intended to facilitate a professional discussion for exploring contextual views through a non-directive approach (Robson, 2002), rather than to provoke precise replies. The participants provided valuable experience and opinions to the focus group. The focus group lasted thirty minutes and flowed effortlessly. All the participants were eager to voice their opinion and share their experiences of CPD. A copy of the transcript from the focus group can be found in the appendix 1.

3.5 Ethical considerations

There are ethical considerations at every stage of the research activity. Ethics is doing the morally right thing and respecting participants in the research. Most colleges would have their own ethics guidelines and committees which aid the appraisal of research proposals (Cohen et al, 2007). Advice on ethics was given at lectures in LYIT and research was conducted according to LYIT's procedures. An ethical application form was completed in detail and was submitted by email to the LYIT Ethical Committee. Ethical permission was granted to carry out the proposed research in December 2019 subject to minor modifications which were overseen and permitted by my supervisor.

 Along with the ethical application a template for the proposed questionnaire (Appendix 2), focus group questions (Appendix 3), an information leaflet (Appendix 6) and a consent letter for participants (Appendix 7) was emailed to the LYIT Ethical Committee. I pursued questions that contributed to knowledge, were appropriate to the research and work according to the LYIT guidelines. I liaised regularly with my supervisor.

A gatekeeper is a person in authority in the research site (Creswell, 2012). Gatekeeper consent was needed to conduct the questionnaire and focus group of staff. Permission was required from the Board of Management and the school Principal. A letter summarizing the proposed

research was provided (Appendix 8). The Principal confirmed in writing that she understood and agreed that the data was to be utilised for research purposes.

All research conducted was in line with the ethical guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2004). As the research site is my place of employment, I had to be careful of bias, relationships and decisions made during the research procedure to prevent potential disadvantages associated with an insider researcher. It was of ethical significance that the participants did not feel coerced to partake by me, as the researcher, out of allegiance since they are my friends and work colleagues. The participants involved in the on-line questionnaire, focus group and the school identity were not divulged in the research writeup and results. I ensured that the research methods did not overly increase the workload of participants involved in the questionnaire and focus group. Participation was voluntary and all answers were treated anonymously. Participants received full information about the study from a cover letter. They were then in the position to make an informed choice on whether they would participate or not. The participants are referred to throughout this research as Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3 and Teacher 4. In this study confidentiality and anonymity was ensured to protect the respondents from any distress (BERA, 2004). The key value of ethics is to handle participants with caution, respect and thoughtfulness (Robson, 2011). Confidentiality was afforded the highest importance throughout the research, with no participant being recognised or identifiable in the publicly obtainable written materials by anyone other than myself.

The data gathered was kept in an anonymous format to safeguard confidentiality (Punch, 2000). It was password protected. The participants were given the chance to withdraw from the study at any period until data had been studied. Information obtained during the research project was securely collected. Any field notes taken during the focus group was transcribed. All research data was locked in a cabinet in my classroom. Safeguarding the privacy of individuals regarding their personal data is subject to the terms of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2018). Article 5 refers to data minimisation.

I reviewed the ethics policies at University College Dublin (UCD) where many are currently under review. The UCD policies are well established and many of them have been tried and tested. There are twenty-four documents and procedures available on the website on ethics. LYIT's are in the initial phases of development of its policies and the ethics policy is at draft level. UCD's code of practice ensures high standards of integrity in all research activities. The

UCD research ethics policy aims to ensure quality and best practice on gaining ethical approval (UCD, 2016). Both educational institutes reference and use BERA guidelines.

3.6 Data Analysis

The mixed method approach allows me to seek a more panoramic view of CPD in a post-primary school. Results of the questionnaire were quantifiable and were statistically analysed. Results were collected and interpreted. Google forms presents each question data by means of pie charts. I used this data to formulate questions for the focus group, concentrating on the personal experiences of the participants of CPD and the application of CPD in schools. Krueger (2000) confirms that quantitative methods allows us to condense vast sources of information and assist comparisons. However, data analysis can be quite narrow and superficial. Results are limited as they provide statistical accounts rather than narrative. It produces fewer rich accounts of teacher's insights which is core to this research. This was one of the reasons for choosing mixed methods. Data analysis is core to trustworthy qualitative research. Qualitative data can be challenging so I applied a thematic analysis framework to the focus group data. This is characterised as significant, coherent and doable. Cohen et al (2007) states that there are limits to research involving people's experience as there is often no easy response to an issue. I acknowledge that validity varies from one sample situation to another.

Thematic analysis is a strategy for classifying qualitative data. Thematic analysis focuses on areas such as experiences and perception (Joffe, 2012). This method of data analysis is an accessible method for a novice researcher as is the case of this study (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is the one of the most common approaches used in qualitative data analysis. It is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting within data (Braun and Clarke, 2014). It is an opportunity to comprehend the potential of a subject more widely (Marks and Yardley, 2004).

It was imperative that I endeavored for maximum validity, as the methods used in the research are intended to examine participant's experiences and perspectives of CPD (Saunders et al, 2009). Research must have validity to be meaningful (Cohen et al, 2011). Validity is concerned with accuracy and may be described as either internal or external. Internal validity concerns the data collection tool, denoting the likelihood of a noted effect being attributable to a direct cause (Peat, 2002). External validity concerns the application of results to the public, known as generalisabilty (Krathwohl, 1993). To ensure validity I outlined precisely how the results may be applied (Peat, 2002). I was completely transparent in the approach and I recognised

it's limitations. (Shenton, 2004). Although this study does not seek to generalise findings to other schools, they may be of relevance to other post-primary schools in Ireland (Yin, 2009).

Braun and Clarke (2006) provide an outline for directing this type of analysis which is flexible and clear. The research questions informed and prompted questions for the focus group. (Appendix 2). The aim was to gather an 'authentic' understanding of participants' experiences of CPD and it is believed that open-ended questions during the focus group are the most effective (Seale & Silverman, 1997). Thematic analysis reports patterns within data (Braun and Clark, 2006). I transcribed the information, generated codes and themes. Coding decreases data into small pieces of meaning. They are summary markers of the data that appears interesting (Namey et al, 2008). A theme captures something significant in the data in relation to the research questions. This process is illustrated in appendix one.

3.7 Thematic Analysis- Qualitative Research

Data from the focus group was analysed by following a useful six phase procedure designed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This model appealed me as it was easy to follow and gave clear guidelines on how to analyse the data (Table 3.1). It was chosen as it works well with a wide range of research questions and allows the researchers to generate themes at an early stage. It can work also with a small data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Data was examined with the support of Microsoft Word.

Table 3.1: Braun & Clarke six phase framework for a thematic analysis

Step 1	Become familiar with the data	Step 4	Review themes
Step 2	Generate initial codes	Step 5	Define themes
Step 3	Search for themes	Step 6	Write up

3.7.1 Become familiar with the data

I conducted the focus group and recorded the interviews on a recording device and transcribed the interview. I found the process of transcription time consuming. I have limited experience in transcribing, so I read some literature around the process of transcribing. Transcribing can be excellent way to become familiar with the information and the data (Reissman, 1993). It is recognised as an interpretative act where meanings are formed (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). Oliver, Serovish and Mason (2005) suggest that transcription is an important act of representation and is an important aspect of any qualitative inquiry. They argue that the

transcription step research can affect how data is conceptualised. Tiley (2003) concurs with this view and argues the importance of researchers taking seriously the ways in which the person transcribing influences research data. I used the naturalist approach to transcription in which every utterance is captured in as much detail as possible (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I felt comfortable in interpreting what was being said as I was familiar with the use of nuances and colloquialisms used in the focus group. I was diligent when transcribing and analysing the findings. The transcript was read and re-read to become familiar with the information. This will assist with ensuring reliability.

3.7.2 Generate initial codes

Coding is a process of identifying and categorising segments of data, line by line or paragraph by paragraph that summarises and accounts for each piece of data. Processed data can be displayed and classified according to similarities and differences (Huberman and Miles, 1994). Data is organised into meaningful groups for easy retrieval and identification (Tuckett, 2005). Denscombe (2010) maintains that researchers should begin with an 'open mind' and the researcher should approach the subject without an agreed set of ideas. I was concerned with specific research questions and explored the data. Denscombe does acknowledge that an 'open mind' is not a 'blank mind' and should not approach

'the analysis of data using preordained ways of seeing things' (Denscombe, 2010 p108).

Coding can be managed in a variety of ways. Code names can be imaginary, actual words 'in vivo' or taken from the literature. The codes assigned to the data were not predefined as open coding was implemented (Gibbs, 2007). I did this process manually by cutting and pasting the transcript electronically into small pieces for analysis into a table in Microsoft word. The initial coding was done after transcription. This involved colour coding themed areas of key points of relevance on CPD such as advantages and disadvantages. For instance, when a teacher referred to an advantage or positive feature of CPD I highlighted it purple and a negative in yellow. On the left-hand side of the page are codes and on the right-hand side are observation and notes. The coding procedures employed as part of the analysis was a way of making sense of the data and understanding what was said in the focus group. I interpreted the elements of the teachers' experience. A problem that can can happen at this stage is the researcher's own bias may 'corrupt' the process. I was very aware of this when coding as my own expereince of CPD can influence the picture (Carson et al, 2001).

110		examine. Lack of examiners. Its nearly twice the work	
111		you have to do as you have to leave work for the	
112		classes and go to CPD. You come back to all this work	
113		which you have to correct. Sometimes it's not worth	Tone of
114		the effort.	voice-apathy
115	legal- CP	**Teacher 2:** I would say the benefit from my point of	
116	technical	view is that my job there is legal obligations at times.	
117		So, say something to do the career guidance	
118		confidential meets child protection. You know so	
119		sometimes it's very technical so it can only be	
120		addressed in a full day of training. Em so that one be	Serious-tone
121		one of the real benefits of it. Em. I would find that a	emphasis
122		days that it's great to be out for the day you get loads	
123	one off days-	of ideas but a one off day has very 1 very limited	
124	limited impact	impact on your practice (nods from group) because	Nods of
125	little structure	you come up with ideas but you probably would need	agreement
126	disconnected	something there a little more structured to kind of add	
127	nature	to that. So, you know that would be the disconnected	
128		nature of the different CPD. I feel is the /an issue why	
129	location	it doesn't necessarily always make the change its kind	
130	access	of meant too. The course aren't suiting me due to	
131		location or I don't get the time out to do it in terms of	

3.2 Colour coding themes to analyse interview transcript

I have included a more detailed example of the coding procedures used in the appendix one. This will give the reader a feel for the focus group. The process of coding and comparing the pieces of data provide a

'conceptual handle on the studied experience' (Charmaz, 2003, p.3)

I am satisfied that the sample chosen produced a robust representation of teachers' experience.

3.7.3 Searching for themes

A theme is a pattern that describes something significant or noteworthy about the research question (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). The codes feed into the themes which in turn assist in addressing the three research questions. The theme of the interviews relates to the research question as outlined above, an attempt at establishing realties experienced by teachers. Themes can be distinguished on two levels: semantic and latent. Semantic themes refer to information

that does not go beyond what the participant had stated. Latent themes focus on the underlying assumptions (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Following the initial coding I felt that the data was coded on a descriptive or semantic level. Codes are sorted into themes. The data was then coded again for a more analytical level of latent coding. Themes are broader and involve interpretation of the codes. The analytical process applied to the transcripts of the focus group yielded important themes that were evident in the data. Some codes may become redundant. The theme titles assigned do not represent exact teacher quotes. They have been assigned to best describe the themes that emerged (Boyatzis, 1998). The themes identified

- Teachers' perspectives regarding the advantages of CPD
- Teachers' perspectives of the disadvantages of CPD,
- Relevance and logistics of CPD
- Cost benefit of CPD including collaborative CPD.

3.7.4 Review themes

During this phase themes were identified. I named and defined the themes. I read the themes, codes and extracts multiple times until all relevant data was coded. This is an iterative process. Codes then collapsed into themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) identifes that a theme captures an important concept. Logistics were merged with the relevance of CPD theme as there was inconsistencies within the theme. It was too broad. Collaborative CPD was merged with cost benefit. The themes need to be comprehensible and distinctive from each other. The themes had to make sense and I had to have data to support each theme to ensure the themes answered the research questions. It is presented as structured summaries, synopses and vignettes (Huberman and Miles, 1994). The focus group gave voice to the research participants and each opinion was important for the research.

