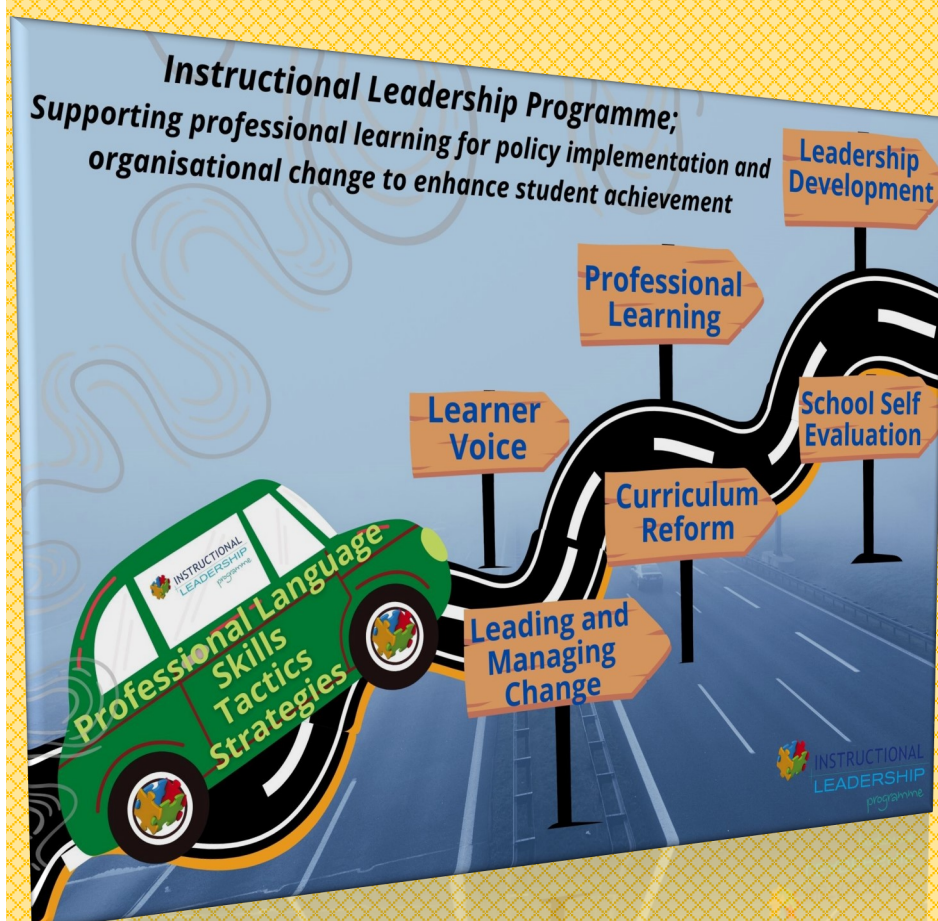




# Leading Learning

Newsletter of the Instructional Leadership Programme

Issue 14: March 2021



## What's in this Issue

### Professor Barrie Bennett

*Escaping the Tower of Babylon: The Language of Instruction.*

### Dr. Pdraig Kirk & Ms. Mary Lafferty, JCT

*PEAS IN A POD Junior Cycle and the Instructional Leadership Programme.*

### Abbey Vocational School

*Fostering a culture of Learner Voice in the Abbey Vocational School*

### Mr. Tomás Ó Ruairc

*Making the implicit explicit; the work of the Teaching Council and how the Instructional Leadership Programme is aligned.*

## Introduction

Colleagues,

Welcome to the Instructional Leadership Newsletter, Issue 14. There is no doubt it has been a strange and demanding year, yet as I continue to engage with schools involved in the Instructional Leadership Programme and the ILP/NCCA Learner Voice Programme, I am delighted to experience the level of creative engagement that permeates both the synchronous/asynchronous teaching and learning space and the communication and wellbeing space.



As I said in the last edition of the newsletter, there is no doubt that COVID, while intently disruptive, also brought an opportunity for us to reflect and consider what is important to us. As a Steering Committee, we equally took that opportunity. Since January, we have launched the updated website and published a Strategic Plan, 2021 – 2023. The plan focuses on the development and delivery of the programme aiming to enhance programme access to schools, at primary and post-primary levels, to suit their context. We are also aiming to enhance the level of support to graduates through the development of local and national networks.

It has been agreed that the fixed date for the hosting of the Annual Conference for Senior & Middle Leaders is the second Monday after the commencement of the Leaving Certificate examinations. Equally, it has been agreed that the Annual Instructional Leadership Conference will take place during the first weekend in February. An exciting inclusion in our plan is to host a Research Conference, in 2022/2023. The theme is 'Leading Teaching and Learning' and we are extending an invitation to all ILP Graduates/participants who are or have engaged in research, at any level, to submit an expression of interest to present, the form is available at [www.instructionalleadership.ie](http://www.instructionalleadership.ie) or by emailing [admin@instructionalleadership.ie](mailto:admin@instructionalleadership.ie)

Unfortunately, COVID 19 has disrupted our plans for the delivery of the programme to Cohorts 12, 13 and 14. Not only did the October 2020 sessions have to be deferred, but we also had to defer the March 2021 sessions, fingers and toes are crossed for October 2021! To support the Cohorts in their ongoing professional reflection and learning, we have arranged an online session with Professor Barrie Bennett, for each of the cohorts. Details are available on Page 5. The session will be recoded and made available to all after the final session, via a link on the website.

We are currently editing two of Barrie's recent publications for the Irish context and are seeking samples of student work to include as graphic. If you and your students are interested in having their work included in the publication, please do contact us. We will need the original piece of work to be posted to us to ensure a high-quality digital copy can be made.

As I reflect on the journey of the ILP over the past thirteen years, I am reminded of the Inaugural National Conference in 2012, at which Dr. Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector, was the Keynote Speaker, and a slide I used as a prompt for my opening remarks. It identified how ILP specifically aims to make the implicit explicit by equipping teachers and school leaders with the language to enable professional conversations around teaching and learning, and in how having that language also supports the journey of change a school faces, either through policy change or local initiated change. At the time I referred to policy changes that were either new or imminent, induction of teachers, professional development, school self-evaluation, curriculum reform. Now, 2021, and I still consider that slide very relevant. I firmly believe that schools engaged with ILP are well placed and well equipped to embrace change, mandated or otherwise. A view that is corroborated by the evidence in many inspection reports. This edition of the newsletter highlights evidence of that readiness and indeed creativity and commitment in navigating change. Barrie has penned an article on the



### Introduction

power and importance of having an instructional language (p.3). Dr. Pádraig Kirk, Director JCT, and Ms. Mary Lafferty, authored an article, aptly entitled *PEAS IN A POD Junior Cycle and the Instructional Leadership Programme* (p.8), which expertly identifies the synergies between the tremendous work of JCT with that of the ILP. For me, the article confirms the readiness of IL schools to embrace curriculum changes and adapt classroom activity to meet the needs of all learners. ILP is currently engaged in a Learner Voice project with NCCA, which clearly identifies how the schools involved are on the journey of facilitating the voice of the learner to be heard, to meaningfully inform classroom practice and place the learner at the centre of learning, a cornerstone of the Junior Cycle programme. Teachers are sharing their instructional language with students to facilitate conversations around e.g., the co-creation of success criteria, meaningful assessment, learning styles etc. Michael Leyden, Deputy Principal, Abbey Vocational School, generously took the time to write an article, *Fostering a culture of Learner Voice in the Abbey Vocational School* (p.12), highlighting their interesting journey with the project. Other participating schools are sharing stories of their journey on [www.instructionalleadership.ie/LearnerVoice](http://www.instructionalleadership.ie/LearnerVoice). Our loyal mentor and critical friend, Tomás O' Ruairc, Director of the Teaching Council, highlights, in his article, (p.14) how the ILP is aligned to the endeavours of the Council to support the professional learning of graduate and established teachers. Taking the lead from the work of the Council, the IL programme has professional reflection now at its' core. I believe that the work of the Council, promoting the strengthening of connectivity between the school and local communities, BEACONS, will not provide a challenge for IL schools, as you have the language, the skills and the confidence to engage in that space, as is particularly evidenced in the Learner Voice Project.

