

Leading Professional Learning

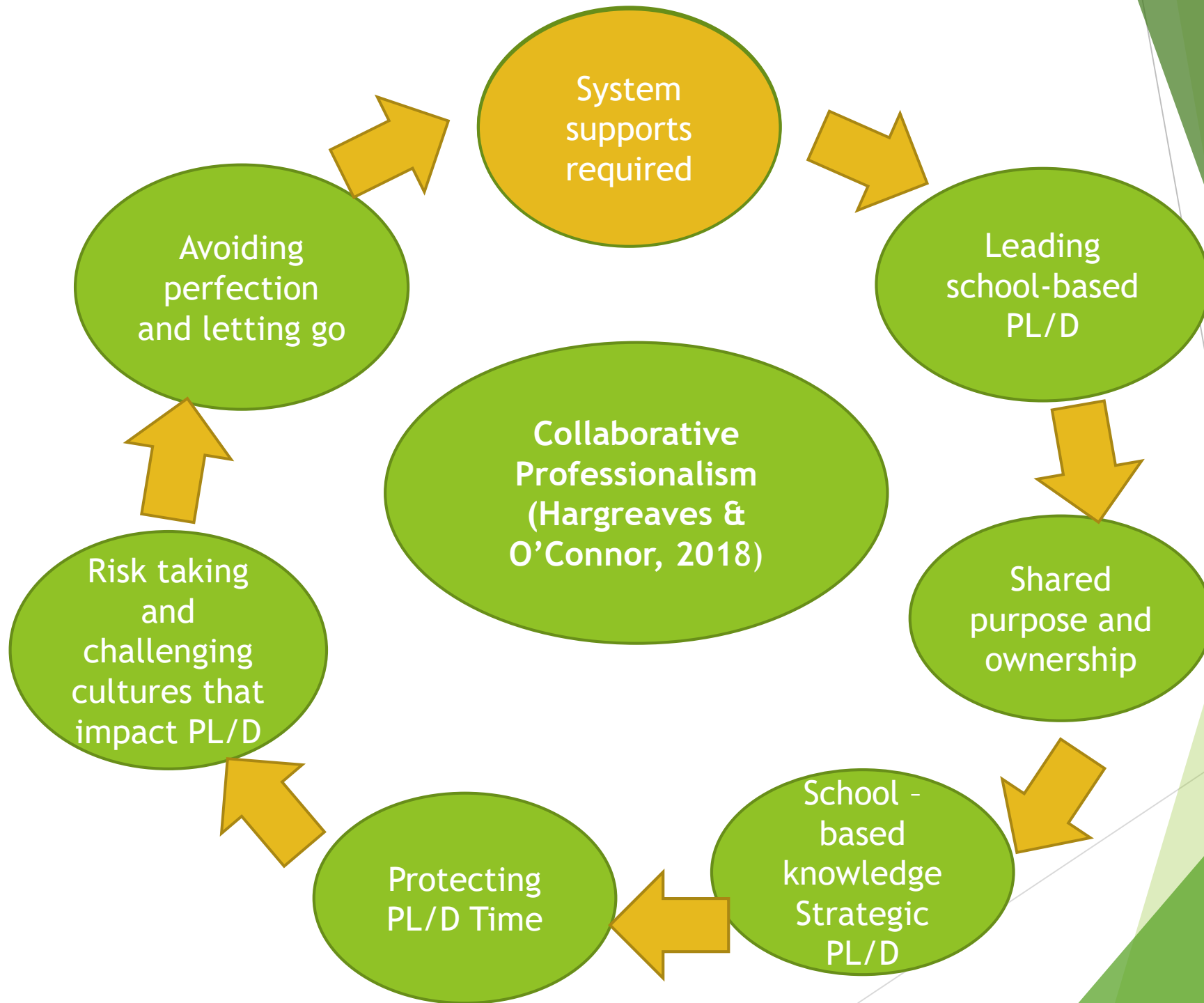
Closing Keynote

Principals and Deputy Principals Association

Dr. Ciara O' Donnell
17th November 2023
Galway Bay Hotel



PRINCIPALS AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION
CUMANN PRÍOMHOIDÍ AGUS PRÍOMHOIDÍ TÁNAISTEACHA



Teacher Professional Learning/Development

*...all natural learning experiences and those **conscious and planned activities** which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the **individual, group or school**, which contribute through these, to the **quality of education** in the classroom.*

*It is the process by which, **alone and with others**, **teachers review, renew and extend** their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the **knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence** essential to good professional **thinking, planning and practice** with children, young people and colleagues **throughout each phase of their teaching lives**.*

(Day, 1987:4)

What the international literature says

Professional development activities that consist of teachers gathering for episodic sessions have been found to make little difference to school or classroom practice (Hoban, 2002).