3.7.5 Defining the themes

This is the final refinement of the theme. At this stage I was satisfied with the nominated titles for each theme. Each theme was descriptive and engaging. I expanded each theme by defining it as outlined in Table 3.3. They also related to the research questions posed. The aim was to identify

'the essence of what each theme was about' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pg. 92).

3.3 Definition of Themes and Corresponding Data Extracts

Themes	Definition	Data Extracts from Transcript
Advantages of CPD	This theme encapsulates the teachers outlook and participation in CPD in post primary education. Each teacher considered the advantages or the positives of CPD.	**Teacher One** *'I know some of my colleagues have participated in CPD in relation to advance their career such as law or leadership'.* **Teacher One** *'It energizes you a bit and you come back full of all these good ideas…eh em a bit more creative maybe and listening to other people and their experiences and you pick up some tips and tricks'.*
Disadvantages of CPD	This theme summarises the teachers' opinions and experience in CPD in post primary education. Each teacher considered the disadvantages or the negatives of CPD.	**Teacher Two** ''*it's easy to forget. You can be overwhelmed with quantity and new ideas and where there is no follow up it very easy to go back to your old practices'* **Teacher Three:** '*I think teachers don't have the time to reflect on what they have learnt at CPD and to apply it. Then they go back to what they know already'*

Relevance of CPD and logistics	This data looked at the dependability, consistency, trustworthiness of CPD and access to meet the needs of schools. This theme looked at the relevance of CPD for the teacher and student in terms of productivity, effectiveness, application and efficiency.	**Teacher Two** *'however, it can be difficult to access because often as there is not enough space to get on a programme or then it is difficult to get released or to get out.'* **Teacher three** *'I use CPD to upskill particularly when it comes to ICT and technology methodologies would help me with my subject, the new music course. It's very digital oriented, just getting new ideas all the time on how to use devices such as recording equipment, etc. It can be very useful.'*
Cost Benefit	This theme looks at the cost benefit of CPD and then subtracts the costs associated with taking the action such as cost in time, financial, outlay for teachers participating in CPD. It also measures the other benefits such as teacher morale. I merged collaborative into this theme as an opportunity cost to achieving benefits while preserving savings.	**Teacher Four** *'it's great to meet other teachers and have conversations with them. You get ideas and you discover that if you are having challenges that you are not the only one'* **Teacher Four** *'I find sometimes when you have the peer to peer stuff that it gets woolly; people start talking about other things. And you don't get as much out of it. But that's my thinking personally'*

3.7.6 Writing Up

The final stage of data analysis involves the presentation of the data within this thesis. It must inform the reader and must be analytic in form, presenting a case and strengthened by suitable data extracts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The data collected arose from the focus group transcripts.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

It was felt that the strategy of a pilot test would help ensure validity and reduce the risk of bias. Reliability of questionnaires depends largely on the way questions are worded and the way the questionnaire is structured. Considerable time was spent on designing the questionnaire and formulating questions. Pre-set answers will not necessarily reflect how participants really feel about answers and in some cases, they might just choose the closer match. The questionnaire results informed the discussion and thus the themes arising out of the focus group.

The mixed method of research has initiation purposes to draw out similarities but also differences or distinctions. The focus group adds depth to the findings and expands the scope of the research and therefore may have a developmental purpose (Greene et al, 1989). Bryman (2008) writes that the merits of mixed methods are that it aids the totality of the enquiry and therefore credibility. These combine to address authenticity, resonance, and trustworthiness (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Silverman (2004) argues that in qualitative research, reliability can be aided by transparency of research design and data analysis.

A pilot test is a useful component of conducting research to reduce errors (Bryman, 2003). The main purpose of it is to ensure that the questions will be clear and explicit (Bryman 2003). Macintyre (2012) writes that pilot testing examines whether questions are understood and indicates questions that will cause difficulty. The first and most efficient way to find out the value of a questionnaire is to test it (Parahoo, 1997). I decided to carry out a small-scale trial to ensure the questions were feasible involving two colleagues. The development of standard questions by researchers can lead to 'structural biases' and false representations, where the data actually reflects the view of them instead of the participants. The pilot test helped to ensure that the questions are worded correctly, unbiased and unambiguous. Parahoo (1997) suggests that a pilot study tests whether the participants understand the instructions and how relevant the questions are to the research. The pilot study indicated how long the questionnaires and the focus group would take to complete. When the data from the pilot study was collected and

scrutinized I made revisions and refinements to eliminate any problems regarding the online questionnaire, such as the addition of upskilling to question seven of the questionnaire and the removal of "Croke Park" from question seven. The Croke Park Agreement introduced non-contract extra hours for teachers with the aim of increased performance in the sector.

Punch (1999) determines validity as

> "the extent to which an instrument measures what it is claimed to measure" (Punch 1999, p. 100)

It was necessary that I strived for maximum validity. It was felt that the pilot study strategy chosen would help ensure validity and reduce the risk of bias.

3.9 Limitations

Limitations relate to the personal nature of the feeling and potential research bias (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2002). As stated by Potter (2002) conducting research in the workplace is challenging. I work in the school where the research was carried out. Those surveyed and interviewed are colleagues. According to Rooney (2005) the 'Insider Researcher' is someone who has direct participation or association with the research location. This can make objectivity an issue. Cohen et al (2007) states that there are limits to research involving people's experience as there is often no easy response to an issue. The sample was limited in size and restricted to one post- primary school. This could be seen as a weakness, however validity, relevance and the results produced by a small research study will have more to do with the 'information richness' (Patton 2001, p.185) of what the participants are stating and the investigation, understanding and presentation of the information than the sample size. To ensure validity of the study a pilot survey and a semi-structured interview for the focus group was conducted with impartial colleagues. Sufficient time was given within the school day to dispense the questionnaires and conduct the focus group. Results were applicable to this post-primary school. This does not indicate feedback from the teachers from the school as a whole or nationally. I am conscious of not making generalisations. However, the findings may be useful and are generalizable as the research findings can be applied to other post-primary settings other than that in which they were originally conducted. It would be interesting to find out if the concerns at the core of this research were as significant to different types of schools in different contexts. Finally, I am a part-time student which may limit the scope of the study. Other factors also are the time frame and the set word count for the project.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the information and data gathered by a mixed method approach described in chapter three. The study aims to explore

- What are teachers' experiences and perspectives of CPD in a post primary school?
- Are teachers experiencing effective, relevant and cost benefit CPD?
- Does CPD improve teaching and learning and do students benefit?

This section details the results and findings that have emerged from the data from the anonymous online questionnaire and the focus group. The use of a qualitative method has many advantages one of which is to supplement and enhance the findings that were obtained in the quantitative data collection phase.

The author surveyed forty-five teachers in a north- east post primary school. From the forty-five surveyed, thirty-two teachers responded. The response rate to the online questionnaire was 71 per cent (n-32). The use of quantitative data in any research is considered numerically, while qualitative narrative data was collected to get a deeper insight of teachers experiences of CPD. I will use pie charts as an aid to quantitatively analyse the data gathered from the respondents.

4.2 Quantitative Data: Questionnaire Results

Question one of the questionnaires asked teachers if CPD should happen within the school.

Continuous Professional Development should happen within the school

Agree	25
Disagree	7
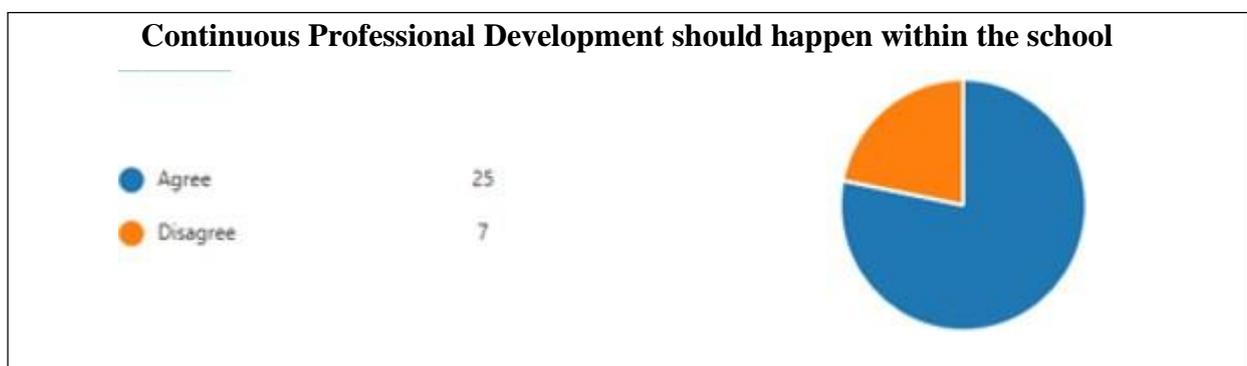
Figure 4.2.1 Teachers responses to CPD should happen in school

A very positive finding of 78.12 per cent (n=25) of teachers surveyed felt that the CPD should happen with the school. Only 21.88 per cent (n=7) disagreed (Figure 4.2.1). The research finds that CPD is very important part of the post primary education. Over the last couple of years teachers are experiencing staff CPD due to Junior Cycle reform. This occurs in schools as mentioned in the focus group. Subject specific CPD often occurs in schools but also in teacher centres. It was interesting to note that 21.88 per cent disagreed and found CPD should happen outside of school. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2014) documents the benefits of taking teachers out of their normal surroundings to create new experiences that challenges their practices.

Question two on the questionnaire asked teachers if they are encouraged to participate in CPD.

Teachers are encouraged and supported to participate in CPD

Yes	25
No	7

Figure 4.2.2 Teachers responses that they are encouraged and supported to participate in CPD

Figure 4.2.2 shows that 78.12 per cent (n=25) stated yes and that teachers are encouraged and supported to participate in CPD. The positive figures indicate that this educational institution is a learning enriched school. As shown in the pie chart, the large proportion of teachers agreed that they were encouraged and supported to participate in CPD which overlaps with research question one regarding teachers' experiences and perspectives of CPD. I feel it is necessary to highlight that 21.88 per cent (n=7) disagree and were not particularly satisfied with the support. Seven out of the thirty-two participants disagreed. These results correlate quite well with the data obtained previously in response to question one 78.12 per cent (n=25) of teachers surveyed felt that the CPD should happen with the school. Only 21.88 per cent (n=7) disagreed.

I asked participants in question three *'If they had inputs into their own CPD?',* to gain a good understanding of their experience in the school. Figure 4.2.3 represents the responses received by the participants.

Inputs into CPD

Yes   25

No   7
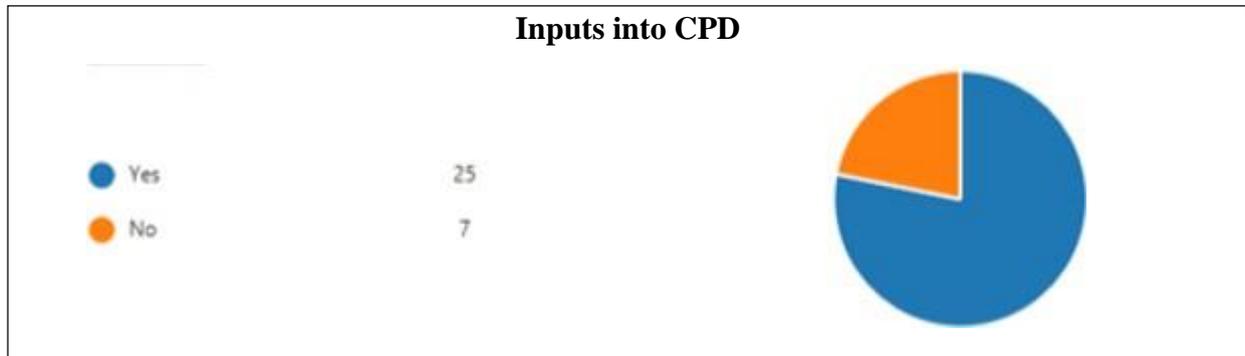
Figure 4.2.3 Teachers responses to input into CPD

It shows that 78.12 per cent (n=25) of respondents felt that they had input into to their own CPD, while 21.88 per cent (n=7) felt that they had no input. This is an encouraging figure and overlaps research question regarding their experience of CPD and that the experience is effective, useful and relevant. However, I feel it necessary to point out that 7 teachers felt that they had no input. The Croke Park Agreement (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2010) introduced non-contact extra hours for teachers with the aim of increased performance in the sector. This is arranged by school leaders.

The fourth question on the questionnaire asked the participants *"Do you feel CPD is beneficial?"* Figure 4.2.4 represents the data gathered for this question (Figure 4.2.4).