I have no doubt you will find this edition interesting and informative. If any of the messages in articles resonate with you, please do let us know or maybe write an article for the next edition!

(contact: [admin@instructionalleadership.ie](mailto:admin@instructionalleadership.ie))

Stay safe and stay connected with us by following us on twitter @ILProgramme or visiting our website [www.instructionalleadership.ie](http://www.instructionalleadership.ie)

I wish you success and safety as you commence the journey of re-opening schools.

Le Meas,



Chairperson National IL Steering Committee

Education Research Officer (ETBI)

**We are pleased to announce that Professor Barrie Bennett will facilitate an online session for each of the Cohorts participating on the IL Programme.**

**Please see above "Save the Dates" for each of the online sessions scheduled for March 2021.**



## ***Escaping the Tower of Babylon: The Language of Instruction***

**Professor Barrie Bennett**



In a book on Differentiated Instruction, Carol Ann Tomlinson, the author, uses the label 'Concept Maps' and provides an example. The problem is that the example was a Word Web and not a Concept Map. In parallel, only twenty years earlier, when I attended my first workshop on Concept Maps in Canberra, Australia, I also thought a Word Web was a synonym for a Concept Map. Wrong. So Tomlinson and I were both misinformed...and we passed it on. So, if those writing about instruction are at times confused with the language of instruction, then imagine how teachers feel. Hence, the 'Escaping Babylon' metaphor for this article. (If you are not sure about the 'Babylon' metaphor, Google 'Tower of Babylon'..., everyone working on the tower spoke a different language...not much got done.)

One key to communication is having both a common language and a common understanding of the words that make up the language. Difficult to 'build a tower'... have a discussion on teaching and learning in the absence of a common language and a common understanding. For example, if you and I have a common understanding of the cooperative learning strategy Teams Games Tournaments (TGT), and we've both tried it few times, then we are positioned to have a richer discussion than if only one of us understands TGT and has applied it in the classroom. You can also see how this 'only one person understanding' creates a discussion 'block' when team teaching. Ditto with a principal or inspector coming into your classroom to provide feedback...if the principal and/or inspector do not understand the attributes of effective group work and how you integrated those attributes into the Teams Games Tournament...then the discussion is unlikely to be meaningful.

I will step back for two paragraphs before providing an overview of this brief article.

**First Paragraph.** A few years back, I was asked to review a manuscript related to a research project in education...the author was a professor from McGill University in Quebec, Canada. In the article, the author used the following words related to instruction: skills, methods, approaches, strategies, and tactics interchangeably...as if they all meant the same thing. I asked myself, if they are interchangeable (aka synonyms) then why not pick 'one' and keep the writing more precise. Of course, if they are different, then assist the reader by explaining their differences, and if possible, their similarities. Problem was the author did not own those concepts; those concepts 'owned' the author.

**Second Paragraph** What does instruction mean? Consider the 'interpretive' baggage attached to a concept like 'instruction'; think about the multiple interpretations for its use. For example, as the result of Christmas, I am reading the 'instructions' on how to use this piece of technology that tells me the distance from where I am on the fairway (think golf) to the flag. (Personally, I think this is cheating.) Anyway, does 'instruction' mean, steps, or a sequence (like a recipe or how to put together a barbeque), or is it the laying down of rules or expectations...telling your child what they have to get done around the house before going out? Or, does instruction infer one person (the instructor) knows a lot and will tell another person (the learner) who does not know a lot? Is the concept of 'instruction' part of a behaviorist/positivist perspective that at times implies the learner is a somewhat empty vessel needing to be filled or topped up? Or, is it possible that 'instruction' can be aligned with the ideas of the well-intentioned 'humanist' or 'constructivist' educator? Is it possible that 'instruction', as a concept, has shifted (somewhat like how the concept of collaboration has shifted)...to a more inclusive position? What do you think? Does it matter what you think?

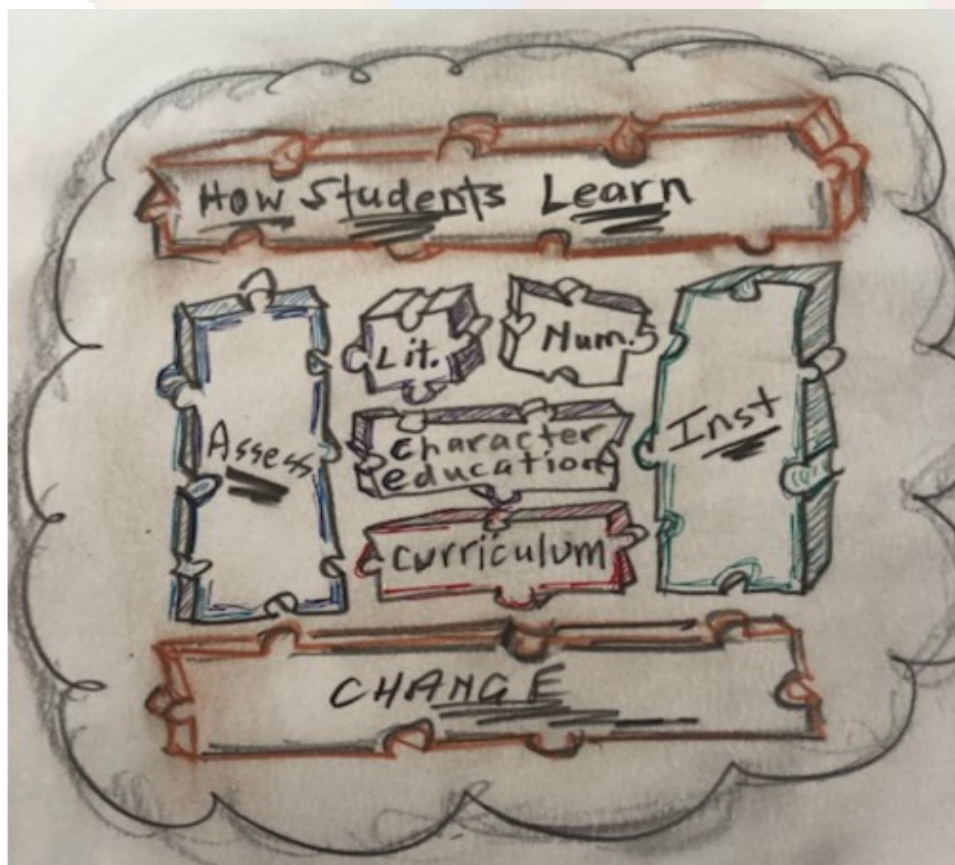
**Overview** In this article I will play a bit with the concept of 'instruction' and the language that is woven into that 'big' label for all the methods that teachers employ in the design of learning environment. Keep in mind that 'instruction' is an amorphous (sensitizing concept); sensitizing concepts, developed by Herbert Blumer in 1954, refer to concepts that have no 'one' accepted definition; no person or group 'owns' the definition of the concept. So, the concept 'instructional' fits in with other concepts such as love, democracy, justice, motivation, critical thinking and effective-group-work as examples of sensitizing concepts. For example, if I suggested that you use a 'method' to teach a lesson on summarizing what your students understand about fractions, you would not find my 'use a method' suggestion helpful. You need more specificity. So, if I said, use a graphic organizer like a Mind or Concept Map you now get that specificity. If I then added that some of your students who are skilled at these

two graphic organizers may want to merge those two organizers in their unit summary I'm simply extending the possibilities. The assumption of course is that we have a common language and common understanding. If you don't know what is meant by Mind Map and Concept Map then your communication will be limited to questions more than answers and enrichment.

I'll start by first identifying 'where' instruction fits into the bigger picture. I'll then work to clarify why we are often confused with the meaning of the concept of 'instruction'. Following that I will situate instruction alongside, curriculum, assessment, learning, and educational change (the bigger picture). Next I'll work to clarify 'instruction' by classifying the various methods of instruction in order to grasp the interactive affect of integrating or stacking multiple instructional methods (key to effective instructional communication). Finally, I'll push the edge a wee bit by discussing how both 'entrepreneurialitis' (a concept I created and that refers to the inflammation of the entrepreneurial glands) and 'teacher training' work to unwittingly keep the Babylon metaphor alive and well. Google 'The Tower of Babylon if you are not sure what it means.

