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ETI: Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
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# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Achieving our full potential<sup>1</sup>: how do we go from here?

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This paper summarises, in order to promote further discussion, issues which the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has identified over the past two years by analysing preparatory work which includes:

- case study visits, focused on teacher professional learning, to 35 schools in 2016-17<sup>2</sup>;
- a survey of professional learning systems in professions similar to education<sup>3</sup>;
- online ETI questionnaires conducted with (i) recently-qualified teachers (RQTs) and (ii) teacher-tutors (TTs)<sup>4</sup> in early 2017;
- self-evaluation reviews prepared by the four initial teacher education providers (ITE)<sup>5</sup>; and
- one day inspection visits to each of the four ITE providers carried out in 2017.<sup>6</sup>

The issues identified in this report are not exhaustive and are explored in more depth in associated ETI reports on TPL listed in the Introduction and its associated footnote.

1.2 This paper is in four parts. Part 2 below summarises briefly some of the key strengths (*going well*) and some of the more important opportunities (*going forward*) identified.

1.3 Part 3 develops, for discussion, the strengths and advantages on which next practice may be build. This section is accompanied by short summary references to observed examples of some of these strengths as well as some opportunities on which to build.

1.4 Part 4 develops more of the challenges, identified through evidence, which need to be addressed as the Department of Education's teacher professional learning (TPL) strategy *Learning Leaders* is implemented.

1.5 Part 5 develops the discussion further across the education community of those concerned in the initial education of teachers and in their wider and continuing, career-long, teacher professional learning by analysing possible ways of responding to the needs and opportunities identified.

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<sup>1</sup> *We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential.* PfG strategic outcome in:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/executive-office/reports/pfg-report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/learning-leaders-an-evaluation-of-department-of-educations-strategy-on-teacher-professional-learning.pdf> and <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/learning-leaders-teacher-professional-learning-next-practice-case-studies.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/learning-leaders-lessons-on-professional-learning-from-other-professions-and-other-education-jurisdictions.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> ETI Evaluation on Teacher Professional Learning 2017. Summary of responses to online questionnaires. (Unpublished)

<sup>5</sup> Unpublished ITE submissions, 2017

<sup>6</sup> Unpublished notes of ITE visits, 2017

## 2. Key points

### Key strengths: going well

2.1 There is a strong ethical axis in the personal and professional values of recently-qualified teachers (RQTs); the calibre of student teachers (STs) and RQTs is high. The STs and RQTs are well trained through an ITE curriculum which is research-informed and reflects strongly the GTCNI teaching competences and values. As a result STs and RQTs are positively disposed to, and engage in, reflection on their own practice, at least while in the initial education phase.

2.2 There are a number of significant examples of higher education-based, research-informed initiatives which provide outreach from ITE into schools for the purpose of building the capacity of teachers involved as researchers and as leaders of school improvement. ITE teaching is enhanced by the close involvement of some experienced practitioners (as associates) from schools and elsewhere in the education system. Individual lecturers in ITE create, through their personal commitment and marginal resources, opportunities for STs and teachers to engage collaboratively in inquiry/research-based approaches to learning. As a result, through some effective ITE/school partnerships, recent, research-informed best practice is developed in schools.

2.3 A small but significant number of innovative schools have the vision, leadership and culture to foster approaches to TPL which reflects the 'next' practice in DE's strategy. In this best practice in schools, teacher-tutors (TT) adopt team-based approaches to TPL and form communities of reflective practitioners. They involve trusted teachers in mutual lesson observation with STs and RQTs and they provide STs and RQTs with rigorous feedback, based on action planning and evaluation.

### Important opportunities: going forward

2.4 There is a need for a "curriculum" (a framework) for continuing, career-long teacher professional learning. There is not enough transparency, information and communication in schools with ITE providers about the content and purpose of the ITE curriculum and the expectations on student teachers (STs).

2.5 The effectiveness of support in schools for student teachers (STs) is too limited, except in a minority of cases. The lack of effective training and development opportunities for those in the TT role and, within schools, the lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of TT post-holders in their role, are all seen through inspection evidence as inhibitors of improvement in the widest sense.