CPD is beneficial

Yes   31

No   1
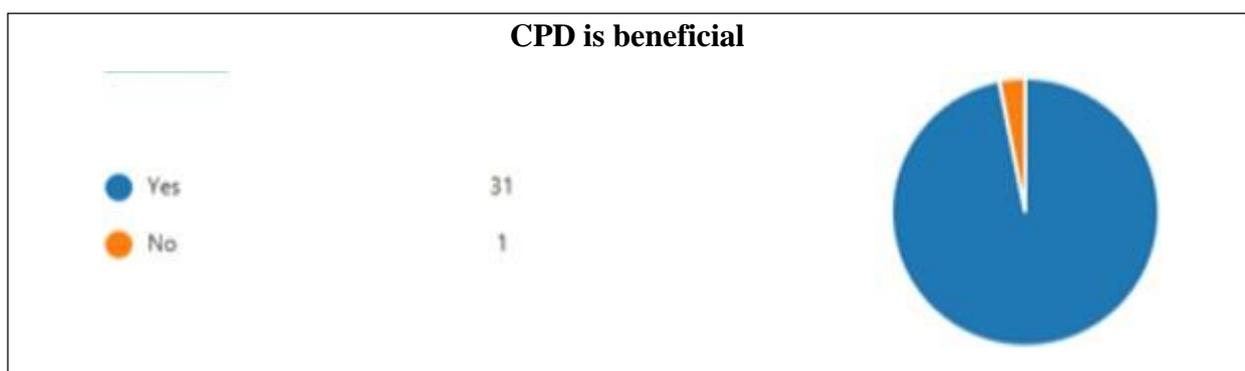
Figure 4.2.4 Teachers responses CPD is beneficial

As you can see from the pie chart, thirty-one respondents or 96.88 per cent (n=31) percent of respondents found that CPD is benefical while 3.12 per cent (n=1) said no. An overwhelming response to this question as teachers find CPD in general benefical and relevant ovelapping

with research question reagarding teachers expereinces of CPD and research question two regarding experience if it is effective, relevant and useful.

Question five on the questionnaire asked the question *"Does CPD focus more on the benefits for student rather than the educational enhancemnt of teacher?* ". This question has ties to question seven to aid with answering research question if CPD improves teaching and learning and do students benefit. The pie chart represents the findings obtained for this question (Figure 4.2.5).

Does CPD focus more on the benefits for students rather than the educational enhancement of teachers?

- Yes — 25
- No — 7
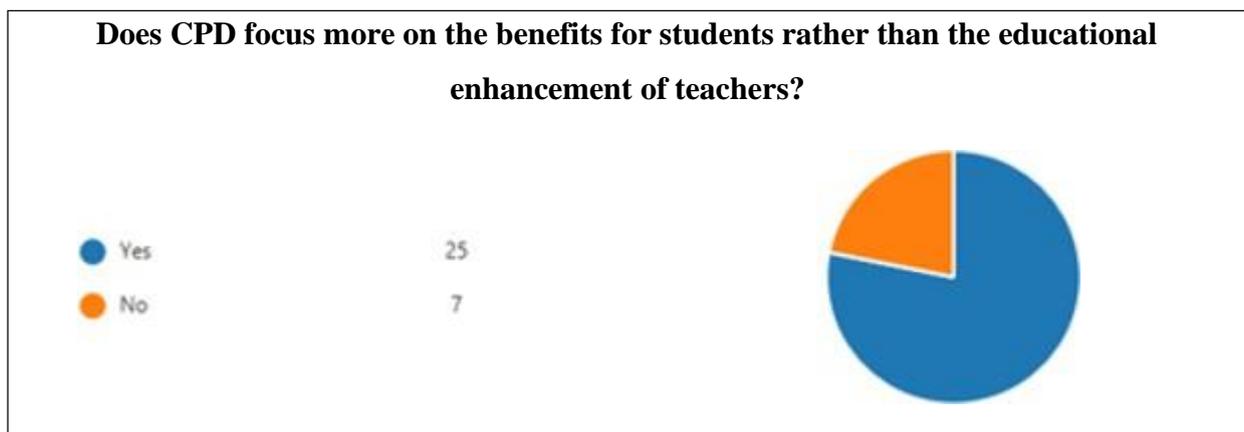
Figure 4.2:5 Teachers responses to does CPD focus more on the benefits for students rather than the educational enahancement of teachers

Figure 4.2.5 shows that 78.13 per cent (n=25) of teachers surveyed in the school agreed that CPD focuses on the education enhancement of students and 21.88 percent (n=7) replied no. A very positive finding regarding the benefits to student learning. The picture was encouraging. This clearly shows that it is worthwhile investing in CPD in supporting teachers in order to encourage thir own learning, being innovative and efficient pedagogy. This active engagement in thir own learning benefits students. Wiliam (2014) stresses that teachers must engage in professional development that is of direct benefit to students. Brookfied (2006) thinks that is is not about the perfomance of the teacher. It is about teachers finding methods to improve educational gains for students. Moon (1999) suggests that refelective practice is related to learning about practice beyond a level of description. As teachers we generate new and meaningful ideas based on what we 'know'.

Dewey (1938) describes reflection as

> " active, persitent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support and the further considerations ro which it tends." (Dewey pg ,9)

Professional learning can be enhanced by the implementation of reflective frameworks (Gibbs 1998). It is recommended by the Cosán framework for teachers to engage on reflective practice. Bell (2001) asserts that the refelective process is an intergral component of sucessful teachers and an important part of professional development.

In question six teachers were asked '*to rate the quality of CPD'* that they have experienced. There were six ratings in this scale. The responses for this question were quite mixed (Figure 4.2.6). The data recorded for this question indicated that a number of participants 18.75 per cent (n=6) reported that it was fair, 53.13 per cent (n=17) good and 28.12 per cent (n=9) very good (Figure 4.2.6). This is very significant and overlaps with research question three regarding if it improves teaching and learning and do students benefit. It is intersting to note that no teacher stated that CPD was poor or excellent. There is evidence that there is a lack of consistency regarding the quality of CPD experienced.

Rate the Quality of CPD Expereienced

Poor	0
Fair	6
Good	17
Very Good	9
Excellent	0
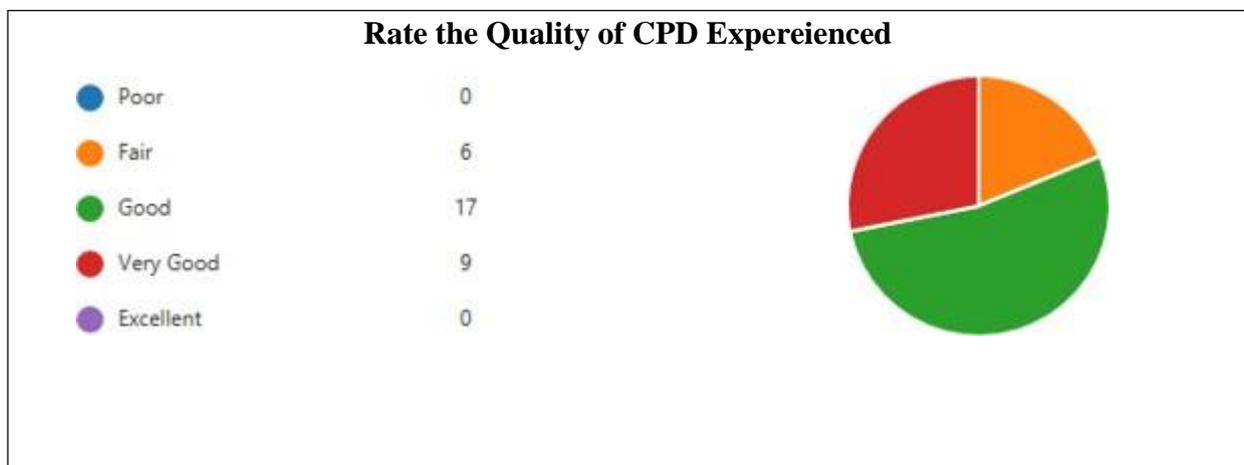
Figure 4.2.6 Teachers responses on the quality of CPD expereinced

Question seven of the questionnaire question asked '*teachers to rate in order of importance the reasons that teachers participate in CPD.*'

Reasons to motivate you to undertake CPD?
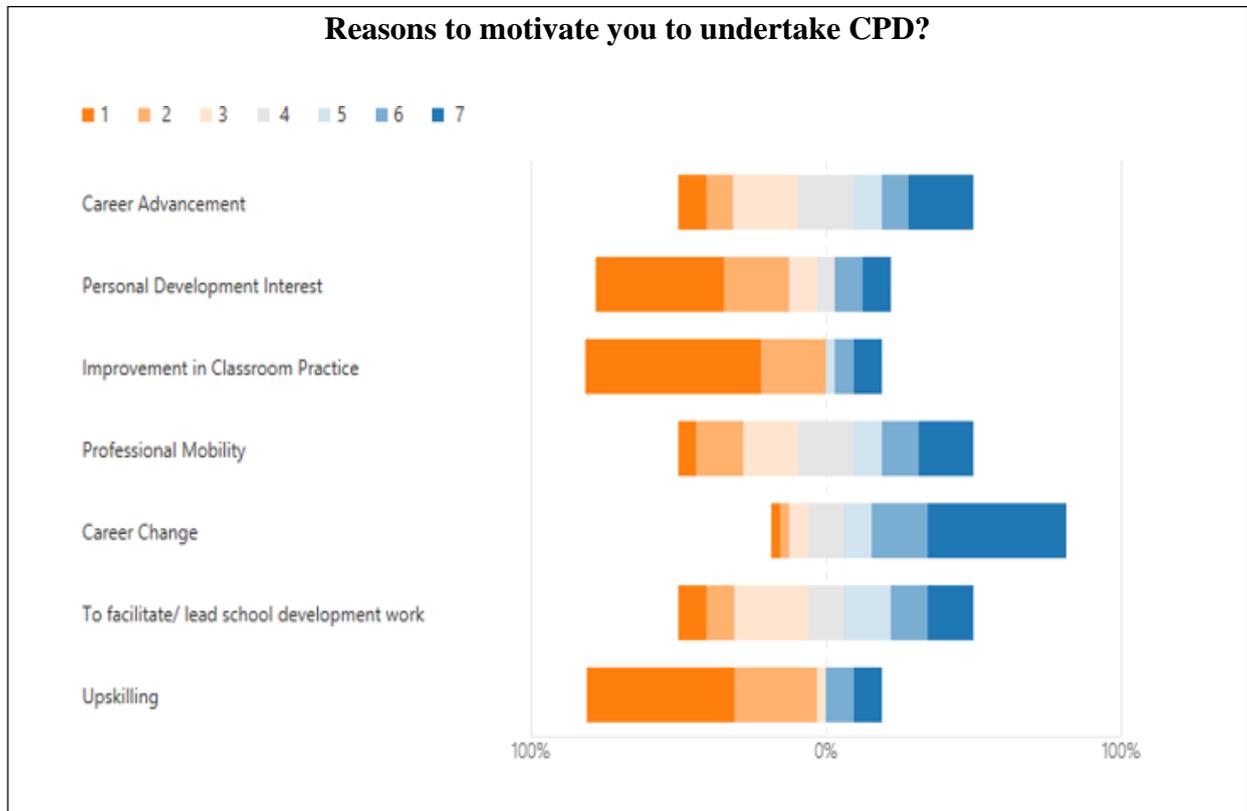
Figure 4.2:7 Teachers responses to what motivates teachers to undertake CPD

Unfortunately, with this question I had difficulty analysing this question as it was misread by participants regarding the rating. There was ambiguity surrounding the rating scale. This did not appear in the pilot test and as a novice researcher I did not foresee the problem. This error is one of the disadvantages of using rating scales in questionnaires. Research suggests that people have different ways of filling out ratings scales (Austin et al. 1998). It appears that there may have been a problem with the wording of the question that caused confusion among the participants. For this question, many of the participants completed the rating scale incorrectly. Many assigned the top ratings to several comments for participating in CPD. What was confirmed by examination of the answers were that top three answers for undertaking CPD by teachers were personal development interest, improvement in classroom practice and upskilling. The analysis of the qualitative data in the focus group further corroborates that finding that upskilling is a major factor in the uptake of CPD. Moon (1999) states that the process of 'upgrading' learning fits into to the pattern learning. CPD can support specific

changes in teachers practice, which enhances career opportunities and work satisfaction such as the development of leadership skills.