**Where 'Instruction' Fits** Below is a diagram that illustrates the key educational components in all districts with whom I work. Educators in all districts talk about numeracy and literacy, not as separate subject areas but as key components in all curriculum areas; ditto with 'social responsibility', that connects to both literacy and numeracy. Those three are the 'hub' in an organization's 'vision' statements. And, you can see that those three connect to or are 'nested' into the bigger concept of 'curriculum' (the noun or the outcomes re 'what' is to be learned).

**Diagram 1. Intersection of eight educational components**



On either side, we have 'instruction' (the verb or the how it will be learned) and 'assessment' the measuring of the learning. And last, we have two additional areas that we often struggle to effectively enact: (1) attending to how students learn, and (2) responding to 'educational change'. Both of those areas are critical in the dialogue around making a difference in student learning over time. So having a common 'instructional' language includes more than having a language of instruction. You better understand the concepts you are teaching (the curriculum) and additionally, be able to assess both your selection and application of the methods you teach. That includes the extent to which the students were successful. Additionally, you need to attend to the ongoing development of your expertise over time; valuing yourself as a life-long learner... the process of educational change. Of course all of which is guided by the research and personal experience related to how our students learn.

**Clarifying Instruction** Educators (those inside and outside the classroom) have ‘used’ the word instruction for well over a hundred years (e.g., see the text ‘The Principles and Practices of Teaching’ (Millar, 1897). Instruction, the word, forms part of the title of hundreds of books...look at the current plethora of books related to ‘differentiated instruction’ (33 000 000 hits on Google). Go back to the 1970s, 1980s, and the work of Madeline Hunter in her program ‘Instructional Theory into Practice’ (2 500 000 hits on Google). That’s over 35 million hits from two programs.

So, from my 48 years of teaching and research, instruction most frequently refers to the specific methods a teacher can employ to increase the chances that students learn independent of any particular philosophy or theory (e.g., constructivism is a philosophy, multiple intelligences is a theory). Hundreds of methods are ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered. I now have just over 90 methods that I can play with like breathing in the classroom. So after 48 years of teaching and a constant focus on instruction, I only have 90 methods that I can easily apply; that works out to learning about 1.9 instructional methods a year. (Note that cooperative learning has over 150 methods (aka, tactics and strategies and over 90 percent are tactics); the CoRT program for thinking has 60 methods (all tactics). I use 27 cooperative learning methods and 4 CoRT methods. You can sense how much more I have to learn. (Note: I explain tactics and strategies later in this article.)

Keep in mind that the meaning of instruction has historically been more aligned to a teacher directed/stand-up recitation/didactic approach to teaching and learning. This was often sensed as a more behaviourist or positivist approach to teaching and learning. Dale and Rath (1945) found in the United States that the primary mode of instruction was stand-up-recitation and little else. Nonetheless, somewhere along the timeline of teaching, the concept of ‘instruction’ has shifted to include those methods that align with a more humanist, constructivist, student centered approach. Personally, that means when I teach, I can shift back and forth between philosophies e.g., behaviourist and constructivist) and their suggested approaches (student centered and teacher centered) in the same sixty-minute lesson. That philosophical flexibility means I can more effectively differentiate my instruction.

*In summary*, the meaning of instruction has shifted, as did the concept ‘collaborate’...collaborating is now a ‘good’ thing. In the same vein, instruction is no more inclusive of multiple philosophies. So for me, the concept ‘approach’ refers more to a philosophy or theory of learning...it refers to a lens that guides my decision making related to how I select and enact those specific ‘methods (aka instructional methods). For example, by theory I refer to research related to areas such as Multiple Intelligence (MI), Learning Styles, Cooperative Learning (which are not specific methods). But, by integrating my methods, I can also integrate those theories (e.g., having students work with a partner to design a Mind Map, I can enact five of the eight intelligences from Gardner’s work on MI, the visual, auditory, and tactile aspects of learning styles, and the research on effective group work).

**Classifying Instruction** Jerome Bruner, back in the early 1980s argued that what we lack is a clearly articulated theory of the interactive nature of instruction. As a result we struggle to have powerful discussion around the complexity of instruction. That statement has been the focus of my work since 1976. I won’t go through that evolution now, but suffice it to say that over the years through looking at relationships and the effects or purposes of different ‘methods’ I’ve now classified instruction into five categories: (1) instructional concepts, (2) skills, (3) tactics, (4) strategies, and (5) organizers. Note that they are all concepts, but in this classification, Instructional concepts have a more specific meaning.

**1. Instructional Concepts:** these are concepts that relate to teaching and learning. Examples would be interest, meaning, safety, active participation, accountability, novelty, success etc. Key here is that they cannot be ‘done’. One does not ‘succeed’ or ‘safety’...they are not ‘methods’. You would not say, “Look, now she is noveltying”; however, you may say, notice how she is invoking novelty by introducing students to different graphic organizers they could select and possibly integrate to summarize this unit of inquiry (say on energy or chemical equations or figures of speech).

**2. Instructional Skills:** these are the least complex of the methods and in most circumstances the least powerful of all the instructional methods. Examples would be sharing and discussing the objective and purpose of the lesson, providing wait time when asking questions to increase safety and private rehearsal before sharing publicly, framing questions to invoke participation, accountability and safety, how to respond to an incorrect response or a ‘no’ response (there are 5 more types of responses, I’ll let you try to figure them out). Suspending judgment, disagreeing agreeably, attentive listening, accepting and extending the ideas of others are a few more examples. Every occupation has ‘skills’ (hammering, sawing, measuring, measuring a cup of sugar, adding up one’s expenses etc.)

**3. Instructional Tactics:** these are the mid complexity instructional methods. Examples would be Venn diagrams, Word Webs, Time Lines, Think Pair Share, Place Mat, Plus Minus Interesting, Brainstorming, etc. They usually have steps involved and usually depend on the instructional skills in order to be effectively implemented. For example, when using Think Pair Share, the teacher must be able to invoke skills such as framing questions effectively, providing sufficient wait time, and making sure the students can attentively listen and paraphrase. The cooperative learning literature has well over 100 tactics just for working in groups.

**4. Instructional Strategies:** these are the most complex of all the methods; in texts such as Models of Teaching by Joyce and Weil, they are labeled 'models' rather than strategies. Strategies, like the tactics, will have steps or components but unlike the tactics those steps and components are more complex and are usually connected to a specific theory of, or research on, learning. For example, Concept Attainment and Concept Formation, and Concept Maps are from information processing theory; Synectic is from creative thinking theory, Academic Controversy and the Five Basic Elements of effective group work are from social theory; Mind Maps are from brain research and research on memory. Strategies often depend on both instructional skills and tactics in order to be implemented effectively. For example, Think Pair Share and Placemat work effectively in Phase II of Concept Attainment. Both Think Pair Share and Placemat will require the teacher to effectively frame questions to invoke accountability to think and participate.

**5. Instructional Organizers:** these are the large bodies of knowledge, from research, that guide our thinking related to what skills, tactics, and strategies to select in the design of an effective learning environment. Organizers assist us to be wise in our design of learning environments. And, like instructional concepts, a teacher does not 'do' them (i.e., one does not 'do' Multiple Intelligence...it is not a method). Examples would be research on autism, gifted, additional language learners, students at risk, brain research, research on constructivism, behaviourism, research on Multiple Intelligence and Learning Styles etc. Taxonomies of thinking also fit here (e.g., Bloom and colleague's taxonomy and Solo used by John Hattie). Here we can also put in the learning ideas from theorists/educators such as Piaget, Montessori, Vygotsky, Dewey, etc. Herbert Thelan, for example, took Dewey's theories and developed a powerful and researched strategy known as 'Group Investigation' (a student centered, teacher facilitated strategy that would fit in with constructivism).

**Entrepreneurialists and Teacher Training** In this last part, I'll share how these two concepts work against developing a common language and what smart systems do to counteract their effects.