2.6 There is a need for better capacity-building for school improvement. There is little or no accountability in schools - internally in the sense of self-evaluation (rather than externally from DE or ETI) - with regard to how effectively they use their funding for staff development and the ten days provided annually by DE for staff training, in terms of improvement of teaching and learning and in outcomes. For many, there still remains a need to establish the right combination of individual accountability by teachers for their professional learning and collective responsibility by the whole staff for school improvement. There is more to be done to investigate and understand how academic research crosses into the classroom (the notion of *usable knowledge*).

2.7 The development of the capacity of senior *leaders of professional learning*, which includes their capacity to source, **design**, provide and **evaluate** opportunities for professional learning (*adult learning by design*) for all staff at all levels within the context of the school also remains very limited. There is more to be done to understand the value of educational research and teachers need the skills and insight to determine which research is authentic, or real value and 'usable.' This is especially evident where the school may be struggling to cope with challenges of low- and under-attainment, curriculum provision which is inappropriate for the changing needs of its learners, and less-than-adequate teaching capacity. It matters to be alert to the effect of changes in how professional development is provided. It is especially important that neither the increase in unregulated commercial consultants nor the central brokering of professional development opportunities does not merely perpetuate a continued dependency culture.

2.8 There is a need to build a strategic professional learning partnership across the community. A common characteristic of the arrangements for professional learning in other, similar (non-education) professions is that they focus and cohere through a body which has the *conceptual* central role of a '*college*' which is representative of the profession as whole (rather than of specific sectorial interests) and which holds the ring on standards, quality assurance and validation.

2.9 Given the reduction in training provided centrally, the character, pattern and nature of professional learning is already changing in the best-led schools. 'Next' practice offers enhanced professionalism and greater professional autonomy for school improvement - where teachers themselves lead improvement based on shared professional judgment.

### **3. Going Well: discussion on strengths and advantages**

3.1 There is a clear value commitment to improve, through ITE, the quality of provision in schools. ITE lecturers see modelling of high quality teaching as being at the heart of their practice.

3.2 Schools report that they see STs and RQTs as bringing freshness and innovation to their school. The leaders of TPL in the best schools do not neglect the importance of promoting and resourcing the continuous professional learning of the teachers, and not only in their own schools but across local area partnerships. The best TPL leaders (and teachers) are intellectually curious, engage in professional reading and are knowledgeable about current developments in their subject, in pedagogy and in professional leadership.

3.3 During ITE, enrichment and wider participation opportunities are provided in some courses, which are taken up by some of the STs, of work-based experience in educational/non-educational settings (other than in schools) and/or in settings beyond Northern Ireland.

3.4 The ETI has observed a rapidly growing use of social media and associated events for communication within the profession to share professional learning, ideas, views and practices. There are information and support resources provided online, both by ITE providers for STs and by the Education Authority (EA) for the RQTs which the users report are of value to them.

3.5 In its engagement with the initial teacher education community during 2017, the ETI summarised the characteristics of effective practice in initial teacher education (ITE) which have, in the recent past, been identified internationally and, together with the principles underpinning the DE TPL strategy, composed a self-evaluation template with eight sections<sup>7</sup> (see below). A response to the evaluation was completed by each of the four ITE providers. Based on the responses, a small ETI team undertook a one day visit to each provider to explore further aspects of practice. Based on that work, and as illuminated by visits to schools in 2016, a number of promising opportunities to develop practice have been identified, some of which are summarised briefly below, using the eight section headings: the source(s) and/or location(s) of each example are not explicitly identified. Some important implications arising from the evidence base are explored further in Part 4 of this paper.