Question eight asked teachers '*If they are encouraged and facilitated to share their learning in CPD with colleagues. Please tick the appropriate boxes".* The pie chart represents the findings on this topic (see Figure 4.2.8) and assists in answering research question regarding teachers experiences of CPD.

Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to share their learning in CPD with colleagues

Never	4
Rarely	3
Occasionally	19
Frequently	6

Figure 4.2.8 Teachers responses that they are encouraged and facilated to share their learning with colleagues

This question used a frequency table to measure participants' stance to a sharing CPD with colleagues. Half were positive comments, but negative words were also included to help reduce bias in the study design. As shown in the pie chart figure 4.2.8, only 59.38 per cent (n=19) occasionally share their learning and 18.75 per cent (n= 6) frequently proportion of participants feel that they share their knowledge. Also 12.5 per cent (n=4) never and 9.37 per cent (n=3) rarely share their CPD with colleagues. This infers that peer collaboration happens only occasionally. However, pre-set answers will not essentially reflect how participants really feel about answers and in certain cases they might just choose the closer match. For example, 'always' could have been added to list. This contrasts with the positive response to question two where teachers are encouraged to participate in CPD reported earlier, which has implications for educational settings. This helps to address the research question relating to teachers experiences and cost benefit of CPD. This would require resourcing of staff development, resources and school environments to support sharing and exchange of ideas. Peer or collaborative forms of learning promote deep learning by increasing teachers problem-solving, leading to the development of essential proficiencies such as teamwork. The results indicate that this is an area that requires some further development.

Question nine aids with answering research question relating to teachers' experiences of collaborative as a cost benefit and research question if teaching and learning are improved. It asks the respondent to '*Are you familiar with collaborative CPD?*'
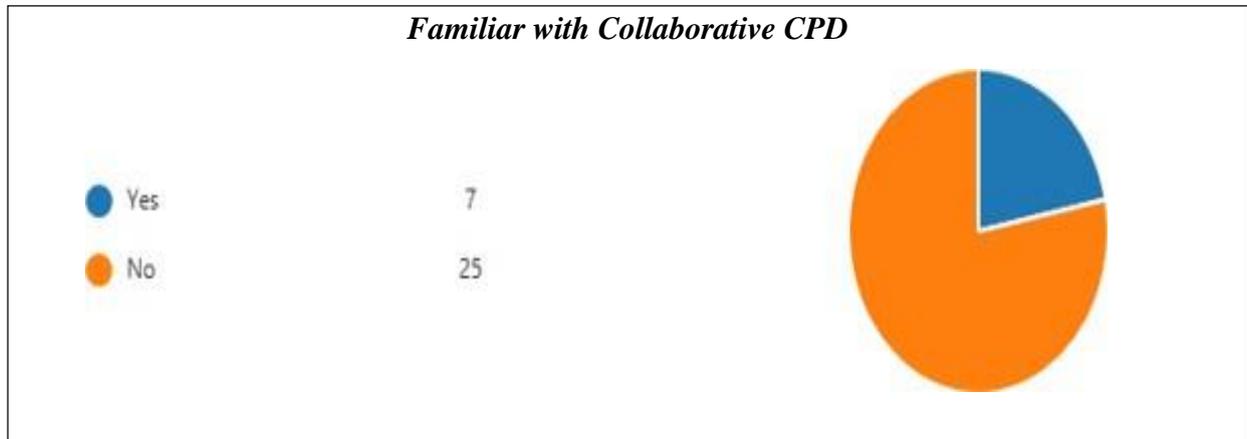
Figure 4.2:9 Teachers responses are they familiar with Collaborative CPD

Teachers on the online survey answered that they were unfamilair with collaborative CPD at 78.12 per cent (n=25). Only 21.88 per cent (n=7) were familiar with this model of CPD (Figure 4.2.9). This finding was unexpected and relevant for research question one regarding teachers' experience and perspectives of CPD. It also helps to answer research question two regarding cost benefit. Responses indicate that collaboration does not appear to frequently be used at post-primary level. Collaboration among teachers can improve teaching practices and boost positivity towards teaching and learning. This finding has implications for the supports offered to staff and the lack of opportunities and/or time to engage in development within the school setting. It is important to note that during data analysis, the term collaborative may have been misinterpreted. This may have affected the responses negatively. The pilot study conducted did not indicate that the wording of this question was difficult to interpret or understand.

Collaborative CPD has emerged as modern method of professional development. Collaborative professional development is defined as having

> 'specifc plans to encourage and enable shared learning and support between at least two teachers colleagues on a sustained basis' (Cordingley et al 2004).

However, these results did not reflect the opinions of those taken by the teachers in the focus group who reported that they do work collaboratively. However, a variety of perspectives were expressed in the focus group whereby teachers suggested that the collaborative culture was

being utilised but a narrow view. Scheduling teachers for collaboration is worth considering. It would therefore be beneficial for school management to look at this into the future.

As part of the research a focus group was conducted. In question ten I asked teachers to volunteer to participate in the group interview.

Willingness to particpate in a focus group

● Yes   15

● No   17
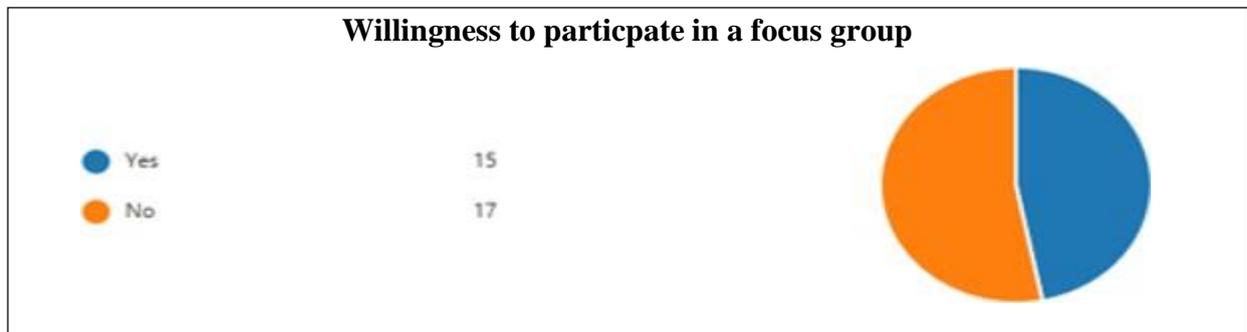
Figure 4.2.10 Teachers responsesto willingness to particpate in a focus group

Figure 4.2.10 shows that 46.8 per cent (n=15) teachers volunteered to participate in the study while 53 per cent (n=17) said no. It allowed me to gather a wider range of teacher expertise for the focus group.

4.3 Focus Group Findings

This section details the findings that have emerged from the data generated by the focus group. It will address the over-arching research questions underpinning the study. This chapter presents the results of the research data collected from the focus group using Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis. From the data gathered four key themes emerged after the transcription and coding process. The dominant themes found within the focus group will be explored in this chapter.

1. The advantages of CPD

2. The disadvantages of CPD

3. Relevance of CPD and logistics of CPD

4. Cost benefit of CPD and collaborative CPD.

The responses and findings from the focus group were very concise and informative.

4.4 Theme One: The Advantages of CPD

The first dominant theme that emerged were the advantages of CPD in the professional life of teachers. At the present time, teachers in the focus group felt that they needed to be continuously involved in CPD to keep well informed with the latest in the field particularly the new junior cycle programme. Teachers have a generally positive outlook on the benefits associated with CPD. Whilst reviewing the transcripts it was discovered that three out of the four participants in the focus group had completed a post graduate qualification and subject specific CPD. CPD is obtained through a wide variety of methods as stated by the teachers in the focus group.

Teacher 1

"I participated in JCT training for the new junior cycle course CPD. Previous to that training for any of the senior cycle courses that changed. And Then I participated in CPD arranged by the school management literacy, numeracy, IT, vsware, different other ones like differentiation em , AFL em . Then in the evening time where we must do Croke park hours. I have gone to the teachers centre and I did courses there on AFL. We have our Subject association conferences and they are very useful in gaining information in subject area and you learn a lot about methodologies, resources, facilities available."

There was also an awareness by the participants to participate in CPD to upskill their capabilities as teachers referred to ICT, the new junior cycle, leadership, and additional qualifications such as guidance counselling. Teacher three felt that it was necessary to upskill to keep up to date with the latest advances, particularly in technology.

Teacher 4

"I use CPD to upskill particularly when it comes to ICT and technology methodologies would help me with my subject, the new music course. It's very digital oriented, just getting new ideas all the time on how to use devices such as recording equipment, etc. It can be very useful."

Teacher 1 referred to how it promotes methodologies and reemphasises what you are trying to teach as you see new perspectives. It reenergises the teacher, so as a teacher you become more creative therefore improving motivation levels of students in the classroom. Whilst Teacher 2

mentioned the fact that it often addresses technical issues or new information regarding legal obligations in the profession.

Teacher 2

"I would say the benefit from my point of view is that my job there is legal obligations at times. So, say something to do the career guidance confidentiality meets child protection. You know so sometimes it's very technical so it can only be addressed in a full day of training."

Teacher 4 referred to the positive attitude one feels after CPD and it is great for upskilling in your subject area. Teacher 4 stated

"I think the CPD that works that is directly related to your subject area. You are learning new information or resources you have an interested in it and you are more likely to implement it."

In particular teacher 4 mention examination conferences. Teachers that attend get a better idea of the standard required in state examinations, so it leads to improved learning in the classroom. Teacher 2 reflected on how one can gain additional qualifications so leading to new opportunities in one's career. It is worth noting that all participants were unanimous about the importance of keeping up to date with your subject area, obtaining useful information and resources available. Teacher 3 mentioned that teachers' attitudes were also important towards CPD '*in that teachers had to be motivated and open to change'.* Teacher 4 stated that the attitude of management in the school is also important regarding CPD. An interesting finding was the feelings associated with CPD. The participants are convincing in their language regarding CPD such as an '*opportunity to learn something new',* '*advances one's career',* '*loads of new ideas',* '*energises'* and more '*creative'* in the classroom. Thus, demonstrating the participants passion for new learning opportunities.

4.5 Theme Two: The Disadvantages of CPD.

Another emerging theme that was evident from the transcripts were the disadvantages or the negatives aspects of CPD. In fact, one of the major disadvantages to emerge from the study is that of time poverty on the part of teachers. Teachers were in unison regarding the lack of time regarding CPD. Each participant detailed the difficulty of implementing change after CPD. This includes time to attend training, time to master the new techniques and time to effectively

teach using the range of skills learned. This indicates that the participants struggled to either finish the process, implement change or to get time to receive training in it. Several factors can limit effective CPD. Teacher 2 stated that it was a two-part process in

"that time and space had to be given to practice and implement it"

They all acknowledged the great work; however, all of this may fall short if there is not enough time allocated in schools for the process. Teachers' work has intensified over the years especially in years of reform. This gives them little time and space for learning outside of their direct teaching role. Not all teachers are able to attend training with places limited often to two staff members. Teacher 1 spoke about been '*overwhelmed with the quantity of information*' given in short space of time with no time to review. *'It is very easy to go back to your old practices'.* Teacher 2 identified the '*disconnected nature*' of CPD as a major disadvantage of the process. They felt that often CPD does not bring about the change that is meant to. This was due to lack of time regarding planning, implementation, access, and logistics of the CPD. Also, Teacher 2 stated *'That one off day has very limited impact on your practice.'* This statement resonated with the group. 60.6 percent of teachers is the survey stated that CPD was important to improve classroom practice. However, Teacher 4 stressed how this is not the case. CPD can sometimes be not relevant or detailed enough to change practice. Teachers gained no new material and CPD often lacked substance. Teachers learn nothing new and therefore does not bring about change in the classroom. Training days for specialist programmes were considered too short and often 'rushed'. This is interesting an overlap with the research question regarding CPD improving teaching and learning and if students benefit.
Teacher 1 felt

"The CPD that we were getting for Croke park didn't work because I think a lot of teacher felt that it was filling in time, em going over stuff we already know, weren't learning anything new, not getting anything useful from it because its foisted upon us and leads to a certain amount inflexibility".