*Entrepreneurialitis* refers to those educators who market innovations (that are usually worth learning and implementing) at the expense of those attempting to learn and implement the innovation. It contains two subsets. The first refers to those who push innovations but have no idea of how to implement them and/or no concern about whether or not their work will be implemented. Second, are those educators who change the labels of an innovation and too often take the essence out of the innovation (e.g., changing Words Webs to Clustering or Bubbling). That said, in this article, I'll only play with the first subset that connects to educational change.

The first involve those educators who travel around between schools, districts etc., doing one or two-day workshops, and then disappear to do the next workshop. Note: no evil plot exists here, they are often well-intentioned. The problem is that little to nothing changes in the classroom/school/organization. They unwittingly fail to apply the process of what needs to happen to cause/support the transfer of learning. You will see this happen a lot with educators, researchers, writers, speakers who speak at conferences on topics related to educational change, assessment, brain research, critical thinking etc. Research on peer coaching shows that workshops that involve the presentation of theory/information, modeling/demonstrations and the chance to practice... but that have no follow-up support result in virtually no transfer. No language, no common language. In the absence of high-quality efforts to extend teachers' instructional repertoires, the chances of developing a more extensive instructional repertoire, where teachers become more refined users of those instructional methods, is limited.

Keep in mind that those inviting those consultants to speak at workshops or conferences are co-complicit in the resulting inaction. Their grasp of change over time (or caring to develop that grasp) is no better than the consultant doing the workshop. No 'skill' transfer, no deep understanding, no meaning re having a discussion. You cannot have a common language if there is no applied language to begin with. Rich, meaningful conversations occur in the presence of a more extensive, enacted instructional repertoire.

The second piece in this article refers to the B.Ed., Teacher Training Programs in all countries. I worked in B.Ed., program at the University of Toronto for 27 years. This is where most potential teachers start developing their instructional repertoire. If those providing the course-work are not skilled with instruction, then where do those students start that journey? Again, there is no 'evil' intention here; if those doing the training were never assisted to develop their own instructional repertoire, then not much is going to happen. As an exercise, if you are an instructor in a teacher training program (B.Ed.) would you be able to identify the methods you use in the classroom and the research that supports those methods? Does it matter whether or not you can answer those questions?

Do you frame questions effectively? How would you know? Do you frame questions at different levels of thinking to assist with differentiating instruction? That implies you own a taxonomy of thinking. Do you understand the difference between effective and less effective group work? Ineffective group work is one of the worst approaches to teaching and learning. Should you have that 'instructional language'? Do you know the difference between the three genres of collaborative skills: social, communication, and critical thinking skills? Do you understand how those three sets of skills depend on one another? Can you identify two examples of each of those three genres of collaboration skills? Maybe none of this matters; then if not, what does?

Let's say the answer is "Yes you can", to the above; you have those skills and that knowledge, then what happens when those teacher candidates shift into their practicums and their associate teachers do not have that same language...or the opposite...the classroom teachers have it, but the university instructors and teacher candidates do not? What if the B.Ed., instructors, the teacher candidates and the associate teachers don't have a common language...one guided by research and the power to impact student learning? Where is the learning? At best we perpetuate mediocrity.

If you are reading this as an inspector think back to your last classroom visit, what type of conversation did you have with the teacher? Was it policy driven? Was it subject content driven? or was it pedagogy driven? Did you and the teacher have a common language? If not, why not?

As a school principal how many conversations do you have with teachers around pedagogy versus resources? If it is mainly resource issues you discuss with teachers, why? What is in your plan to develop the instructional conversations with individual teachers and between teachers of the same and/or different subjects?

Michael Fullan (2011) argues that developing the instructional repertoire of all teachers within a system is the key driver for educational change when it comes to student learning. Leithwood et al., (2009) in their ten-year study in three countries, found that the teachers' instructional repertoire was the most powerful predictor of student achievement. Interestingly, the principals' support of assisting teachers to develop that repertoire was the second most powerful predictor of student achievement. Do B.Ed., programs provide high quality instruction in those instructional methods that have the biggest impact on students learning (e.g., structuring groups effectively). John Hattie in Australia and Robert Marzano in the United States have spent most of their career researching instruction; they work to see what methods have the most power to impact student learning. The answer is out there.

In summary, educators in smart systems work hard to promote the life-long learning of students, teachers, principals, and administrators. They are guided (not controlled) by research. For example, those 'learning' must receive high-quality training where they get theory/information, they see demonstrations, they get a chance to practice and get feedback in their course work or workshops and they get follow-up support in the classroom (note that those components are part of the process of peer coaching). Peer coaching, developed by Beverly Showers and Bruce Joyce, is one of the most important and researched processes to develop and extend one's instructional practice. Interestingly, team teaching may be one of the more powerful ways to enact/encourage peer coaching. Some schools in Ireland have shifted in this direction.

So, one move is to start with how we train teacher candidates so that the candidates not only develop their initial repertoires in their studies but who also work with classroom teachers who have had at least some common language to deepen the candidates' ability to apply those methods. Concomitantly, we also need those in leadership positions, such as principals and inspectors etc., to also have that common language; as I said at the beginning, hard to be considered an instructional mentor if those observing and those teaching do not have a common language.

## PEAS IN A POD - Junior Cycle and the Instructional Leadership Programme

Dr. Pádraig Kirk and Ms. Mary Lafferty, JCT

*'Since we cannot know what knowledge will be needed in the future, it is senseless to try to teach it in advance. Instead, our job must be to turn out young people who love learning so much, and who learn so well, that they will be able to learn whatever needs to be learnt'*

John Holt



The introduction of the Education Act (1998) can be regarded as the starting point for a myriad of changes affecting Irish schools. While many of these are reflective of our dynamic society, others are proactive in attempting to future-proof education for our young people. Schleicher (2018a), Education Director at the OECD, provides clarity on this necessity:

A generation ago, teachers could expect that what they taught would last their students a lifetime. Today, because of rapid economic and social change, schools have to prepare students for jobs that have not yet been created, technologies that have not yet been invented and problems that we don't yet know will arise (2018a).

The reform of lower-secondary education in Ireland has been a road with many turns, the latest of which sees a move from the Junior Certificate to the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). This award documents the broad range of student learning during the first three years of second-level education, while following the curriculum as detailed within the *Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)*<sup>1</sup>.

The *Framework* document has its foundations in international and national research and was further contextualised by engagement with the educational stakeholders. The *Framework* calls for a *'quality, inclusive and relevant education that will meet the needs of junior cycle students, both now and in the future'* (p.8).

The vision for Junior Cycle was first set out in the 2011 NCCA document *Towards a Framework for Junior Cycle: Innovation & Identity*. It stated that *'Junior cycle education places students at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives'* (p.9). While the *Framework* may have experienced challenges in its early implementation in schools and centres for education, this vision has remained constant throughout.

The curriculum for Junior Cycle is built on a triad of eight principles, twenty-four statements of learning and eight key skills (see Figure 1). Individual schools have autonomy and flexibility in how they choose to enact the curriculum utilising Level 1 Learning Programmes, Level 2 Learning Programmes, Subjects, Wellbeing, Short Courses and Other Areas of Learning. This flexibility also allows for a better *balance to be struck 'between school-led change and system-wide change'* (NCCA, 2011, p.5).