**3.5.1 Coherence:** *that is, a common and shared understanding of the ITE curriculum across the education community and, in particular, among ITE providers and schools, achieved through transparent, informed means of communication (tic).*

- ❖ One provider is developing the specification for an online digital overview which aims to address evident fragmentation and information communication issues and clarify the contribution of all initial teacher education stakeholders to ITE. Initially designed to set out details of the ITE curriculum it has the potential to provide transparency for students on: their progress, attendance, content and skills coverage, route-ways, key staff contacts, and assessment (through the formative profile, the reflective journal and the career entry profile), as well as conveying a common sense of educational purpose. It has the potential to provide the basis for transparency, information and communication (*tic*) across the service, to articulate what ITE provides within a clear framework of self-evaluation and improvement and to provide informed discourse to bring the framework to life for students, lecturers and school teachers and leaders. It could address the finding that teacher tutors tend not to be well informed about their contribution to the ITE curriculum and their role in determining student outcomes. For the potential to be shared, would depend on buy-in from all of the partners; the benefits/impact need to be seen to be worth the effort. As it is now, it is the more astute students and teacher tutors who put the most into and gain the most from the formative profile/reflective journal/ career entry profile process.

**3.5.2 Connectedness:** *the extent to which connections are build and sustained between ITE providers and schools.*

- ❖ All ITE providers have, to a greater or lesser degree, serving or former teachers and school leaders and other associated educators who work with them in the role of part-time associates who assist the providers in various aspects of their work. In some contexts, their task is specifically focused on, for example: assisting with recruitment, assisting with school visits to students on teaching practice, assessing presentations, tutoring or contributing talks on aspects of educational practice. In other contexts, their role is wider, providing, in effect, a very effective **bridge** between the ITE provider and schools and especially when they focus on the practices of pedagogy, through team-teaching for example, and school improvement, thus providing both a practice- and practitioner-development role. Occasionally, they have been instrumental in identifying gaps in the ITE curriculum which have been addressed by the provider. Those who are working currently in the school service can provide, in their role as teacher-tutors, high-quality mentorship to student teachers.

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<sup>7</sup> Coherence, Connectedness, Contributing, Continuity, Culture (research-informed), Culture (continuous professional learning), Capacity and Commitment.

**3.5.3 Contributing:** *the extent to which the connections between schools and the ITE providers, in their role as higher education institutions, are contributing to building capacity for school improvement.*

- ❖ Those associates who provide a bridge for practice and practitioner development are in some instances also bringing an inquiry-based and a practitioner-focused approach to research activities. They become active partners in research projects providing a channel and link between research led by higher education practitioners and school practitioners.
- ❖ One provider has an ambitious plan not only to contribute more directly to school improvement, but to embed their initial teacher education directly into school improvement.
- ❖ There are examples of specific centres/initiatives of excellence in certain areas of the curriculum being provided through both the ITE and HE role of the provider; these, for example, include modern languages, special education, computer science, primary science and the role of education in peace-building in countries in conflict.
- ❖ One ITE/HE provider offers an extended programme of higher degree work based wholly in schools, including in partnerships of schools, with the main focus on building the capacity of school leadership for innovative professional learning and school improvement. Yet, elsewhere in Northern Ireland, partnerships of innovative schools provide their own programmes, without any higher education partner or other partner, including the Education Authority.

**3.5.4 Continuity:** *the extent to which teachers are helped to see and activate their professional learning as a continued, career-long commitment (rather than just the successful completion of their ITE qualification).*

- ❖ The combinative use by student teachers of a reflective journal, a formative profile and the career entry profile is effective in inducting them into the habits of reflective practice leading, potentially, to improvement. However, the endurance of reflective practice is not sufficiently evident in schools and the ITE providers currently have no follow-up evaluative evidence of its sustained use when a qualified teacher takes up post. A reflective student will embrace reflection and continue with this practice of self-evaluation leading to improvement. Not all teacher tutors are reflective practitioners themselves and are not aware of the importance of this, which may be a reason why its value is undercut for some students who may see it as an unnecessary piece of paperwork to complete for the course. From ETI experience on inspections, there is work to be done, system-wide, on developing an understanding of the importance of self-reflecting/evaluating in order to promote improvement; the lack of embedding of the teacher competences into professional learning after ITE is a significant element. The processes established during the ITE phase could be built upon with care, to avoid the risk of an imposed bureaucratic task and help to develop a meaningful sense of continuity. More than one provider is developing the use of online learning tools and forum environments for student teachers to accumulate their lesson planning, blog, and share their reflections and their assessments, including examples of pupils' work which can be the basis for making both purpose and continuity more explicit and tangible. However, there is a balance to be struck here which involves avoiding RQTs being 'receptors' of the distilled reflections of others as opposed to developing the RQTs as co-constructors of knowledge who create new ways of meeting their learner's needs.