4.6 Theme 3: Relevance and Logistics of CPD

The results of the thematic analysis highlight the challenges of teachers. The participants of the focus group stressed the pressure of participating of CPD out of school hours such as after school as part of Croke Park agreement, evenings after school and weekends. Comparisons were made to other professional CPD. Teacher 4 stated that

> *"if time is scheduled during regular teaching hours, it shows that it is valued by management".*

It was revealed in the focus group by the participants that there is pressure on management from student and parents for teachers not to miss tuition time. This was often due to lack of substitution and curriculum demands. Therefore, the costs involved are time and financial. It is often difficult to get released due to teacher shortages. There was reference made to the work of examiners. School are not inclined to release teacher and the pressure is on the teacher to prepare work. Teacher 1 stated '*that it often not worth the effort'*. CPD can no longer be the 'add on' of teaching but central to teaching (O Sullivan et al 2012),

The focus group teachers stated that some CPD that they experienced was unrealistic and frequently repetitive. However, Teacher 1 reported in the focus group that they were not getting anything useful from CPD.

> *"because its foisted upon us and leads to a certain amount inflexibility. I think if teachers had more choice in what they could do. If you had choice or input, you are then interested because it's what you want".*

This addresses question two of the questionnaire which asked if teachers are encouraged and supported to participate in CPD. There was agreement among the focus group that structural arrangements and teachers working conditions can create barriers for teachers to engage in beneficial and meaningful CPD. The participants agreed that not all teachers are able to attend training with places limited often to two staff members and location of the CPD. Teacher 2 stated

> *"Another disadvantage is the CPD is out of school hours which is not always possible for those especially if they must travel distances, can't be home on time for children or whatever. There is an expectation often to do CPD at weekends which does not suit families".*

Teacher 4 stated that it was easier years ago to be released to participate in CPD and can be negatively viewed.

> *"Now it's harder to get out unless the whole school is involved such as the CPD for the new Junior Cycle, the school is off, and the staff are off. But to actually get out for a*

subject specific CPD where you are the only person leaving, I find it can be used against you at a later stage".

The focus group teachers stated that some CPD that they experienced was unrealistic and frequently repetitive.

Teacher 1 from the focus group stated

"You can be overwhelmed with quantity and new ideas and where there is no follow up, it's very easy to go back to your old practices then to implement".

There is often an inevitable reduction in momentum after a time. Teachers stated at the focus group that short-term training events have little impact on transforming change practices and that there is disjointed thinking about CPD. Feedback of professional development constantly points out unproductiveness of programmes due to not considering factors as to what motivates the teacher and how change happens in teachers (Guskey 2002). Teacher 1 felt that teachers are 'overwhelmed' with all the information that they are getting at the one time. Moreover Teacher 1 stated that time devoted to CPD process is lost as it depends on the quality of the facilitator. Teacher 3 felt that CPD should only be delivered by someone who is competent and questioned collaborative.

Teacher 4 commented

"Sometimes it depends on the quality of the facilitator. Sometimes the CPD may not be relevant or detailed enough. It might be information you know already".

In post primary education the subjects are different in their pedagogies and have their own individual emphases. Quality CPD undertaken where possible should be subject specific to be more beneficial to the teacher and the learner (Whitehouse, 2011). All the contributions from the participants in the focus group demonstrate a positive impact on learning and the student experience. This correlates with question 5 of the questionnaire regarding the impact of CPD on student learning.

Teacher 2 in the focus group found CPD to be effective

"The CPD that I think works best in that it is a two-part process gives you the information then the time and space to practice it and implement it".

This was resonated by the participants in the focus group. Teacher 3 felt that qualities that one must have were to be open to change and motivation. CPD from external sources are useful in introducing new alternatives and changes in practice. Teacher 2 that that the CPD should not be overreaching in that you leave with a skill and good resources. Over time teaching styles can become automatic, allowing teachers to practice them without serious thought (Jarvis 1992). The Cosán Framework (2016) reports that teacher learning must be real and situated in the school context. This is in line with previous Irish research concerning professional development.

4.7 Theme 4: Cost Benefit and Collobrative CPD

At the moment schools are engaged in CPD regarding junior cycle reform. Teacher 2 felt that this puts pressure on the school curriculum as teachers lose tuitin time yet as teachers have to get the curriculum covered. It places pressure on the teacher to deliever. Subsitiution costs and lack of qualified teachers are presently an issue for schools and school leaders. Financial costs were also an issue for the particpants.

Teacher 3 was a newly qualified teacher

> *"I would like to do a post graduate course but not at the moment. I am trying to get established with work. Some of the courses are quite expensive too."*

Teacher 2 mentioned that some CPD is expensive and it can have *a financial impact on the school.'* Some of the CPD does not provide substitute cover, making it very difficult for teachers to leave classes for a full school day as it has a financial impact on the school.

There were positives associated with sending surveys prior to focus groups too and one of these was that the focus group were able to be questioned on why they thought so many teachers had answered that they were unfamiliar with collaborative CPD. However from the focus group teachers practice collaborative work quite often in the school. The opinions of teachers in the focus group varied on collaborative. They were able to provide suggested reasons for such answers. All had experienced, but they did not recognise it as collaborative such as subject association conference and exam conferences. This correlates with the question eight on the survey. Collaborative CPD has emerged as modern method of professional development.

Duirng the focus group Teacher 1 commented

> *"We have our subject association conferences and they are very useful in gaining information in subject area and you learn a lot about methodologies, resources, facilities available. Learning from colleagues, the teach meet was very good. Teachers is the school provide short, simple snappy, shots of information and straight to the point. You weren't overburdened .... Teachers were not afraid to ask questions, because they are their colleagues, so you have followed on"*

Teacher 3 similarly states

> *"At examiner conferences for subjects they share, get a better idea of the standard"*

Teachers 3 felt it improved teaching and learning and therefore student learning outcomes in relation to state examinations. Cook & Fine (1997) believe that teachers likely will need more that 20 percent of their work time for learning and collaboration if to be effective in implementing school reform.

Teacher 2 felt that following CPD it you

> "*could reflect and collaborate with a colleague that you are more likely to implement the changes*".

Teacher 4 identified that

> "*Likewise, it's great to meet other teachers and have conversations with them"*

According to teacher 3 they felt that CPD should be delivered by an expert in the field only and questioned collaborative CPD ran by teachers in the school.

Teacher 4 felt

> *"sometimes when you have the peer to peer stuff that it gets woolly; people start talking about other things. And you don't get as much out of it. But that's my thinking personally"*

This correlated with research conducted by Wiliams (2014). He attests the existing evidence does not support the idea that collaboration with other teachers will always be the best way for every teacher to improve their practice. By reflecting on teaching and learning, teachers and

students can help improve the learning experience not just learning outcomes but levels of engagement, motivation, interest and enjoyment (Cosán, 2016).

Hargreaves (1994) has advocated a 'new professionalism' which promotes teacher collaboration and teacher involvement in decision-making, problem-solving and planning professional development (Webb, 2007) which promotes teacher independence regarding school improvement (Seed, 2008).

Likewise, all the teachers had experienced a teach meet. Teacher 1 stated

> *"The teach meet was very good. Teachers is the school provide short, simple snappy, shots of information and straight to the point. You weren't overburdened coming out".*

The teach meet model is an informal meeting in which likeminded practitioners share tools, techniques and tips that they have tried themselves so as to improve practice (Kuhn et al 2011). When teachers can work collaboratively, they develop ownership over the learning process and learning is more likely to promote student success (Diaz- Maggioli 2003)

It was also interesting to note that as the focus group was ending teacher 4 reflected on the focus group and stated

> *"I really enjoyed this chat. We never as teachers talk about CPD. I think it is good to look back and reflect. This was a really good idea".*

This was noteworthy. This is also revealed in the literature. Teachers often experience CPD, but never reflect on the experiences, its implementation and the impact thereof. This resonated with the focus group. Teacher learning and teacher reflection are interlinked.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter described the research study. This chapter detailed the findings of the questionnaire (Appendix 9) and the focus group conducted with teachers in a post primary school. The results were related to the research questions which guided the study. (See table 4.8.1 – Summary).

1	**Design:** Selection of the mixed methods using a quantitative questionnaire and a qualitative focus group
2	**Ethical Approval**
3	**Implementation of Quantitative Questionnaire**
4	**Analysis of the qualitative data**: questionnaire- emergent issues of concern
5	**Qualitative data collection**- focus group
6	**Transcription and coding of the qualitative data** from the focus group
7	**Emergent themes**
8	**Thematic analysis of the data**
9	**Evaluation of research**- conclusion and recommendations

Table 4.8.1: Summary of the sequence of steps taken

Conclusions drawn from the research will be presented in Chapter 5. The findings will be discussed with reference to four themes with the aim of answering the research questions.

1. The advantages of CPD

2. The disadvantages of CPD

3. Relevance of CPD and logistics of CPD

4. Cost benefit of CPD and collaborative CPD.

In Chapter 5 suggestions and recommendations with be made to improve CPD at post primary level based on the research and my perspective.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the implications of the findings from this small-scale research are considered. The discussion to follow is based on the data generated from a quantitative questionnaire and the themes that emerged from the qualitative data. Conclusions will then be drawn linking back to the research questions. The chapter will suggest recommendations based on my perspective combined with the data of the questionnaire and contributions from the focus group set within relevant literature in the area. Opportunities for further research will be discussed in relation to the findings presented within this study.

5.2 Discussion

This section will revisit the three research questions set out at the start of the thesis in section 1.3. and provides a summary of the data collected.

5.2.1 What are teachers' experiences and perspectives of CPD in a post primary school?

This research set out to discover teachers' experiences and perspectives of CPD in a post primary school. After analysis of the data from the online questionnaire and the focus group, it can be argued that most teachers are positive about their experience of CPD. However, participants in the focus group recognised both the opportunities and challenges associated with CPD. The thematic analysis exposed that CPD increases creativity in the classroom. All participants identified the advantages as that of reenergising the teacher's enthusiasm for profession as they share new ideas with colleagues not just within their own school setting. When teachers are given the opportunity to participate collaboratively teachers develop ownership over the learning process and therefore are more likely to promote student success (Diaz-Maggioli, 2003). The focus group participants valued school based CPD and external CPD for providing information on curriculum reform, new teaching methodologies, resources and technology. They valued this expert knowledge offered on diverse teaching methods to support student learning styles, meeting legal obligations as teachers and technical issues that encourage deeper learning for students.

The questionnaire found that 78.12 percent of teachers agreed that CPD is most applicable when teachers learning opportunities are school based. The teachers surveyed found that CPD

assisted in upskilling, advancing one's career and improving student learning outcomes. Teachers in the questionnaire revealed that the school encouraged and supported them to participate in CPD. However, the focus group participants revealed that this participation in CPD can occur with caveats which is a disadvantage.

The disadvantages associated with CPD that emerged from this theme were information overload, difficulty in accessing CPD due to financial or logistical issues, the repetitive nature and the quality of CPD provided to teachers. They felt that CPD was less beneficial when it was not allocated enough time or resources. The participants found that episodic workshops and the disconnected topics of CPD were not working in enhancing the CPD experience. However, the workshops can be useful for delivering theoretical information. The focus group participants felt that some CPD is foisted on them and they have little choice but to participate.

5.2.2 Are teachers are experiencing effective, relevant and cost benefit CPD?

Data collected from the questionnaire revealed that teachers felt that CPD should happen within school and 78.12 percent surveyed felt that they had inputs into their CPD. Teachers were encouraged and supported to participate in CPD. The focus group responses added more insight into these findings. There was a feeling of apathy regarding CPD reported from the participants. Their experience of CPD is that information and knowledge is not translated into effective, sustainable classroom practices. The motivational levels of teachers increase if it is for areas in which training is more extensive or areas in which they have an interest in. It can be difficult to change the mind of teachers who have developed a repertoire of successful teaching strategies. Change in practice will entail teachers to reconstruct their knowledge (Hillocks, 1999). The participants involved in the focus group talked about the repetitive nature of CPD and questioned its usefulness. Other barriers identified included school organizational constraints and workload issues. Participants discussed being unable to access funding for self-identified CPD opportunities such as externally run courses and workshops that where relevant to their specific subject. Of particular concern, is that even when CPD was funded by the school organisation it tended to be influenced by organisational needs rather than the professional needs of the teacher. The affect here is that teachers have little control over decision-making regarding the CPD opportunities even though the questionnaire results contradict this. Other difficulties included the restrictive times when CPD is conducted such as in the evenings and weekends.