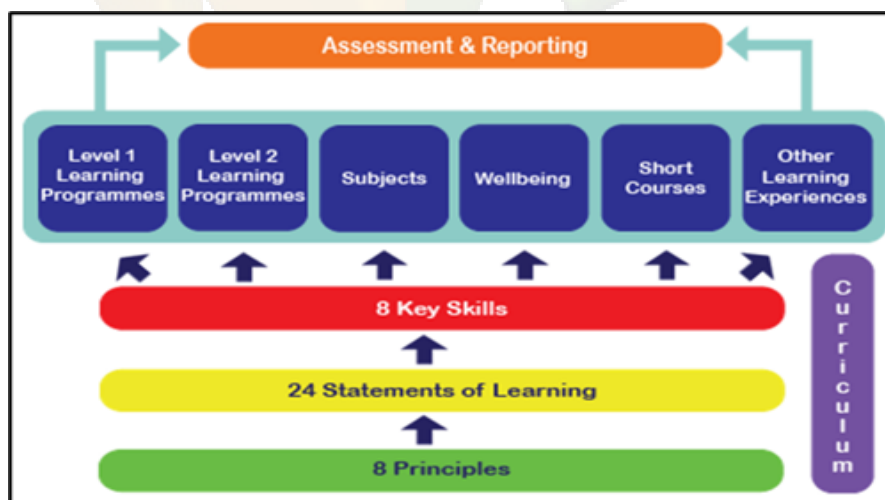


Figure 1: The building blocks of the reformed Junior Cycle

Hereafter referred to as the Framework<sup>1</sup>

The Instructional Leadership Programme (ILP) is one such 'school-led change'. Since the introduction of the programme in 2008 it has enjoyed an ever-increasing positive impact across all sectors and levels of Irish education. The 2011 NCCA report, *Towards a Framework for Junior Cycle: Innovation & Identity*, envisaged a Junior Cycle where schools moved forward, in the same direction and towards a common end point. The ILP not only advances schools in the direction espoused in this 2011 NCCA report but does so at an accelerated rate.

While all of us involved in education constantly strive to provide quality teaching and learning opportunities for learners it can sometimes be difficult to find consensus on what quality learning and teaching actually looks like. The relationship between the two is not always a clear one. The Framework promotes a shared understanding of how teaching, learning and assessment practices should evolve to support the delivery of a quality education. The pedagogical approaches promoted by the ILP align with those of the Framework, hence providing a mechanism that allows teachers to create quality learning opportunities for their students. The ILP supports and develops the foundational triad of principles, key skills and statements of learning, and in doing so, supports quality learning. This rich, layered learning is described as a 'Learning River' by Claxton (2017) who believed there are three different levels of learning taking place in all classrooms. On the surface is knowledge, normally shared through subjects and typically easy to see, flowing quickly as students are presented with content. Below the surface, is where the skills that support learning, such as numeracy and literacy, are developed. These skills require opportunities to practice and develop. They are harder to track and assess but are required to make sense of content. Finally, at the deepest level, student attitudes and dispositions are shaped, moulded slowly over time, but having a lasting impact. In Junior Cycle, the learning outcomes contained in the various subject specifications describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and values that students should be able to demonstrate. Clearly, a world apart from the syllabi of old, where only knowledge was more explicit.

The ILP creates opportunities for Claxton's deep learning to take place, with teachers encouraged to utilise various strategies to develop skills and embed concepts. Indeed, the ILP has provided participating teaching with a pedagogical repertoire that assists them to navigate *'through a period of demanding change'* (ILP, 2018 p. 11). One such strategy is the use of placemats. While students will need subject knowledge to engage with the discussion question, it is the skills development aspect that make this strategy so powerful. Students need to communicate with their classmates as they work together to manage information and engage literacy, numeracy and creative skills. In addition, when teachers plan skills-rich lessons, *'students are more actively engaged in their learning, feel more positive about learning and take more responsibility for their learning'* (NCCA, 2017 p.22).

The deepest level of learning also takes place as personal values are formed, such as *'equality and inclusion, justice and fairness, freedom and democracy, and respect for human dignity and identity which are fundamental to the vision of junior cycle education'* (NCCA, 2011 p.9). It is this deep learning which will most effectively meet the needs of students, now and in the future.

The *Framework* details a dual approach to assessment, as it recognises that no single assessment, including the terminal written exam, provides evidence of all levels of student learning. This dual approach reduces the focus on one externally assessed examination while increasing the profile of classroom assessments, including formative assessment. This rebalancing arises from the *'acknowledgment that students learn best when teachers provide feedback that helps students to understand how their learning can be improved'* (p.7). In addition, the dual approach allows for a more rounded evaluation of the education of each young person (p.8).

The *Framework* envisions a majority of assessment activities for Junior Cycle students to be formative in nature. There exists strong evidence that shows formative assessment as being one of the most powerful ways to raise student achievement. While there are numerous approaches to formative assessment, the work of Black and Wiliam (2009) is seminal. The 'pillars' of formative assessment are considered as non-negotiable by Black and Wiliam. Teachers embedding the ILP are enacting all pillars in their classroom pedagogy. By disseminating strategies such as 'think-pair-share' and 'brainstorming' the links to effective formative assessment are clearly visible. Clarity is provided through the sharing of the learning intentions and success criteria. Further, students are provided with opportunities to deepen their understanding of the topics and issues through classroom discussion and ongoing feedback from the teacher, both of which are enhanced by the emphasis that ILP places on the art of questioning. Also, by engaging in discussions with their peers and sharing their thinking, students

become learning resources for one another, engaging in collaborative and co-operative learning which is also central to the ILP approach. Strategies promoted by the ILP ensure this occurs, enabling students to take greater ownership of their learning.

	Where the learning is going	Where the student is now	How to get there
Teachers	1. Clarifying and sharing learning intentions and success criteria	2. Engineering effective classroom discussion, activities and tasks that elicit evidence of learning	3. Provide feedback that moves the student forward
Peers	Understanding and sharing learning intentions and success criteria	4. Activating students as instructional resources for each other	
Students	Understanding learning intentions and success criteria	5. Activating students as the owners of their own learning	

*Pillars of Formative Assessment, adapted from Wiliam (2009)*

Wellbeing is a central focus of the Framework, with greater clarity provided in the *Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle*, published by the NCCA in 2017. These guidelines promote a shared language through the identification of six wellbeing indicators - Connected, Active, Aware, Resilient, Respect and Responsible. It is widely accepted that wellbeing and learning are intertwined. Research has found that the development of key-skills through teaching methodologies can also help students feel connected, confident and engaged, thus supporting their wellbeing (NCCA, 2017). Facilitating the development of students as team players, as creative and imaginative, as resilient and persistent, as connected and empathetic, all combine to ensure our young people flourish in our classrooms (NCCA, 2017). The development of these wellbeing indicators in our young people illustrates the type of learning that takes place in the deepest part of Claxton's learning river; they are the concepts within the ILP that flow naturally from the principles of Junior Cycle. It is not surprising that, in more recent times, the ILP has incorporated an added emphasis on the development of learner voice, which is supported in classrooms through the formative assessment approaches advocated by the programme. This aligns with national policy documents such as 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures' and the 'National Strategy on Children's and Young People's Participation in Decision Making'. It is worth pointing out that Fullan & Hargreaves (2016) argue that '*having more student engagement and student voice, engaged in activist and other projects that provide continuous and honest feedback online and offline, is a powerful stimulator for teacher well-being*' (p. 17).

The *Framework* is not unique in the importance it places on collaborative practice for teachers. However, the provision of dedicated 'professional time' to all teachers at junior cycle was, and remains, pioneering. In 2018, the OECD TALIS report found that while collaboration among teachers builds relationships it is valuable in and of itself. Engaging in collaborative practice allows teachers to benefit from the synergies that arise from the use of common methodologies and the resulting professional conversations/observations (Wiliam, 2009). Fullan & Hargreaves (2016) believed a culture of professional collaboration brings individual, school and societal benefits. The *Framework* states '*professional collaboration envisaged between teachers has huge potential to enrich both the quality of students' learning and teachers' own professional engagement*' (p.4). In 2018, the ILP published a yearbook, celebrating ten years of the programme. Throughout, contributors reference collaboration and credit

ILP with promoting and enhancing collaborative cultures in their schools, referencing positive feedback from MML inspections, inclusive of improved classroom practices. The good practices associated with the ILP are once again mirrored within the *Framework*.

The OECD (2015) reported that between 2008 and 2014, Ireland introduced twenty-three educational reforms, one of which was the *Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)*. The OECD also contends that the most effective policies are those that are designed around students and learning, that build teachers' capacity and engage all stakeholders (OECD, 2009). Given the consultative nature of the development of the Framework, as conducted by the NCCA, the subsequent student-centred curriculum which evolved and the level of supports introduced to support the development of teacher capacity, not least of which is the JCT support service, it would appear the deck is stacked in its favour. The same, however, can also be said for the ILP, which is anchored in enhancing quality teaching and learning in our schools and in so doing empowers teachers to develop their practice. The opening up of the ILP to all post-primary schools and centres for education in recent years means that it can now follow and support the junior cycle programme wherever it is implemented. Like the junior cycle, it is a truly inclusive education programme. The ILP has succeeded in cultivating a change in practice in those schools that implement it. There is no doubting that it complements the implementation too of the *Framework*, the most significant reform of lower second level education since the foundation of the State.