... inability to meet the unique needs of schools given the decontextualized and generic nature of the content (Livingston and Shiach, 2010).

...fail to impact in any significant way the manner in which new knowledge is used in practice afterwards” (Kennedy, 2014)

What the Irish research says

- ▶ There is an over-reliance on episodic training models and a lack of contextualised learning settings
(Granville, 2004; Loxley *et al.*, 2007; Conway *et al.*, 2009)
- ▶ “...*there is need for more school-based CPD, particularly in order to overcome the documented limitations of short out-of-school courses*”
(Sugrue, 2011: 803)
- ▶ Wholesale scheduled provision is limited to equipping teachers to respond to change rather than on the development of approaches or the promotion of reflective practice
(Harford, 2010)

Professional learning during times of reform

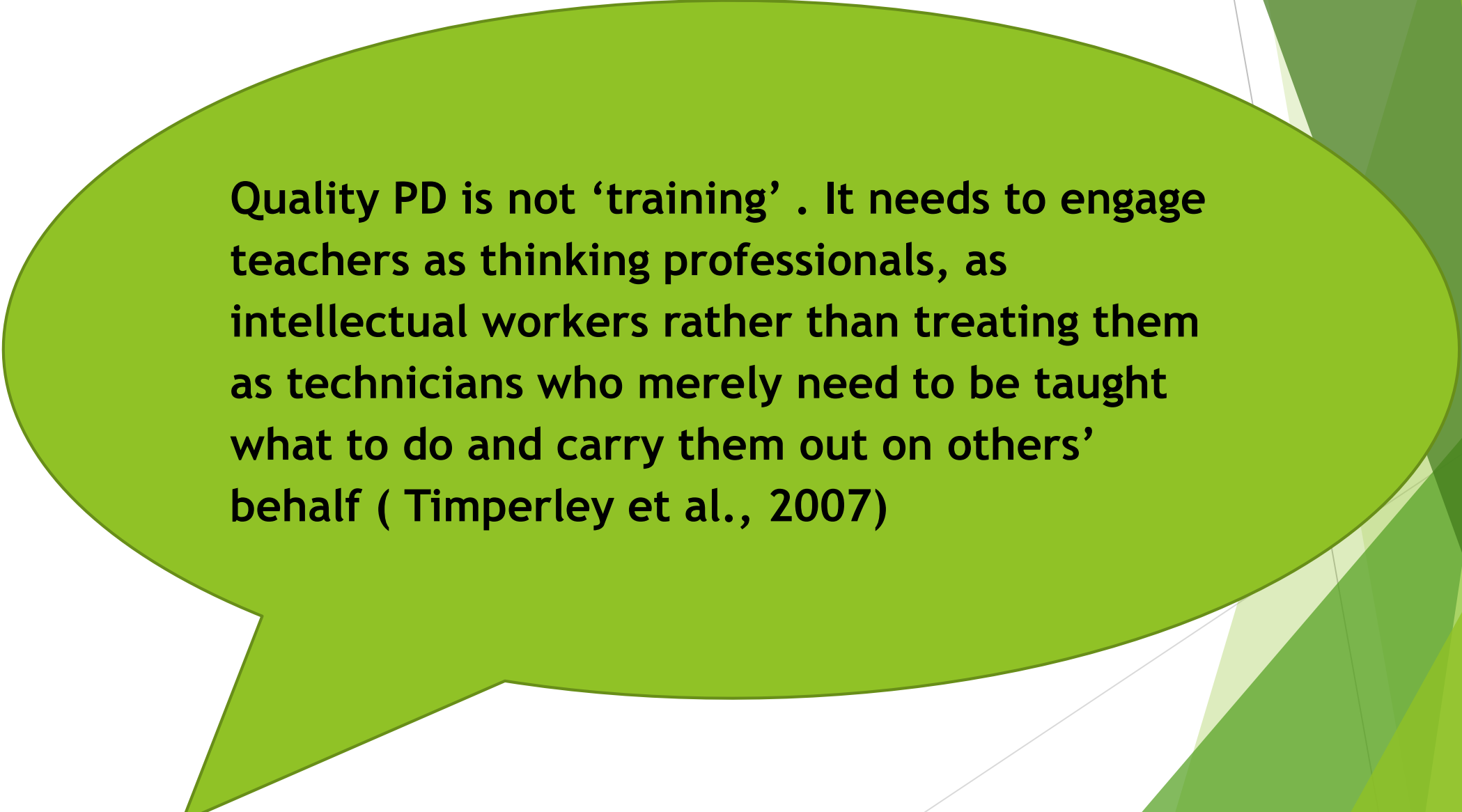
- ▶ ‘*one-shot*’ training models where professional development is something episodically ‘*done to teachers*’ (Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002)
- ▶ and which typically “...*during periods of reform treats teachers as needing occasional injections to pep them up or ease their pain* (Hargreaves; 1994:430)

Cascade provision

- ▶ *Individual teachers attend ‘training events’ before cascading the information back to colleagues*
- ▶ *Nominated teacher returns to school as ‘resident expert*

“...returning to schools of uncomprehending colleagues who have not shared the learning with them (Hargreaves, 2000 :162).