Participants in the focus group felt that some CPD was not recognised or perceived to be important. Effective CPD will help teachers to anticipate and respond to the changing demands of the profession. It enables teachers to keep up to date and to maintain the professional standards required throughout a teaching career. Teachers must have time to progress, engage, examine, and run through new knowledge. This means that activities require meaningful amount of contact hours over a sustained length of time. CPD must be doable and in context Time poverty in implementing CPD is a major concern as reported from the qualitative data. One day workshops are often detached from the teachers' environment. Due to the lack of time given teachers do not have the opportunity to implement or reflect on the new content or strategy. Therefore, one must question the cost benefit of CPD and if it is effective. Finance is an issue regarding access to post graduate courses and an issue for school leadership regarding the release of teachers to attend CPD. What resonated with the focus group was that teachers' work has intensified. This gives teachers little time and space for activities outside of their direct teaching role. It is imperative that CPD is based on a thorough need analysis both at individual and at school level.

There is evidence from the quantative data generated in the questionnaire that there is a lack of consistency regarding the quality of CPD experienced. Data from the focus group supports the quantitative finding that not all CPD experienced by the particpants was found to effective and useful in meeting their professional development. Professional development for teachers has gone from a choice to mandated CPD and particpants in the focus group questioned its relevance. Professional development is often linked to certification, workshops and in-services. The focus group was an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their CPD experience. Teachers experience CPD but generally do not discuss nor reflect on it. The participants reported that they enjoyed the experience of the focus group and found it worthwhile. Reflection in an example of the tangible benefits that CPD can bring as it drives change in performance (Moon, 1999).

5.2.3 Does CPD improve teaching and learning and do students benefit?

Data from the questionnaire indicates that teachers find CPD generally beneficial and improves student learning outcomes. The focus group participants' feedback corroborated the questionnaire findings. CPD has a positive influence as teachers are encouraged to engage in CPD that is of direct benefit to students that improve their educational gains. This was particular important with regard to current junior cycle reform and state examinations as

reported. Teachers are interested in improving their classroom practice so that students benefit. It is difficult to measure directly the effect of a particular CPD activity on students outcomes. This should not diminish the value of a CPD activity. Research suggests that committing to improving performance is more likely to lead to changes in practice (White et al 2004) which utimately leads to educational gains for students.

Also data from the questionnaire indicated that teachers only share their learning in CPD with colleagues occasionally. The term collaborative CPD was misinterpreted by the participants answering the questionnaire. However, the focus group participants were aware of the term collaborative CPD and discussed the benefits such as enabling teacher's expertise. It highlights good practice. Teachers trust and are assured when working with a colleague that is familiar with their subjects and school. Collaborative CPD contributes to increased motivation, collegiality and enhances teaching therefore improving student learning. CPD frameworks increasingly lean towards more teacher-led and less provider-driven CPD, allowing more teacher autonomy as regards choice (Cosán 2016).

5.3 Conclusion

I feel that as a teacher and a researcher it is important that the teachers are well trained and well informed about contemporary teaching practices and learning techniques. Enhancing teaching practice with innovative ways of CPD strengthens the teaching profession, the personal lives of teachers and ultimately leads to improved student learning outcomes. According to Hargreaves

> "professional learning in teaching is an individual obligation as well as an institutional right" (Hargreaves 2003, p. 16).

Similarly Finely et al (2000) states that teacher learning is the foundation to school reform and improvement. Consideration must be paid to teacher learning and providing strutures to support learning. Without this school reform efforts are not likely to be real or lasting. CPD is an nesccesary in all educational improvement efforts (Guskey 2000). Teachers need to be facilated to reflect on their own learning which can benefit student learning but also students enagement and levels of motivation.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on my findings from this research and reviewing relevant literature, I propose the following recommendations.

- Consultation should occur with regard the school improvement plan to determine critical areas of CPD that need to be addressed by the school. A proposal would be to conduct a review or an assessment on adult learning theory needs, teacher development levels and state curriculum requirements. Teachers need to be involved in the choice of CPD. The 'voice' of teachers should be heard.

- Planning and executing teachers' CPD must be an enriching learning experience for teachers and be part of the school calendar. School leadership and the entire staff should develop the CPD calendar. It should be well planned in that is accessible and inclusive for all teachers. It should if possible be on-going and within school hours as it demonstrates respect of the profession.

- Creative professional development deserves to be recognised, valued and commended. (Owen 2014). Teachers should be credited when they complete additional qualifications (e.g. master's level and other accredited courses) that are personally funded. Qualification allowances such as the master's allowance was abolished by the government in 2012.

- CPD content should be informed by research. Successful CPD requires that teachers are active when learning. CPD should have an active objective for the development of deep understanding of the theory and practice.

- CPD must be continuous and regular. Time must be provided for teachers to master new content and strategies so that they can be implemented into classroom practice. This would be more relevant and effective for teachers and therefore improve teaching and learning.

- CPD that is mandated from the department and delivered by an outsider should be revisited after the event. It is important that one shot presentations are connected to other goals in teaching such as literacy and differentiation.

- CPD can done effectively and economically through promotion of a collaborative learning culture drawing on the expertise of teachers.

- CPD approaches should have level of teacher reflection with an emphasis on student learning. The role of reflection can assist teachers in revising their practice to improve teaching and learning. Bell (2001) states that reflective practice is a skill displayed by successful teachers. Teachers should be given the time and the tools to develop the skills of reflection.

5.5 Limitations and Opportunities for Further Research

It is not enough to just generate research; it must be made assessable to utilise the findings. According to Strubert & Carpenter (1999) all researchers are responsible for disseminating research findings. For logistical reasons this was a small-scale study in one post primary school. It was carried out with a limited number of teachers (n=32). I would advise a similar study to be carried out on a larger scale.

Taking the limitations into consideration a valuable direction and an opportunity to take this study further could be to conduct this research into different types of schools such as other post primary school, the vocational sector, comprehensive schools and primary schools. I would encourage schools to carry out more reflection on CPD that they provide for teachers. A SWOT analysis could be conducted on teacher experiences as a possibility of reviewing CPD approaches. CPD should have level of teacher reflection which might prove useful to bring about change.

5.6 Researcher Growth and Reflection

The implementation and evaluation of this research has contributed to my own professional development. The mixed methods approach particularly thematic analysis was challenging; However, it greatly enhanced my research skills. This M.A. in Teaching and Learning has allowed me to examine in depth an issue which I feel is very relevant to my work as a teacher. The knowledge which I have gained from this research has given me a greater insight into my praxis as a teacher. The completion of this research has given me a strong sense of achievement and my studies have helped me to further develop skills of critical analysis, observation and reflection which can only serve to benefit me as I progress through my career. It has encouraged me to test my professional values and will guide my own CPD. As noted by Denzin & Lincolin (1994) the process of

> "analysis, evaluation and interpretation are neither terminal nor mechanical, but always ongoing emergent, unpredictable and unfinished." (Denzin & Lincolin, 1994 Pg. 456)

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Appendices

Appendix 1- Transcript with codes

Appendix 2- Questionnaire

Appendix 3-Questions for the focus group

Appendix 4- Consent letter for questionnaire

Appendix-5- Consent letter for focus group

Appendix 6- Letter to Participants

Appendix 7- Information Leaflet on Research

Appendix 8- Letter to Gate keeper

Appendix 9- Questionnaire Results

Appendix 1- Transcript with codes and colour coding

Line	Code	Researcher: You are all very welcome to the focus group. As you know my dissertation is on teachers' experiences and perspectives of CPD in post primary schools. I will put it out for general discussion. Maybe say how are you teaching, and have you always participated in CPD?	Code
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6		Teacher 1: I have yes. 18 years. Yes, I have always participated in CPD. So, I have taken part in different kinds of CPD. I completed a Master s in Education after I started here. And then different courses tricking along yes, the new junior cycle there is plenty of CPD for it…. And the teach meets here as well. We have participated in. Any wee thing we have. We had the wee Stephen Eustace here last week for CPD. That's all part of it.	
7	Masters		
8			Qual
9			Courses
10	JCT		
11	Plenty of CPD		
12	Teach Meet		
13	ICT		
14			
15		I participated in JCT training for the new junior cycle course CPD. Previous to that training for any of the senior cycle courses that changed. And Then I participated in CPD arranged by the school management literacy, numeracy, IT, vsware, different other ones like differentiation em , AFL em .Then in the evening time where we must do Croke park hours I have gone to the teachers centre and I did courses there on AFL.	
16	Arranged by school-types		
17			
18	Croke park		
19	Teacher centres		
20			
21			
22			Useful for
23	Subject ass		gaining
24		We have our Subject association conferences and they are very useful in gaining information in subject area and you learn a lot about methodologies, resources, facilities available. Learning from colleagues, what's available, reemphasize what you are trying to teach in the classroom, and I know some of colleagues have participated in CPD in relation to advance their career such as law or leadership.	information
25			
26			
27			Learning
28			from
29	add qual.		colleagues
30	Advance career		
31			

32	adv	**Teacher 2:** Yeh eh I've done yeh I've done science education as my degree, so did a guidance qualification afterwards. I also did a Master's in Education after that. Yeh is very …eh yeh with guidance you get opportunities to do CPD em eh sometimes however it can be difficult to access because often as there is not enough space to get on a programme or then it is difficult to get released or to get out. Some of the courses are quite expensive too. It's not saying management won't let me out but at particular times of the year you feel you just can't.	
33			
34	disadv-		
35			
36	access		
37	<space		Qual
38			
39	< time		Cost benefit
40	A lot of CPD		
41			
42	Pressure		
43	Availability	This year for example we are doing an awful lot of CPD on the new junior cycle …which puts a bit of pressure on them to get things done by Christmas because you miss 4-5 days. Yeh no that's what I felt.	Not released
44			
45			suitability
46			
47	Timings	Some of the courses don't provide substitute cover, making it very difficult for teachers to leave classes for a full school day as it has a financial impact on the school.	
48	Substitute cover		types
49	Costings		
50			
51		Yeah, I would have done a lot of different types of CPD.	
52		CPD.	changed
53	Evenings	**Teacher 3: Yeah** I am teaching a few years now. I try and get out on as much CPD as I can. It doesn't always suit. Em… sometimes an em lot of CPD goes on in the evenings for my subjects. Em err like this year I did one on Saturday. Eh So, it's kind of eats into your own time as well. Training days for specialist programmes are often short and often 'rushed'. It's not all ways on a school day, em but yeah as best I will try and get out, but it doesn't always work out. I would like to do a post graduate course but not at the moment. I am trying to get established with work. Some of the courses are quite expensive too.	mindset-
54	Own time		easier years
55			ago
56			
57			Cost benefit
58			
59	Difficulty-		
70	short/rushed		
61	Sub Spec		
62			
63	Harder- diff		
64	Difficult		

65		**Teacher 4:** Over the years I am 30 plus years teaching.	
66		So, over the years I have done a lot of CPD. Initially	School
67		it was lot easier to get out I would have thought but I	arrange it
68		would have done also of subject specific CPD such as	
69	Difficulty-	CSPE, SPHE, subject specific etc, em Now it's harder	
70	management	to get out unless the whole school is involved such as	Costings-
71	Lack of tuition	the CPD for the new Junior Cycle., the school is off,	benefit
72	time	and the staff are off. But to actually get out for a	Creative
73		subject specific CPD where you are the only person	
74		leaving, I find it can be used against you at a later	tips
75		stage.	Difficulties
76		**Teacher 2:** Yes, I have a Master's in Education. Now	
77		a day's management maybe their hands are bit tied and	does not last
78		constraint because they are worried about lack of	long
79	Energize>	student tuition time, lack of subs, cost to the school	
80	Creative>	and substitutes., Yes, we have participated in CPD in	easy to forget
81	Listening>	the school. School would also arrange CPD for us as	
82		well.	practices not
83	Enthusiasm	**Researcher: What do you believe are the**	implemented
84	momentum<	**advantages and disadvantages of CPD?**	
85		**Teacher 1:** It energizes you a bit and you come back	
86		full of all these good ideas…eh. em a bit more creative	
87	info brill	maybe and listening to other people and their	
88	forget	experiences and you pick up some tip and tricks. It	management
89		doesn't last that long, the enthusiasm. Laugh. It's very	not inclined
90	overwhelmed	hard to keep the momentum going, you come back	
91	no follow up	great but it's very hard to keep the momentum (nods	workload
92		from the group- em) going once you settle back into	
93	lack of time to	the everyday today. Yeah you do, its tried and tested.	
94	plan	You learn a lot of information which is brilliant but	
95		and it's easy to forget. You can be overwhelmed with	
96	out of hours	quantity and new ideas and where there is no follow	
97		up it very easy to go back to your old practices then to	