## References

- Claxton, G. (2018). *The Learning Power Approach: Teaching Learners to Teach Themselves*. Crown House Publishing, Carmarthen.
- Fullan, M. & Hargreaves, A. (2016). *Bringing the profession back in: Call to action*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.
- Holt, J., *How Children Fail* (New York: Pitman, 1964), p. 173
- Instructional Leadership Programme, *Celebrating 10 Years* (2018)
- NCCA, *Towards a framework for Junior Cycle: Innovation & Identity* (2011)
- NCCA, *Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle* (2017)
- OECD. (2009). *Creating effective teaching and learning environments: First results from TALIS. Main report*. Paris: ERC.
- OECD (2015), *Education policy outlook 2015 : making reforms happen.*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264225442-en>.
- Schleicher, A., (2018a) *The Case for 21st Century Learning*  
<https://www.oecd.org/general/thecasefor21st-centurylearning.htm>
- Schleicher, Andreas (2018b), "Teachers' well-being, confidence and efficacy", in *Valuing our Teachers and Raising their Status: How Communities Can Help*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- William, D., (2009) *Assessment for Learning: why, what and how?* UCL: IOL Press, London
- Viennet, R., & Pont, B. (2017). *Education policy implementation: A literature review and proposed framework*. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 162. Paris: OECD Publishing.

## ***Fostering a culture of Learner Voice in the Abbey Vocational School***

**Mr. Michael Leyden, Deputy Principal, Abbey Vocational School**



The Abbey Vocational School has a strong tradition of promoting student voice. Giving students an authentic voice has been instrumental in creating a school culture that is inclusive for all and has placed students firmly at the center of their learning. Our journey through the Instructional Leadership programme has led us to the point where we use IL strategies to facilitate a more interactive learning experience for our students and give them more control of their learning, enabling us to listen to the voice of the learner throughout the teaching and learning process. The following is a synopsis of our journey in the Learner Voice project thus far.

Having been in the fortunate position of having teachers participate in cohorts 7, 8 & 9 of the Instructional Leadership Programme with Professor Barrie Bennett we have the deep-rooted foundation blocks on which to create a collaborative learning environment in our school. When we set out on our journey our initial plan was to work with our first-year students during their wellbeing classes, aiming to empower them to take control of their learning in the area selfcare and wellbeing.

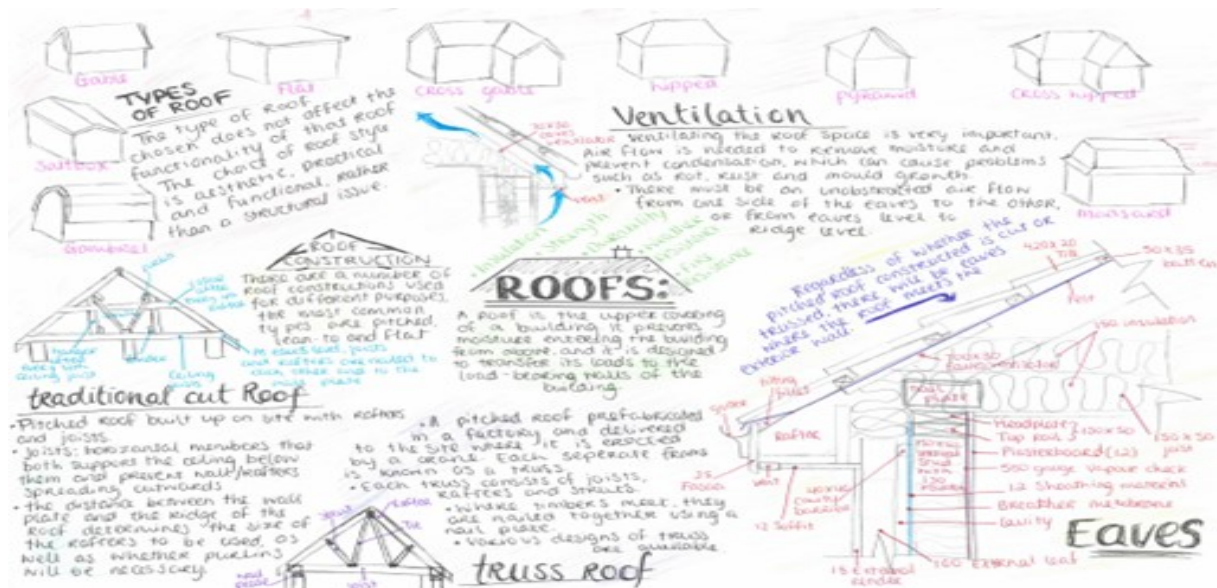
However, the first period of homeschooling curtailed our endeavours. We quickly responded to the demands of homeschooling and changed track, directing our attention to determining the needs of all our students during that time. We conducted a number of surveys to assist us in providing effective responses. The results were carefully analysed and provided much food for thought. It highlighted areas where our students were struggling, not just in terms of their approach to learning, but also the effect their individual circumstances at home had on the quality of their learning. During this phase we provided much support to students through a team of dedicated teachers that checked in on them regularly; the school also provided devices to those students that were in need.

One of the most important terms to enter our lexicon during the run up to last summer was that of calculated grades. The surveys we conducted during lockdown provided us with a vast array of information regarding student concerns. One item that we zoomed in on was that of exam preparation, and we collaboratively drafted a plan to support students. On our return to school, we introduced a tracking programme that analysed results and gave us a greater understanding of where individual students required help. This in turn allowed us to develop a more focused approach.

Our targeted approach of focusing on 1st, 3rd & 6th years came about through analysis of the various student surveys that highlighted where students themselves identified areas that they needed help with.

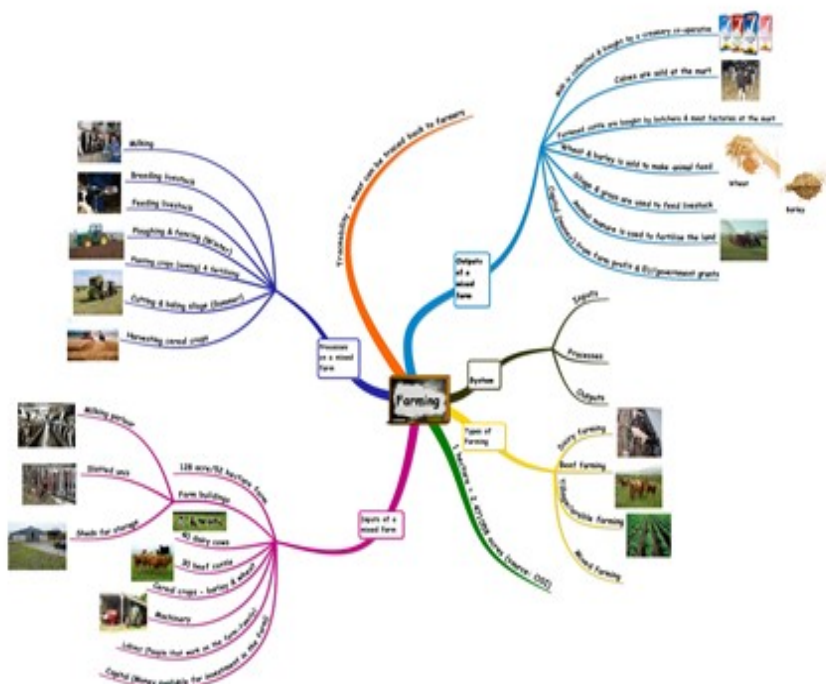
- The 'Learning to Learn' module studied in 1st year as part of their wellbeing classes equips students with the basic tools and approaches to studying and identifies what works well for them.
- Using a focused group approach with 3rd year students, we are guiding them through an investigation, which allows them to identify what type of learner they are. This investigation involves students being presented with various pieces of information which they listen to and are then tasked with trying to remember using a different approach each time, i.e., written answer, sketched answer, or a combination of both. Students can then see which approach works best for them.
- A 'Cheat Sheet' was introduced for 6th year students. This means that students will be allowed to bring 1 A4 'cheat sheet', populated with information in a format of their choice i.e., text, images, mind maps etc., (linking in with the strategy used with 3rd years to discover what type of learner they are) when completing a classroom-based assessment. Some students will have straight forward text-based sheets while others will use abstract pieces of text and images which reflect their experience with the topic. The main idea here is to encourage students to revise the topic fully and produce a 'cheat sheet' based on their experience with the topic. The information is ordered and presented in a way that is familiar to each individual student and so is easier recalled. For students to create a 'cheat sheet' such as this they are challenged with having a deeper understanding of the content themselves. It encourages students to take a greater ownership of their revision and display a deeper understanding of the topic. We identified that in Maths, in particular, it can ease exam anxiety. The preparation of the 'cheat

sheet' can also over time train students to develop key study skills such as organising, picking out key information for different topics, and designing personal revision tools. Students will also keep their 'cheat sheets' after each assessment and these will become key revision pieces for them in the long run.



