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Continuous Professional Development and Work Conditions for English-Language Teaching Practitioners in Ireland: Where do we go from here?

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Abstract

In Ireland, English-language schools have historically constituted a lucrative sector for their owners and the Irish exchequer. However, teachers of English as a foreign language have not reaped financial rewards on an equitable scale. Two online surveys were conducted in 2020 and 2021 to ascertain teachers' attitudes to continuous professional development and to their workplace conditions in privately-run schools. Findings from both surveys reflect a highly skilled, highly qualified and highly motivated cohort with a strong commitment to engaging in continuous professional development and a keen sense of their own professionalism. However, this was not found to be reflected in their work conditions. The results raise integral questions on stakeholder status.

Keywords: Irish English-Language Teaching (ELT) Practitioners; Continuous Professional Development (CPD); motivation; work conditions

Introduction

Ireland, recognised for millennia as a land of saints and scholars, has a rich literary tradition, producing giants such as James Joyce, Edna O’Brien, no fewer than four Nobel Laureates in Shaw, Yeats, Beckett and Heaney, and contemporary powerhouses such as Maeve Binchy, Sally Rooney and Colm Tóibín. Ireland has been marketed by the English-Language Teaching (ELT) industry as an attractive cultural and literary destination for learners seeking English-language instruction. In 2016, 122,000 students came to Ireland to study English, an 11 percent increase on the previous year, giving its ELT sector a “total output impact” of €762 million (Department of Education and Skills, 2016, p.20). Despite such optimism, 2019 saw a reported 2.6 percent decrease in student numbers, exacerbated by the pandemic, which saw a dramatic 73 percent enrolment drop in Irish-based language schools in 2020 (ICEF Monitor, 2020, 2021b). A merger of Ireland’s two premier national associations of English language schools – Marketing English in Ireland (MEI) and the Independent Language Schools Group (ILSG) – has pledged “to strengthen the overall sector and provide a united, compelling voice for Irish language schools both within Ireland and abroad” (ICEF Monitor, 2021a). A combined eighty-five schools now operate under the MEI brand, equating to 150,000 students attending English-language programmes in Ireland and placing the value of the Irish ELT sector in the region of €900 million (ICEF Monitor, 2021a). The MEI website offers learners a choice of language schools across the Emerald Isle, “renowned for its friendliness, rich heritage and lively culture that puts music and friendship at the heart of everything...one of the most beautiful countries on the planet”. So far, so magical.

While the Irish private ELT sector has been historically lucrative for schools, their owners and the Irish exchequer, precarious work conditions for its teachers including

sudden school closures, job insecurity, lack of benefits and inexplicable pay structures have been identified in recent years, revealing that Irish ELT practitioners have not reaped financial rewards on an equitable scale (King, 2019; UNITE ELT Branch, 2020a; 2020b). The government-enforced pandemic closure of all ELT schools led to the furloughing of many teachers, further highlighting the precarity of this industry in Ireland.

Two online surveys were conducted in 2020 and 2021 to ascertain Irish-based ELT practitioners' attitudes to continuous professional development (CPD) and to their workplace conditions in privately-run schools. Though results of each survey are presented here, the primary aim of survey one was to determine whether Irish-based ELT practitioners were interested in CPD during the pandemic and, more specifically, their use of technology in the language-learning classroom. Responses concerning teachers' motivation towards CPD have been provided and synthesized here with the results of survey two, whose central aim was to investigate practitioners' work conditions in private language schools in Ireland.¹ As such, these surveys represent findings of each author's unique doctoral research. Similarities within their research have been combined to investigate this complex area.