98	weekends	implement, a lot of what you hear at CPD you need	
99		time. Sometimes you have lack of time to plan and	
100		then you don't implement what you have learnt.	
101	workload	Another disadvantage is the CPD is out of school	
102	not worth the	hours which is not always possible for those especially	
102	effort	if they must travel distances, can't be home on time	
102		for children or whatever. There is an expectation often	
105		to do CPD at weekends which does not suit families.	
106	legal obligation	For schools' teachers must replace by sub teachers and	
107		there is a real shortage of sub teachers, then principal	
109	technical	not inclined to let teachers out for CPD especially	
110		examine. Lack of examiners. Its nearly twice the work	
111		you have to do as you have to leave work for the	
112		classes and go to CPD. You come back to all this work	
113		which you have to correct. Sometimes it's not worth	Tone of
114		the effort.	voice-apathy
115	legal- CP	**Teacher 2:** I would say the benefit from my point of	
116	technical	view is that my job there is legal obligations at times.	
117		So, say something to do the career guidance	
118		confidential meets child protection. You know so	
119		sometimes it's very technical so it can only be	
120		addressed in a full day of training. Em so that one be	Serious-tone
121		one of the real benefits of it. Em. I would find that a	emphasis
122		days that it's great to be out for the day you get loads	
123	one off days-	of ideas but a one off day has very 1 very limited	
124	limited impact	impact on your practice (nods from group) because	Nods of
125	little structure	you come up with ideas but you probably would need	agreement
126	disconnected	something there a little more structured to kind of add	
127	nature	to that. So, you know that would be the disconnected	
128		nature of the different CPD. I feel is the /an issue why	
129	location	it doesn't necessarily always make the change its kind	
130	access	of meant too. The course aren't suiting me due to	
131		location or I don't get the time out to do it in terms of	

132	chatting to t	work, it's hard to get access to the course due to long
133	Cost-	distance away or cost, working all day and I have to
134	Collaborative-	travel to the courses.
135	positive attitude	**Teacher 3:** Yeh I think there great. Em I suppose the
136	upskilling	main thing is just chatting with the people around you
137	ICT	on the day. And even to get a feel for what everyone
138		else is doing, I think that's what I enjoy the most when
139		I go out on these days. When I go out on these days
140		talking to other people, seeing what they are doing and
141		then of course you come out with this positive attitude
142	New ideas	but again it doesn't really last as long as you hoped.
143	Very useful	**Teacher 3:** But I think it's great for upskilling to keep
144		up to date my subject area. It's interesting to see what
145		new teaching methodologies would help me with my
146		subject. I use CPD to upskill l particularly when it
147	Sharing of info	comes to ICT and technology methodologies would
148		help me with my subject, the new music course. It's
149	Meet other	very digital oriented, just getting new ideas all the time
150	teachers	on how to use devices such as recording equipment,
151		etc. It can be very useful. Advantages are you learn
152		that you learn a lot about resources available for
153	Different	subject area , different activities, facilities different
154	perspectives	activities for TY share ideas for example examiner
155		conference for the subjects they share, then a better
156		idea of the standard now that we have to mark our own
157	The focus of the	subjects marks to give. It improves learning in the
158	CPD	classroom as you know what to focus on.
159		**Teacher 4:** Likewise, it's great to meet other teachers
160		and have conversations with them You get ideas and
161		you discover that if you are having challenges that you
162		are not the only one. Other people are having similar
163		challenges. It does give you a different perspective. It
164		gives you are fresher look at your subject and then

165		more positive going in teaching it afterwards. The
166		disadvantages it depends on the focus sometimes of
167	Disjointed	the CPD, I am thinking of one of the new junior cycle
168	thinking	one whereby the teachers went expecting one thing
169		and got something very different. Where really the
170		department were looking for feedback from us rather
171		that actually informing what we needed for the next
172		stage the second CBA. But Overall, it's has been a
173	Overwhelmed	very positive experience doing CPD over the years.
174	Croke park	**Researcher: Do you think we are getting the best**
175	Teachers are	**out of CPD activities generally?**
176	tired	**Teacher one:** Maybe the new junior cycle its new for
177		everyone. It's difficult to know what we need until we
178		go through it all. It might not just be ticking what we
179		hope it's trying to do. There is a lot of disjointed
180	No choice	thinking about CPD and it comes all together
181		particularly the last few years around the new JC.
182	Filling in time	There are also new expectations for CPD it may be
183	Not learning	differentiation, maybe co teaching, it could be team
184	anything new	teaching, the new set model. So, I think teachers are
185	Foisted upon	becoming a little bit overwhelmed with all the
186	Inflexibility	information there getting at the one time. Some CPD
187		because it's part of Croke Park Hours usually run after
188		school; teachers are tired. Teachers also maybe had no
189		choice in the type of CPD they are getting. Maybe the
190	Increased	CPD that we were getting for Croke park didn't work
191	pressure-	because think a lot of teacher felt that it was filling in
192	evening times	time, em going over stuff we already know weren't
193	and weekends	learning anything new, not getting anything useful
194		from it because its foisted upon us and leads to a
195		certain amount inflexibility. I think if teachers had
196		more choice in what they could do. If you had choice
197		

198		or input, you are then interested because it what you
199		want.
200		**Teacher 2:** I think that teachers are becoming under
201		==increased pressure to do CPD in the evenings times==
202		==and to do CPD on a Saturday. And over the years have==
203		==I done stuff on a Saturday. And no one really thanks==
204		==you for it. You really feel it then as the years go by its==
205		==not just the Saturday, it's also the Croke Park stuff and==
206		==different school outings but.== eh I feel like if CPD that
207		starts at 5 ==o clock or 7-9, I would just be there. I==
208		==wouldn't be able to get anything out of it.== I do think
209	Its scheduled-	there is more of a move to move it out but that's ….
210	valued	**Researcher: Do you think is should be within**
211		**school time?**
212		Yes, I think so. Most work is like that. Like when I
213		was a lab technician you would have a training day but
214		during your working day. You know like…
215		**Teacher 4:** If you are a nurse and you are going to
216	Training focused	training, your training is in you work hours.
217	2 things	**Teacher 2:** Yeah
218		**Teacher 4:** Nurses wouldn't attempt to give up their
219	Not	free time. Its scheduled, it shows that it is valued by
220	overreaching	management. (ems and nods from the group) If they
221	College	are not prepared to give up the time for you to do it do,
222		do they actually value it at all.
223	Simple	**Teacher 2**: Yeah
224		**Researcher: Do you think the benefits of CPD are**
225	Depends on the	**manifested in the classroom?**
226	person	**Teacher 2:** It depends on the training. (Nods of
227		agreement from the group) I would prefer CPD
228		training that was very focused that you left with maybe
229		two things or that you left with a resource that you
230	Time<	were trained to deliver. I ==wouldn't like CPD where the==

231		idea is way overreaching and they think you can do
232		maybe a week's worth of college I one day. Any you
233		would be like, what was that all about. Something
234		very simple left with a skill and the resources in order
235		to do that. That would be what I would like the most.
236		**Yeah em from the group**
237		**Teacher 3:** It depends to a certain extent to the person
238		delivering the CPD. Some people are excellent. And
239		can get through quite a bit very quickly and you walk
240		away with good resources. Other times not so it
241		depends on the person delivering it.
242		**Teacher 1:** Sorry it depends on the time you have
243		afterwards. For example, last week the training on
244		Microsoft it was excellent,
245		**Teacher 3;** Yes, it was excellent
246		**Teacher 1:** but you just don't have the time to sit and
247	Quality of	give yourself a chance to learn. It' s not working out
248	facilitator	as easy for me afterwards but if you had more time, I
249	Not relevant	think it would.
250	Not detailed	**Teacher 3:** You do come away with loads of ideas but
251		it's actually putting them to use
252		**Teacher 1;** Yeah, having the resources and being
253		trained properly. So, you know if you focused it on
254	Teacher open to	one or two small wee things, I thought for example the
255	change	screen record was excellent, but I had trial myself. Eh
256	Motivated	eh and it's just not working out as easy for me as for
257		him, but if you had plenty of time to do it.
258		**Teacher 4:** Sometimes it depends on the quality of the
259		facilitator. And sometimes the CPD may not be
260		relevant or detailed enough. It might be information
261		you know already. So, you are not learning anything
262		new. You take home loads of ideas, if you just focused
263		on one of two things, I think it would be better.

264	Stand up and tell	**Teacher 3:** I think it depend a lot on the teacher If you	
265	me	are open to change a lot of the CPD at the moment is	
266		to help us cope with the changes and different	
267	Good resources	methodologies, so it depends on how motivated you	
268		are to implement the changes, how open you are to	
269	Peer to peer- off	make the changes.	
270	point	**Researcher: What types of CPD work? I**	
271		**mentioned on the questionnaire Collaborative**	
272		**CPD? Do you think it works? Do you think that**	
273		**model works?**	
274	Someone who is	**Teacher 4** Personally I prefer if they stand up there	
275	competent	and tell me what I need to know, As In a new section	
276		of the course hasn't been there before I need someone	
277	Not sure about	who knows what it is and to deliver to me in a good	
278	collaborative	class an possible send me away with resources. I find	
279		sometimes when you have the peer to peer stuff that it	
280		gets woolly; people start talking about other things,	
281	Time & space	And you don't get as much out of it. But that's my	
282		thinking personally	
283		**Teacher 3:** I feel the same. I think is should be	
284		someone who is really competent on what the topic is	
285	Extra day	about. It would be better for someone to come in or go	
286	Inbuilt time	somewhere, I don't know……. I am not sure about	
287		collaborative.	
288		**Teacher 2:** Yeah, I don't think Yeah, I could see it	
289		working if it was a particular subject like everyone like	
290		the H. Ec teachers did that within the school and it is	
291		relevant to them. The CPD that I think works best in	
292	Teach meet	that is a two-part process gives you the information	
293	Short	then the time and space to practice it and implement it.	
294	Simple	Just say if you learnt something on the computers it's	
295	Snappy	so simply when you see an expert go through it. Oh	
296		Yeah, I can do that. But then you try adding do it you	

297	Straight to the	realise the problem that you have. If it's just that extra
298	point	day or inbuilt time you do what you were trained to do
299	Useful tool	you would be more likely to be confident in front of a
300	school context	class with 30 people looking at you…… you'd want
301		to make sure you know what you're at.
302		**Yeah from the focus group**
303		**Teacher 1:** The teach meet was very good. Teachers
305		is the school provide short, simple snappy, shots of
306	teachers not	information and straight to the point. You weren't
307	afraid to ask	overburdened with coming out
308	their colleagues	**Teacher 2:** yeah
309		**Teacher 1:** But yet is was very useful thing to be able
310	working in	to do
311	isolation	**Teacher 4**: It's a tool
312	time<	**Teacher 1:** Because it's in the school context it where
313	<reflect	they are based and there is variety, teachers present 5
314		to 6 sample. Teacher might take away 2 of them. It is
315	Snippets at staff	practical, it is hands on. Its short simple straight to the
316	meetings	point not overburdened coming out. Yeah, very useful
317	3 things	tool was learned. Teachers were not afraid to ask
318	Everyone is	questions, because they are their colleagues, so you
319	doing it	have follow on. If they didn't get it the first time, they
320		know who presented the model at the teach meet, so
321		they don't mind asking, so there is follow through.
322		**Teacher 3:** Often when you are working in isolation
323		in the classroom it's a totally different story because
324#	Not	sometimes you need to be led through it again
325	overburdened	particular when it comes to maybe technology.
326		Because you need time to digest it, absorb it. I think
327	Collaborate with	teachers don't have the time to reflect on what they
328	a colleague	have learnt at CPD and to apply it. Then they go back
329	Follow on	to what they know already. So, change may not
330		happen, or it happens slowly.