In seeking to roll out the learning and knowledge gained by students who have taken part in each of our strategies we have kept the Lundy Model of Child Participation to the forefront of our approach. Giving students the 'space' to be able to relay their experiences to others in the school community is vital. To provide that space

in a safe way we use on anonymous surveys to gauge where students are at in terms of their understanding of the strategies and how comfortable they are with the process. We see online collaboration as the next step in expanding our strategy to the whole school. Classroom discussions provide students with the opportunity to 'voice' their thoughts regarding the effectiveness of each approach - the focus groups used this to great effect during the initial phase. Our 'audience' initially consisted of the exam year groups and 1st years; our plan now is to roll this out throughout all year groups. In our efforts to gain 'influence' with all students in the school we hope to use online presentations to introduce the various strategies and concepts to all students.



Our challenge in the coming months will be how we get our message out to all students effectively. As Simon Sinek has opined in one of his TED talks most people know 'what' they are doing and 'how' they do it, but it is only when they understand 'why' they do it will they truly understand, that remains our goal. We look forward to sharing our experiences with other schools over the coming months, and also learning from their experience of putting the student voice at the heart of teaching and learning.

Michael Leyden,  
Deputy Principal,  
Abbey Vocational School

## ***Making the implicit explicit; the work of the Teaching Council and how the Instructional Leadership Programme is aligned.***

**Mr. Tomás Ó Ruairc, Director, The Teaching Council**

As we reflect on the year that was 2020, I am reminded of the original meaning of the word “apocalypse”. It meant to unveil. I have spoken in the past at Instructional Leadership Programme conferences, and other events, of how so much of what we are seeking to achieve as a Teaching Council is to make the implicit explicit. Teachers have always been professionals, they have always been learning, teaching is one of the most complex endeavours we can undertake – these are just some of the key messages we have been promoting since our foundation.



Pressure to learn has never been as acute as it has been for the past year. The impact of that learning has been clear, palpable, visible, and audible! We hear of a deeper understanding amongst parents as to the complexity of teaching and learning. And we all feel in our hearts the deeper truth of how education is a relational and social endeavour. The importance of the connections between all members of the school community, to sustain and support each other, and to ensure ongoing excellence of teaching and learning, has never been more apparent.

Some things have changed during this pandemic. Teachers have embraced professional learning in the areas of remote and online learning in their thousands. And the impact of this particular strand of learning can be seen in the various enhancements in online learning since the beginning of 2021.

On the other hand, the perception of endless change that can seem at times overwhelming not only continues but has been exacerbated in many ways. This can raise some fundamental questions for teachers as people as well as professionals. How do we make sense of all this change and learning? How can we join the dots? How can we continue to sustain ourselves, our peers and our school communities in the face of such uncertainty?

In this article, we will explore the various ways in which the profession has access to a framework of supports that will help them frame their own answers to these questions, and which are rooted in the synergies between the Instructional Leadership Programme and the work of the Teaching Council.

### **Cosán, the National Framework for Teachers’ Learning.**

2020 has been challenging for everyone, but particularly for school leaders. Amidst the ambiguity and uncertainty, teachers, students and the wider community have looked to their school leaders for guidance. The way we teach, learn and connect with each other has changed greatly, possibly forever, and we’ve had to really think about how we teach our students and how they learn.

Therefore, it makes sense that we must also reflect on how we as teachers learn. This concept is fundamental to Cosán, the national framework for teachers’ learning. Cosán acknowledges the importance of taking the time as professionals to reflect on our learning, to make connections with practice, and ensure it is having impact. There are clear parallels between Cosán and the Instructional Leadership Programme.

Cosán seeks to support teachers in meeting two key standards; a commitment to continued professional growth for enhanced professional practice, and a commitment to quality teaching and learning. The Instructional Leadership Programme clearly embodies both standards, while also realising another cornerstone of Cosán - enhanced engagement in reflective practice.

Cosán acknowledges that teachers are best placed to determine the impact of their professional learning, with reflective practice, both individually and collectively. By engaging in reflective practice, we may ask ourselves a number of questions regarding the breadth and depth of our professional learning. Such questions may include, for example:

- What have we learned during 2020 that is important to hold on to?
- What opportunities now exist which we as leaders and teachers can capitalise on?
- What activities contributed to enhanced professional practice, and what did not?
- What do we want to keep, and what do we want to change?

These questions are equally relevant in the context of the Instructional Leadership Programme, within which a commitment to reflective practice is evident. A very practical example of this commitment is the distribution of a reflective journal to all participants when they commence the programme to support the tracking of their learning journey. The Instructional Leadership Programme is therefore well aligned with Cosán. This is, perhaps, unsurprising, given that both are underpinned by a recognition of all teachers as autonomous and responsible learning professionals, who are best placed to choose the learning they engage in. In that context, participants in the Instructional Leadership Programme, or schools who have already completed the programme, may wish to build on that learning by engaging in the Cosán workshop series, which is currently being rolled out through the Centre Network.

### **Cosán Workshops**

The ESCI (Education Support Centres Ireland) and the Teaching Council co-host an annual series of three Cosán workshops, aimed at supporting teachers' engagement in professional learning, their critical reflection on that learning, and their engagement in meaningful and sustainable collaboration. The workshops are underpinned by Cosán, the national framework for teachers' learning. Under the banner 'Adapting to Change, Reflecting for the Future', teachers and school leaders are invited to share their professional learning journey, while Cosán facilitators (all practising teachers) provide practical, helpful tools and strategies to support flexible, autonomous and context-relevant professional learning experiences. The reflective approaches and tools explored in these workshops will also support schools in engaging with a range of policies and programmes in their contexts. These include, but are not exclusive to, the Instructional Leadership Programme, the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Process, Droichead, the Junior Cycle Framework, and the new allocation model for inclusive education.



The workshops are open to primary and post-primary schools, and Centres for Education in the Further Education sector. Schools are invited to nominate three staff members (including one senior or middle leader) to engage in this professional learning programme, which is underpinned by Cosán, the national framework for teachers' learning. It is anticipated that a third round of workshops will take place during the 2021/22 school year.

### **BEACONS – Bringing Education Alive for our Communities On a National Scale**

Two of the most common concerns about reform, the pace of change and workload articulated not only by teachers, but also by parents, are (a) there is too much happening, it does not seem to be co-ordinated and (b) they do not have the time to do it all.



These concerns were articulated prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the achievement of principals, deputy principals, teachers, and all members of our school communities in getting schools open and keeping them open until December was phenomenal. But we know that this mammoth achievement has brought its own stresses and pressures.

One thing that Covid-19 has reminded us of acutely is how vital it is that all members of the school community – especially teachers, parents, and students – need to connect with and support each other on a regular basis.

BEACONS is a process that the Council has been developing for almost two years now that offers school communities a simple, accessible, and highly effective model to support them in this endeavour.

#### **What is BEACONS?**

BEACONS is a model for local school community conversations between teachers, parents, and students on educational matters of importance and interest to them. Any other members of the school community can be invited to attend. But teachers, parents and students must be at the core of the process.