**3.5.5 Culture - of research informed practice:** *the extent to which, in their connectedness, teacher professional learning and school improvement are well founded in research-informed practice.*

- ❖ Within and across the four ITE providers, there are well-established cultures in the approach to educational research into which the providers set out to induct their students. These HE cultures vary: on the one hand, lecturers see their research work as responding to educational knowledge-building challenges in an international academic context while others reflect more on the experience of research-informed practice (with a 'small r' as one put it) responsive to the classroom. All have their value and are not mutually exclusive, indeed, combined across the province they would be potentially very powerful. They are not, however, so well combined, nor are they sufficiently central. Valuable work is being done which benefits the initial teacher education curriculum (and occasionally, student-led research reaches a publishable standard). There are a number of small scale examples of higher education-based, research-informed initiatives which provide outreach from ITE into schools for the purpose of building the capacity of student teachers and teachers as researchers. These include examples in reading, technology, science, mathematics, shared education, mentoring and coaching. While these benefit the students who take part, it is important to note that these initiatives are not funded or resourced through the budget for ITE. In more than one setting, the timetable provides a forum for the students to hear about and discuss how the research led by their lecturers may inform practice, but only on occasion are school practitioners included.
- ❖ There is a need to be addressed: while some teachers engage willingly with higher education colleagues in such research-based projects, they fail to get any recognition of their engagement as part of their own continued professional learning and development.

**3.5.6 Culture - of continuous professional learning:** *the extent to which teachers are developing as effective reflective practitioners and the educational community is creating the environment which supports autonomous professional learning.*

- ❖ All of the ITE providers create an opportunity for their students to engage in research-based project work during their school experience and, towards the end of their ITE course, to share their reflections on their practice and present their examples of good practice and innovation with each other through various conferences, tutorial groups, gatherings and forums. One of the providers also hosts Teachmeets to broaden the audience beyond student teachers. Such events are helpful in embedding the continuing nature of professional learning for student teachers, but there are relatively few coalition opportunities for students from the different providers to work and share with each other and with teachers from their host schools in a way which would help to engage a sense of community of recently qualified teachers across the province.
- ❖ The lack of continuity reported above (2.3.1) in the embedding of the GTCNI teacher competences after the initial and induction stages of teacher education may best be addressed in the first instance through programmatic change in how PRSD is defined.

**3.5.7 Capacity:** *the extent to which the educational community is building and sustaining an inherent capacity for continuous improvement.*

- ❖ As described above, student teachers on teaching experience engage in some form of project-based work in placement schools. However, it is not usually the case to find that the work is connected directly to school improvement priorities, or contributes to action plans within the school development plan. It may serve the purpose of learning ‘on the job’ for the student, but does not have the advantage of connecting the student’s learning to the school improvement agenda. The ETI do not see school development plans in which the presence (and the potential contribution) of student teachers in the school features in any way. An overview of priorities collected and collated from school development plans (perhaps by the Education Authority) and cross-referenced with inspection overview outcomes could inform both a research agenda and make engagement in self-evaluation and improvement work more meaningful and authentic for all concerned.
- ❖ Within the BEd programmes, and to a more limited degree in the PGCE, elements of voluntary degree enhancement are available with a view to widening participation, developing further skills and knowledge, making constructive use of time and improving capacity, and therefore employability.