“...little consideration to the principles of collaboration and ownership over one’s own learning having limited, if any, impact beyond the practice of the teacher attending” (Day, 1999 :126)

A large, light green speech bubble with a dark green outline is centered on a white background. The bubble has a tail pointing towards the bottom left. The text inside is in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The background of the slide features abstract, overlapping green shapes in various shades of green, creating a modern, geometric aesthetic.

Quality PD is not ‘training’ . It needs to engage teachers as thinking professionals, as intellectual workers rather than treating them as technicians who merely need to be taught what to do and carry them out on others’ behalf (Timperley et al., 2007)

Dan Lortie, 1980



Switching the view ...

Professional Collaboration

Collaborative Professionalism

School Self-Evaluation



GOAL
REALITY
OPTIONS
WILL



Collaborative Professionalism may involve taking risks

- ▶ *“The norms of school have taught teachers to be polite and non-judgmental...refraining from critique and challenge thus impeding the capacity to grow ” (Wilson and Berne ,1999:200)*
- ▶ *“...cultures do not change by mandate; they change by the specific displacement of existing norms, structures, and processes ” (Elmore, 2004:11)*

Avoid perfection

First

Attempt

In

Learning

Share the load

Leading can be everybody's work because learning is everybody's work

Sustained School- based support

Sustained school support is a developmental approach to teacher professional learning , tailored to the specific needs and context of the school. As a result it looks different in every school . This facilitated support is available to schools over an extended duration as part of a deliberately planned process where schools take ownership of their professional learning goals. (PDST, 2014)

- ▶ Sustained support involves various forms of **deeper transformational modes of teacher professional learning** aimed at **building internal capacity** and enabling schools to drive and embed change as **independent communities of learners** (PDST, 2014)
- ▶ Sustained support as a model moves *beyond a series of CPD ‘events’* or workshops. It focuses on *enablement*, through *empowering* schools to problem-solve and to draw on their own expertise within their own school context (PDST, 2016).

Commissioned Evaluation Digital Learning Framework support

“Respondents noted that in **providing contextualised school based professional development** with a strong focus on coaching models of CPD, **staff were empowered** to take responsibility for their professional learning throughout the initiative. This was seen as being **crucial for the building of professional capacity at the school level**, which will ensure that **practice is sustained beyond the life of the initiative**. The appropriate role of professional development support becomes one of **facilitation and enablement** as opposed to the generic supports that are quite frequently offered to schools in various jurisdictions and are proven to have minimal impact.”

Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection, DCU , 2017

One school's experience

Sustained support was the single most effective thing we have done as a school in 10 years. Collaboration between teachers on a meaningful basis occurred and we established a STEM Committee across subject departments where we focused on our 'teaching' and pedagogical practice. We have now put a plan in place that works for us and for students . Our school has been transformed we are now truly collaborating and learning meaningfully .

The Teaching Council 2014

Professional development [of teachers] is most effective in improving teachers' instructional practice and contributing to student learning when it is **continuous and sustained, closely connected to the work of teachers in the school,** and when it fosters teacher professional **collaboration.**

Collinson et al. (2009)

Teachers require **continuous learning** as well as opportunities to **engage in context** . They need opportunities to **work collaboratively**, and contribute to their own and their colleagues' learning

Bottom Line

“Working with teachers directly over an extended period is probably the most potent form of professional development available to schools” (Elmore, 2002 :18).

Can't you just tell us what to do ?

If a bird has been in a cage for so long and suddenly finds the door open, it should not be surprising if the bird does not wish to leave (Eisner, 1992:617)

And so

“ Teachers need to be supported and resourced to engage in meaningful curriculum development processes”.

(Priestley, 2016:10)

There can be no curriculum development without the right professional development (Stenhouse, 1975)

Review of Scotland's Implementation of Curriculum for Excellence

Regular and ongoing support are necessary to enable teachers to make sense of new learning and translate it into practice by trying out, amending and reflecting on new and/or different ways of doing things. This is optimised by **tailored professional learning** which meets **contextual needs in school** (Donaldson, 2011)

Purpose of Model	Examples of models of CPD which may fit within this category
Transmissive	Training models Deficit models Cascade model
Malleable	Award-bearing models Standards-based models Coaching/mentoring models Community of practice models
Transformative	Collaborative professional inquiry models

Increasing capacity for professional autonomy and teacher agency



Kennedy (2005:247)