Each BEACONS event is supported by a trained facilitator where specific questions are framed, giving everyone an opportunity to share their story or their experience. Sharing, listening, and discussing are the key components of each event.

## **BEACONS and Instructional Leadership**

The complexity of schools, including the varying forms of leadership, teaching methodologies, and learner profiles may sometimes be underestimated. With nearly 4,000 schools and 1 million students, how schools operate and how students learn differs throughout the country. No two schools are the same and certainly no two students are the same. With that, teachers are individually tasked to create a learning environment that is conducive to the needs of all their students, which is no easy feat. The instructional design in each classroom varies depending on the needs of the students in the class. The variety of ways in which students learn, their interests, their backgrounds, requires teachers to reflect, re-evaluate and re-design their practice on an ongoing basis. Although teachers and leaders are tasked with this challenge individually, the solution can be co-created, through meaningful dialogue between all voices.

### **What difference has BEACONS made?**

In the seven events across four communities (see appendix), BEACONS has acted as a catalyst for local agency by bringing people, from the local to the national, together in a shared safe space for open, honest and mutually helpful conversations. Participants have commented on how quickly trust has developed in the BEACONS process. The crucial difference is the sense of agency and ownership which all participants share about the issues and the solutions, mainly because they have identified them themselves.

Topics discussed to date include climate change, wellbeing, curricular reform, inclusive education, bullying and instruction. BEACONS can support many aspects of school life, including the development of instructional leadership by providing a space for teachers and students to discuss and describe the ways in which they learn best. A skilled facilitator helps frame the conversation and the questions so students, teachers and parents can reflect collaboratively in a way that can support future instructional design. Students have spoken about creative homework and the term 'gaducation' (gadgets in education), while post-primary school teacher Mary Fahy noted 'the relationship I have with the students has changed [...] there is a certain knowing between us, a deeper respect, there was very real sharing and listening'.

### **What have we learned from the process so far?**

The Centre for Effective Services reported (2019, p.44) that 'in a context of an increasingly complex educational ecosystem, BEACONS responds to an appetite for change'. We have seen communities where common goals existed, but their approaches to achieving these goals varied and frustrations resulted. A culture where some people are afraid to have conversations which need to happen means failures repeat themselves and successes do not. Learning and innovation are both hindered. BEACONS conversations stimulate and recognise that teachers' and learners' co-agency 'act as enablers for this innovative process, which in turn facilitates positive changes for the education system' (CES 2019, p.44). This concept of co-agency is also a central concept of the OECD 2030 learning compass.

Instructional Leadership started in the ETBI (Education Training Boards Ireland) sector and has since expanded into other post-primary sectors as well as primary. It seeks to foster communities of practice, both at inter-school and intra-school levels. BEACONS and Instructional Leadership, therefore, have the potential to be of significant help and support to each other. They can mutually reinforce each other so that our school communities can realise the power of their own collective agency in fostering excellence and innovation in teaching and learning for all learners.

### **Further information**

Videos and reports have been published on events to date while a webinar on BEACONS was also hosted.

**Céim**

The Teaching Council's initial teacher education (ITE) policy (Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education) sets the standard for the teacher's initial development phase. The teacher is viewed as a self-reflective, research-informed, autonomous professional, a life-long learner that demonstrates the four core values (trust, care, respect, integrity) that underpin the Council's Code of Professional Conduct for teachers. By undertaking a programme of ITE, student teachers commit to facilitating quality teaching and learning for all pupils, fostering inclusive learning environments and being open to professional growth and learning for their lifelong teaching and learning journey.

Droichead (the integrated professional induction framework for newly qualified teachers (nqt)) builds on this phase, taking as its starting point the areas for further learning that have been identified by the NQT in collaboration with the Higher Education Institution (HEI) as part of the school placement experience. At the same time, Droichead recognises that induction is a distinct phase of the continuum of teacher education, a socialization process into the teaching profession and includes both school-based and additional professional learning activities. NQTs engage in 'cluster meetings' with their peers, self-directing areas of discussion and development.

As a model of Professional Development, the Instructional Leadership Programme provides for engagement and submersion, modelling and practice and the development of collegial networks as a means of support and encouragement. This model reflects the initial teacher education model as outlined in Céim and the creation of professional networks and significance of peer support as outlined in Droichead. The Instructional Leadership Programme describes the 'consciously competent' teacher which builds on and supports the Céim and Droichead view of the teacher as reflective practitioner, innovator and researcher and their relationship with and impact on their school community.

**Conclusion**

In this article, we have "laid bare" some of the connections and synergies between the Instructional Leadership Programme and the work of the Teaching Council. We have done so against the backdrop of a global pandemic which has been described as an apocalypse – an event that strips things back, that unveils the deeper connections between us all.

In his book "Underland: A Deep Time Journey", the author Robert McFarlane writes:

*"I remember something Louis de Bernieres has written about a relationship that endured into old age: 'we had roots that grew towards each other underground, and when all the pretty blossom had fallen from our branches we found that we were one tree and not two.'"*

Such a statement could be applied to so many aspects of our societies and communities in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the purposes of this article, however, it does raise some questions for us all to reflect on as we look forward to the day when we can teach and learn in the same physical spaces as the norm. When the "leaves and blossoms" of how we do things have grown back, how will we hold on to the best of what we have learned about teaching and learning during this crisis? How can we sustain and enhance the synergies between Cosán and the Instructional Leadership Programme?

We look forward to exploring these questions with you in the months and years to come!

Tomás Ó Ruairc  
Director  
Teaching Council

**Appendix**

A total of seven BEACONS events have been hosted in partnership with a number of stakeholder bodies across five communities from May 2019 to November 2020:

Ennistymon, Co. Clare (2) (May 2019; November 2019)

Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow (November 2019)

North-East Inner-City Dublin (November 2019)

Ennis, Co. Clare (with a focus on inclusion) (February 2020)

Portlaoise, Co. Laois (with a focus on diversity and inclusion) (26 November 2020) (via Zoom)

In addition, a Sharing Learning Day attended by 100 people was hosted by the Teaching Council in December 2019. Half of the attendees came from the communities in 1-3 above, while the other half were an invited audience of national stakeholders, leaders, and policy makers. The communities mixed with the national stakeholders and demonstrated how impactful the model could be.





# Notices & Updates



**OPEN**  
Registration for Cohort 15 is **Open**  
Limited Places available  
Email: [admin@instructionalleadership.ie](mailto:admin@instructionalleadership.ie)

Check out our new look Website @ [www.instructionalleadership.ie](http://www.instructionalleadership.ie)

Checkout the IL Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023 on the IL Website [www.instructionalleadership.ie](http://www.instructionalleadership.ie)

Interested in presenting at an IL Research Conference 2022 / 2023 ??  
Let us know at [admin@instructionalleadership.ie](mailto:admin@instructionalleadership.ie)

ILP is delighted to work in partnership with ETBI Bliain na Gaeilge 2020 /2021 - "Festival of Learning".  
We call on students and teachers to share effective strategies / tactics to enhance students' learning

## IL Programme October 2021 Schedule

Cohort 13	Session 2	Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 6 <sup>th</sup> October
Cohort 12	Session 4	Wednesday 6 <sup>th</sup> to Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> October
Cohort 14	Session 2	Monday 11 <sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 13 <sup>th</sup> October
Cohort 15	Session 1	Wednesday 13 <sup>th</sup> to Friday 15 <sup>th</sup> October

**\*\*Please Note** Pending Government & NPHET advice the above dates maybe subject to change

Please check our website for regular updates and information, Thank you.



### **Contact Details**

**Ms. Joan Russell**

*Chairperson National Steering Committee Instructional Leadership Programme*

**Ms. Paula Fitzpatrick**

*Instructional Leadership Programme - ETBI Head Office, Piper's Hill, Naas Co. Kildare*

[admin@instructionalleadership.ie](mailto:admin@instructionalleadership.ie)

[www.instructionalleadership.ie](http://www.instructionalleadership.ie)

[newsletter@instructionalleadership.ie](mailto:newsletter@instructionalleadership.ie)

[@ILProgramme](#)