**3.5.8 Commitment:** *in Northern Ireland in particular the extent to which the education community, and ITE providers and schools in particular, contribute to building and sustaining personal and social inclusion and diversity.*

- ❖ The additional opportunities for students for work experience in settings outside schools and also outwith Northern Ireland are evident in the BEd programmes (*‘taking the blinkers off the traditional route’* as one put it) whereas in PGCE courses the opportunities are unavoidably constrained with the exception of a short alternative education placement in, for example a nursery or special school setting. One PGCE provider involves a range of inputs to the ITE course by non-governmental agencies who work in the arenas of personal health, economic awareness, sustainable development, cultural understanding, special needs, newcomers, diversity and inclusion, children’s rights, e-learning and spiritual awareness. One BEd provider ensures that the students visit a school which has acknowledged effectiveness in its diversity practice and monitors the student placement as a whole for diversity.
- ❖ There remains a tendency for ITE providers to continue to use broadly the same cohort of schools for teaching experience year on year and the extent of quality assurance of selected schools varies considerably from provider to provider. There is scope to widen considerably the opportunity for students to experience work in schools which are very different from the one they attended as pupils. Building links with existing local area community partnerships as the location for school placements in order to provide more diversity has been identified by more than one provider as a worthwhile way forward.

Education generally, including ITE, has a particular focus to bring to bear on promoting social mobility and social cohesion. In planning, more explicit links across other strategic outcomes in the draft Programme for Government programme may help to make the connections more explicit for STs and RQTs.

#### 4. Going forward: discussion on opportunities

This section groups the issue identified, going forward, into **three main needs**: (i) the need for a “curriculum” framework for continuing, career-long teacher professional learning; (ii) the need for better capacity-building for school improvement; and (iii) the need to build a strategic professional learning partnership across the community.

##### 4.1 The need for a “curriculum” (a framework) for continuing, career-long teacher professional learning

4.1.1 The use of the term ‘curriculum’ here refers not only to the initial teacher education curriculum, but to a continuity framework comprising the opportunities for the continuing professional and career-long development of the teacher.

4.1.2 The leadership of professional learning, the support for STs, the induction of RQTs into the profession, the setting of professional standards and the quality assurance and validation of TPL is at its best when led by experienced, professionally knowledgeable and highly-effective teachers who also have the requisite coaching and mentoring skills.

4.1.3 There is a lack of knowledge, focus and commitment from some school leaders, including some of those in the role of teacher-tutor (TT), to support professional learning. We cannot rely on there being a shared understanding of high quality teaching within the staff of each school, across the ITE providers, and between ITE providers and schools.

4.1.4 Furthermore, the beneficial influence of the GTCNI teacher competences and the values which is evident in the design and provision of the ITE curriculum fades away as RQTs progress through induction and Early Professional Development. The teacher competences and values would benefit from: having a tighter focus; being more directly linked to the ETI indicators for improvement and inspection; being a more explicit reflective of the intention of DE’s TPL strategy; and, by taking much more account of advances in digital technology.

4.1.5 There is a decay in continuity and progression from ITE, through Induction and EPD, toward PRSD. While this is not the only problem, trying to identify continuity is not helped by the organisation of progression as **steps** in a bureaucratic process (*ITE, induction, EPD, PRSD*), and not least because of the pervasiveness of temporary teaching contracts early in the career of many RQTs and their relatively frequent movement from school to school.

4.1.6 Planning for progression may be better served by being recast through conceptual ‘**stages**’ of professional learning and development (such as, for example, *aspiring, emerging, establishing, accomplished // mentoring, emerging senior leader,*) rather than though supposedly time-bound process steps.

4.1.7 Furthermore, the quality control and assurance of the continuing professional learning of RQTs as they progress through the ‘steps’, and the validation of the professional learning activities completed during induction/EPD, is *laissez faire*, and as a result highly inconsistent, which limits both its purpose and reduces its value.

4.1.8 There is no central repository of shared evidence of professional learning; no consistently-agreed means of recording the deliberate continuing professional learning of teachers, particularly RQTs; no effective continuing use of the GTCNI teacher competences and values in professional learning in schools (and especially in PRSD) and, when we compare education to similar professions, no formally-recognised, career-long, arrangements for the validation and certification of continuing professional development activities.

4.1.9 Addressing these shortcomings would help teachers, as RQTs, to: extend their understanding of the cumulative process which build towards their Career Entry Profile; as a practitioner at any stage in their career, to identify the professional standards against which they are improving; and to obtain transferable/portable professional recognition and credit for their improvement through ongoing professional learning activities in schools - including in Induction and EPD.