331		**Teacher 2:** Or if you had teachers giving snippets at
332	Working in	staff meetings like in relation to Literacy and
333	isolation. Cpd	numeracy. If you pick out three things for Literacy and
334	that direct to	three from numeracy and everyone is doing it, you can
335	subject	talk about it daily. You can collaborate with your
336	Interested in area	colleague on it. So more likely to implement it. And if
337		it something essential like child protection guidelines
338	No time to	something essential you must know. Then it's usually
339	reflect	very good or care for the staff or reduce stress or to
340		work more efficiently that's good also. I think the
341	3things	CPD that works that is directly related to your subject
342		area. You are learning new information or resources
343		you have an interested in it and you are more likely to
344		implement it. **Researcher: That's great guys. That**
345	Direct to your	**is, it. Thank you for participating in the focus**
346	subject	**group. Is there anything you would like to add?**
347		Teacher 4: I really enjoyed this chat. We never as
348		teachers talk about CPD. I think it is good to look back
349	Look back rflec	and reflect. This was a really good idea.
350		Yes, from Teacher 1, I agree
		Researcher: Thank you

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire- online

1. Continuous Professional Development should happen within the school

    Agree

    Disagree

2. Teachers are encouraged and supported to participate in in CPD.

    Yes

    No

3. Have you had imputs into your own CPD?

    Yes

    No

4. Do you feel CPD is beneficial?

    Yes

    No

5. Does CPD focus more on the benefits for students rather than the educational enhancement for Teachers?

    Yes

    No

6. Is your experiernce of CPD of good quality?/How would you rate the quality of CPD.

     1. Poor
     2. Fair
     3. Good
     4. Very Good
     5. Excellent

7. What reasons would motivate you to undertake CPD? Please rank the following statements from 1 to 7.

Career advancement

Personal development interest

Improvement in classroom practice

Professional mobility

Career Change within education

To facilitate/lead school development work

Upskilling

8. Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to share their learning in CPD with colleagues

Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

`   9. Are you familiar with collaborative CPD?

Yes

No

As part of this research I would like to conduct a focus group on teacher's experiences and perspectives of CPD

10. Are you willing to participate in a focus group on CPD.?

Yes

No

Appendix 3- Questions for the focus group

1. How long are you teaching?

2. Have you always participated in CPD?

3. What do you believe to be the advantages and disadvantages of CPD? Do you think it is beneficial?

4. Are we getting the best out of CPD activities?

5. Are the benefits of CPD being manifested in the classroom?

6. Can you think of a time when CPD did not work? Why, in your opinion didn't it work in this instance?

7. What types of CPD work in your opinion?

Appendix 4

Consent Form for questionnaire

Title of project: Teachers' perspectives and experiences of CPD in a Post Primary School

Name of researcher: Ann Mc Cormack

If you agree with the statements below, please tick the boxes.

• I have read the attached information letter which explains the research project named above. Yes ☐

• I understand that the letter is asking me to participate in a questionnaire. Yes ☐

• I understand that all the information gathered will be kept strictly confidential and that my name and the name of my organisation will not be included in any reports. Yes ☐

• I understand that my interview will be recorded electronically and transcription of this will be kept securely in an encrypted file on the researcher's computer. Yes ☐

• I understand that participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time until the data are analysed and about to be written up. ☐

• I understand that this research will be published in form of a doctoral dissertation and possibly in conference papers and journal articles. Yes ☐

Also, please tick one of the following boxes to indicate whether you agree to taking part

I AGREE to taking part in the above research ☐

I DO NOT AGREE to taking part in the above research ☐

Signature:_____Date:_____

Name: _____

Appendix 5

<p align="center">**Participant/ Teacher Consent Form for Focus Group**</p>

Title~ Teachers' Perspectives and Experience of Continuous professional development in a
Post Primary School

<p align="center">**Name of Researcher:** Ann Mc Cormack</p>

Supervisor Details: Dr. Joseph Gallagher, Letterkenny Institute of Technology,
Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

Declaration: I _____, acknowledge that:

- I have been informed of and understand the purpose of the study

- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions

- I understand that the focus group will take place between _____2020. I can withdraw from the study up until the data has been transcribed or before March 2020.

- I understand there will be no penalty encountered if I do withdraw from the study

- I understand that my participation is voluntary

- I consent to the publication of results

- I understand that the interview from the focus group will be handwritten and audio recorded

- I understand that in this study I will be referred to as 'Teacher A etc.'

- I must not refer to the real name of a student or group of students

- I understand that all data will be collected, processed and stored securely

- I agree to participate in the study as outlined to me

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date:_____

Appendix 6– Participant letter - Sample

Dear Teachers,

I am undertaking a research study on Continuous professional development as part of a dissertation for a Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching. Letterkenny Institute of Technology has ethically approved this research. However, is it important that you understand what this study entails before you decide whether to participate. Please read the information sheet included with this letter and feel free to ask me any questions in relation to the project.

My Intention is to gain a deeper understanding of the experience and perspectives of teachers of CPD in this school. I would like to establish the types of CPD that work.

My Intention is to conduct an online questionnaire consisting of closed and open questions. I expect the questionnaire to take 15 minutes. I also intend to do a focus group with 4 teachers lasting approximately 30 minutes.

I am asking you to participate in an online questionnaire.

You can contact me by email at＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿ or by phone at＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿. My supervisors contact details are＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿ The School of Business, LYIT, phone＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿and email at＿＿＿＿＿＿＿.
Thank you for taking time to consider participating. You are satisfied with the information provided and willing to participate, please tick the boxes on the consent form attached, sigh it and return it to me in the envelope provided.

With Thanks, Yours faithfully

Ann Mc Cormack

Appendix 7

<u>**Participant Information**</u>

<u>**Title:**</u> Teachers' experiences of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

<u>**Name of Researcher:**</u> Ann Mc Cormack

<u>**Introduction and Aims:**</u>

The purposes of this research are: (a) to establish teachers' experiences of CPD (b) to ascertain what types of CPD works and the benefits.

The information will then be analysed and will be used to inform and review CPD in Loreto College Cavan

<u>**Procedures:**</u>

The researcher will meet with each participant prior to the focus group. An Information Sheet regarding the purpose of the research will be distributed. This Information Sheet will be retained by participants. In addition, the researcher will provide each participant with a Consent Form to enable participants to provide their free and full consent to participate in this research. Participants who provide their consent to participate in the research must sign the Consent Form and return it to the researcher before_____. On receipt of signed Consent Form, the researcher will schedule a suitable time and date _____on which to conduct the focus group. The group interview will be recorded on a recording device and handwritten notes will also be taken.

<u>**Confidentiality and Data Protection:**</u>

Participants will be referred to as Teacher A/ Teacher B, etc. Where specific incidences/examples are being discussed, participants will be advised to refrain from using the real names. All data will be collected, processed, and stored in compliance with relevant data protection legislation and compliance with LYIT's Guidelines for Electronic Data Storage.

<u>Voluntary Participation:</u>

You have volunteered to participate in this research project following on from the questionnaire and signed a Consent Form. If you wish to withdraw from the project you must inform the researcher immediately in writing. You may withdraw from the study up until the data has been transcribed or before the _____

<u>Discontinuation of the study:</u>

You understand that the researcher may discontinue the study at any time without your permission.

<u>Permission:</u>

This project has Research Ethics Approval from LYIT.

Use of data and dissemination of results.

The content of the questionnaires and focus group will be used for my dissertation: all references to it will be on an anonymous basis. I may also write conference papers or see publication of my research in academic or professional education journals.

This project has been submitted to The_____School of Business, Ethics Committee and has been approved in order to request interview from a number of personnel in _____

Appendix 8

Letter to gate keeper- TEMPLATE

Dear Board of Management,

I am undertaking a research study on Continuous professional development as part of a dissertation for a Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching. Letterkenny Institute of Technology has ethically approved this research.

My Intention is to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of teachers of CPD in this school. I would like to establish the types of CPD that work.

My Intention is to conduct an online questionnaire consisting of closed questions. I expect the questionnaire to take 10 minutes. I also intend to do a focus group with 4 teachers lasting approximately 30 minutes. All data will be collected, processed, and stored in compliance with relevant data protection legislation and compliance with LYIT's Guidelines for Electronic Data Storage.

I would like permission to conduct the study. Please see enclosed templates for the questionnaire and focus group interviews.

Yours sincerely

_____

Ann Mc Cormack

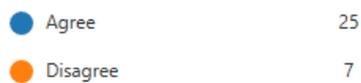**Appendix 9**

Results of online questionnaire

Continuous Professional Development of teachers in a post primary school

32
Responses

1. Continuous Professional Development should happen within the school.
   More Details

   ● Agree   25
   ● Disagree   7

   Agree 78.12% Disagree 21.88%

2. Teachers are encouraged and supported to participate in CPD
   More Details

   ● Yes   25
   ● No   7

   Agree: 78.12% Disagree 21.88%

3. Have you had inputs into your own CPD?

More Details
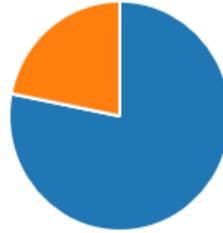
- Yes   25
- No   7

Agree: 78.12% Disagree 21.88%

4. Do you feel CPD is beneficial?
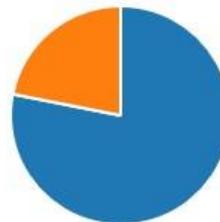
More Details

- Yes   31
- No   1
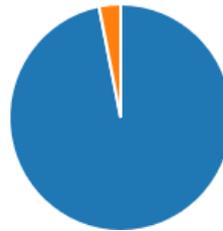
Yes: 96.88% No: 3.12%

5. Does CPD focus more on the benefits for students rather than the educational enhancement of teachers?

More Details

- Yes   25
- No   7

Yes: 78.13%   No:21.87%

6. Is your experience of CPD of good quality? How would you rate the quality?

More Details

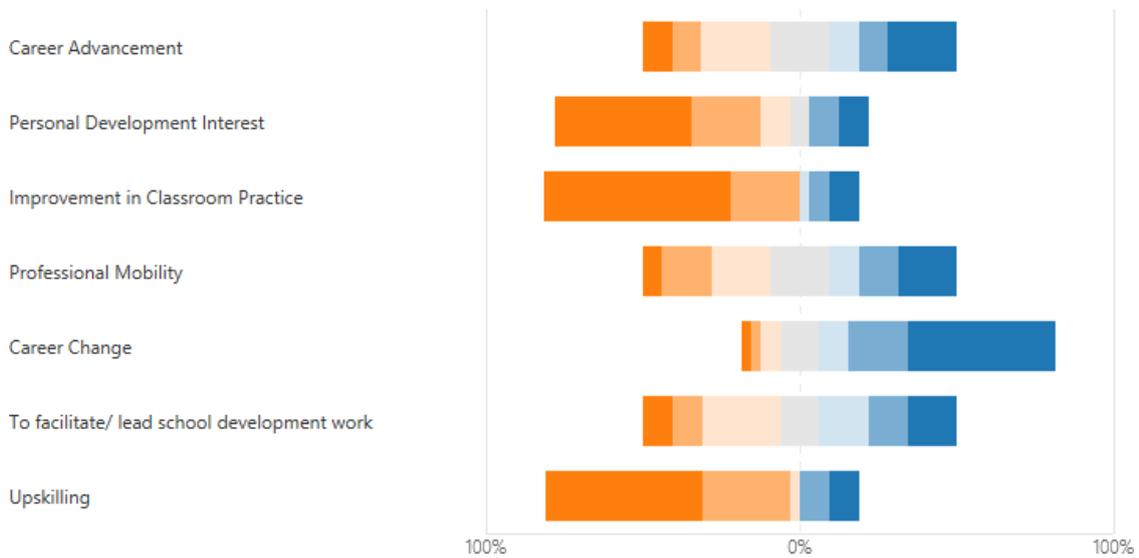|		
● Poor		0
● Fair		6
● Good		17
● Very Good		9
● Excellent		0

Fair: 18.75%   Good: 53.13%   Very Good: 28.12%

7. What reasons would motivate you to undertake CPD? Please rank the following statements from 1 to 7. 1 as the most important and 7 least important

More Details

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6 ■ 7

Career Advancement 12.1%

Personal Development Interest 45.5%

Improvement in Classroom Practice: 60.6%

Professional Mobility 6.1%
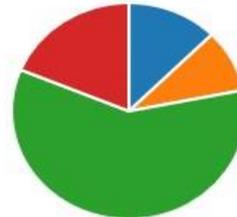
Career Change: 3%

Facilitate/lead school development work: 9.1%

Upskilling: 51.5%

8. Teachers are encouraged and facilitated to share their learning in CPD with colleagues
More Details

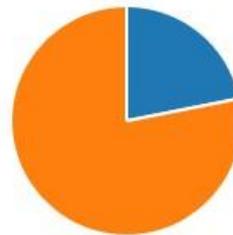|		
🔵 Never	4	
🟠 Rarely	3	
🟢 Occasionally	19	
🔴 Frequently	6	

Never: 12.5%   Rarely:9.37%   Occasionally:59.38%   Frequently: 18.75%

9. Are you familiar with collaborative CPD?
More Details

🔵 Yes	7	
🟠 No	25	

Yes: 21.88%   No:78.12%

10. As part of this research I would like to conduct a focus group on teacher's experiences and perspectives of CPD. Are you willing to participate in a focus group on CPD?
More Details

🔵 Yes	15	
🟠 No	17	