## 4.2 The need for better capacity-building for school improvement

4.2.1 There is evidence of initial teacher educators making some effective connections in a variety of different ways between ITE providers and the schools with which they work routinely (and in some instances with other partners): through the ITE curriculum; through the support for students on teaching practice; and by the individual initiatives of lecturers, especially in bringing STs and teachers together in inquiry-based work. As this connectivity is driven individually, the approaches vary within and across the ITE providers and the knowledge of the ITE providers of the possible and the potential impact of their work on school improvement is limited.

4.2.2 As higher education institutions (HEIs), the ITE providers, individually, make contributions to continuing professional development for individual educators through higher degree programmes, often building capacity for their role development in middle and senior leadership. Yet, in only a few notable instances, do they, as HEI providers, work closely enough with the leaders and staff of individual schools and/or groups of schools to promote professional learning and school improvement, as seen through the evidence of better outcomes for the learners.

4.2.3 The HEIs should be providing much more systematic, evidence-informed, formal contributions, drawing on the strengths of their sector, to school improvement measured through improved outcomes. The constructive work being done by ITE providers with schools has the potential to be developed further to make a more evidence-based and research-informed impact on school improvement. At the moment, there is limited knowledge across the ITE community of the potential for a collective impact of their contributions as a community. The ITE community could do more to present itself as a community and in particular to model collegiality and community building for students teachers by bringing them together more often across the province, if not physically, then online.

4.2.4 Activities undertaken within the school and inputs by external trainers, statutory or unregulated commercial, are generally unproved by evidence of better capacity to bring about improvement and raise outcomes.

4.2.5 It is evident that the role of the TT varies very considerably both in its availability and in practical effectiveness from school to school. The aspirations reflected in DE's strategy, as touched on above, will require a **re-setting** of the role of the teacher-tutor as a coordinator and/or leader of effective teacher professional learning in a school. Such a role requires high-level mentoring skills and the ability to help all teachers to develop their craft through formative observation, rigorous critical feedback and coaching.

### **4.3 The need to build a strategic professional learning partnership across the community**

4.3.1 Since the launch of the DE TPL strategy in 2016 the various stakeholders (including the ITE/HEI providers, EA, CCEA, ETI and the various sectorial bodies) have started to respond by taking the strategy's language, and sometimes, but not always, its concepts, associated with TPL on board in describing their work. However, this is happening so far without enough co-ordination or cross-referencing of their endeavours. The recently-established Strategic Oversight Group has an opportunity to create a much-needed shared perspective and common sense of purpose.

4.3.2 All four of the HEIs have a commitment to knowledge-building, through educational research which is usable in classrooms. Each has a distinctive philosophy about their research, ranging from work at an international standard to action research in the classroom. Each approach has its merits and value, however, all are limited in terms of helping enough classroom practitioners to know about, benefit from and make best use of contemporary research.

4.3.3 An encouraging feature of teacher-initiated and teacher-led, mutual support and sharing of effective practices has been the marked growth in the use of social media, and especially Twitter, as well as the uptake of online webinars and Moocs. Many have expressed the view that, especially given the investment in online technologies in schools, that there is considerable scope to make much better use of online and digital technologies to effect networking, improved communication, better transparency (including within the ITE and school communities, as well as between them and with other stakeholders), coherent coordination, sharing of approaches and evidence about effective practices.

## **5. Possible responses to the opportunities and needs identified: a discussion starter**

5.1 The DE Strategy envisages developing a **Framework for Teacher Professional Learning**, partly through research commissioned as an action in its Year Two Action Plan. It will be important that such a Framework encompasses responses to all three of the needs set out above and not just the first:

- a “curriculum” framework for continuing, career-long teacher professional learning (*as articulated in section 3.1.1 above*);
- better capacity-building for school improvement; and
- a strategic professional learning partnership for the community.

5.2 The thrust of DE's strategy demands that the ownership of professional improvement pathways (in other words, a *personal career-long curriculum*) should be driven by the classroom teacher, built on a strong ethical axis, and highly responsive to the priorities identified by the school in meeting the needs of its learners in its local community and wider society.

5.3 There is a need for this slow, ground-up change to be accelerated and to provide all teachers more consistently with more equitable access to evidence and usable knowledge that can inform their practice, through more authentically-focused, inquiry-based professional learning opportunities.

5.4 The examples of best 'next' practice identified by the ETI illustrate an apparent range of ways in which teachers and schools connect their educational practice to professional learning and to improved outcomes for learners. The range extends through:

- reflective practice by teachers individually;
- making mutually supportive, collegial connections between teachers (in curriculum areas, for example) to share their pedagogic practice;
- planned instances of inquiry-based methods by groups of teachers to learn more about what works best;
- collaborative (and increasingly online) professional learning which is informed by applying a good understanding of relevant contemporary educational research about effective practice, and
- an engagement in research-informed initiatives led by HEI providers.

5.5 However, and despite the promise evident in this range of approaches, the marshalling of evidence that 'next' practice leads to improvement in outcomes in a school, or across schools, remains exceptionally rare.

5.6 There is however, a small number of instances where school leaders have the capacity to create the culture, establish an appropriate vision and to provide pedagogic leadership to create an approach of **adult learning by design** which may be built upon, through small-scale, but strategically planned, school improvement networks, for the benefit of leaders and of governors in other schools.

5.7 For the necessary Framework, in response to the needs outlined in parts 2 and 3 above, to be promoted effectively, there needs to be a strategic partnership across the school service. An identifiably collaborative community needs to have a shared understanding of TPL and in particular of what the DE vision ***“Every teacher is a learning leader, accomplished in working collaboratively with all partners in the interests of children and young people”*** means in practice and how to promote and to effect it.

5.8 ITE providers need to know much more than they do about the progress, destinations and effectiveness of STs, once qualified, not only as they progress as an RQT but later in their career. This would enable them to evaluate how justified they are in their confidence that their ITE provision is effective in producing effective practitioners skilfully responsive to the needs of their learners and attuned to the aspirations of the community they serve. It would also enable them to better quality assure the selection of schools where students are placed for teaching practice and to help ensure that STs benefit from guided school practice grounded well in subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical method.

5.9 As HEIs, ITE providers need to lead, through their knowledge-building capacity, in creating, in partnership with schools, a research-informed improvement agenda, through the identification of authentic needs by the teaching profession and with a balance between HEI-generated research and school-generated (action, inquiry-based) research.

5.10 Conceptually, and as a virtual community rather than in the sense of a concrete organisation, a *“learning leadership college”* could provide championship of learning leadership, enable the *complementary* roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders to be clarified, and could help common meaning and sense of purpose to be developed and exemplified through school improvement networks. It would also articulate how schools can be responsive to government's education agenda as well as being focused on the needs of local communities.

5.11 There would be an advantage in facilitating much greater use of online communications and social media for professional purposes provided that such sponsorship does not undercut the impetus provided by practitioners themselves.

## **6. Final thoughts**

6.1 Systemic change: the ITE providers made clear to ETI that while individual initiatives and innovation projects may well enhance those aspects of provision targeted, they will not effect the necessary systemic changes leading to improvement which DE's *Learning Leaders* strategy envisages. The challenge will be to identify which pathfinder projects are likely to have the most leverage in this regard. Proactive teachers and schools with effective leadership will always find ways of ways of harnessing their professional commitment to make improvement in the interests of their learners. However, it would require a system-wide change of expectations and requirements for teacher professional learning to obtain the attention and engagement of all teachers and all schools in the best interests of all learners.

6.2 Evaluation: a common characteristic of the innovations which the ETI encountered in its visits in schools and to the ITE providers was the exciting quality of the work being done to bring about potential improvement. What is lacking in many cases, however, is the first-hand evaluative evidence that the energy and dynamism evident is effective in bringing about the intended improvement, especially through the longer term tracking of the destinations of their students and assessment of the effectiveness of their initial preparation as teachers.

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