Much literature exists on areas such as teacher identity and motivation, yet this tends to focus largely on what teachers do in their active teaching role within the classroom parameters: historically, limited data have existed on the work conditions within which Irish ELT practitioners are expected to perform and adhere to high standards of professionalism (Ahearne, 2014; Willoughby, 2019). In this sense, teachers have largely been voiceless. Responses were examined to explore how they positioned

¹ Much of the data from Survey 2 used in this article appeared in an earlier piece by the first author published by *EL Gazette* issue 481 (July 2022).

themselves in the sector in relation to other principal stakeholders within the industry, such as school owners, the promotional body (MEI) and the curriculum standards regulatory body, the Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services (ACELS), a legacy function of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). Variables of age, gender and teaching experience were examined to see how empowered or disempowered they felt within the Irish ELT sector in terms of their workplace conditions. Findings from both surveys reflect a highly skilled, highly qualified and highly motivated ELT practitioner cohort with a strong commitment to engaging in CPD and a keen sense of their own professionalism. However, this was not found to be reflected in their work conditions.

Survey 1 and 2 distribution channels

Both surveys were distributed following similar methods, and both were built and distributed online using the same software package.² An anonymous link to each survey was sent via email to the Directors of Studies at English Language Teaching Organisations (ELTOs) with ACELS/QQI recognition as an accredited language school. Finally, both surveys were also distributed with the help of Irish-based ELT organisations via their social media platforms: ELT Ireland and ELT Advocacy. The ELT Ireland annual conference also provided a pre-pandemic opportunity to recruit participants for the second survey.

The surveys differed in their aim and in the number of questions. The first survey, comprising 15 questions to ascertain both quantitative and qualitative data from respondents, was distributed in the summer of 2020. The second survey, comprising 75 closed questions for quantitative data collection, plus four open-ended questions

² [Qualtrics XM // The Leading Experience Management Software.](#)

allowing more qualitative participant responses, was distributed in three phases over a five-month period (November 2019 to May 2020). The data from both surveys is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondent profiles

	Survey 1 (2020)		Survey 2 (2021)	
Total responses	62		81	
Percentages of responses per region of Ireland	Dublin	68%	Dublin	66%
	Cork	3%	Cork	3%
	Galway	1%	Galway	11%
	Limerick	1%	Limerick	11%
	Other	27%	Kerry	6%
			Cork/Mayo/Wicklow	3%
			Donegal	
Sex	Female	62%	Female	67%
	Male	38%	Male	33%
Nationality	Not included		Irish	68%
			Other	32%
Age	18–23	1%	Under 20	0%
	24–30	8%	21–30	20%
	31–40	37%	31–40	42%
	41–45	19%	41–50	21%
	46–55	24%	51–60	11%
	56–60+	11%	61+	6%
Years of teaching	0–3	10%	1–4	24%
	4–7	19%	5–10	26%
	8–10	14%	11–20	31%
	10+	57%	21–25+	19%
Highest teaching qualification	CELT	14%	CELT	17%
	CELTA	37%	CELTA	18%
	DELTA	17%	DELTA	8%
	Other	32%		
Highest academic qualification	Undergraduate	27%	Undergraduate	28%
	Graduate	70%	Postgraduate	70%
	PhD	3%	PhD	2%
Worked abroad	Not included		70%	

Survey 1 findings: Continuous Professional Development uptake

Survey 1 was conducted to understand Irish-based EFL teachers' motivations towards continuous professional development, focusing on the use of technology (namely their use of corpora) in the classroom. However, the timing of the survey's distribution,

during the height of the pandemic when ELTOs were closed, meant the inclusion of critical questions relating to the Covid-19 uncertainty in the EFL teaching profession, and their view regarding professional development within it. Critical questions were:

1. 'Does your language school provide CPD opportunities using technology in the classroom?'
2. 'Would you be interested in learning how to use (more) technology for language teaching?' and
3. 'Does the current health crisis affect your interest in professional development?'

Resulting themes have been analysed and presented thematically below.

Professional development opportunities in language schools

Almost 60 percent of respondents reported that their language school provided professional development opportunities relating to technology, correlating with UNITE ELT Branch findings of 61 percent (2020a). Twenty-nine percent reported their language school did not do so, and 12 percent reported they were not sure. Because this question focuses on professional development in language schools as it pertains to technology, it does not ask respondents to report on the existence of professional development in general or the topics of this development. Interestingly, however, it shows that some respondents were unaware if their language school provided CPD while others who reported their language school did not, a requirement stated in language-school regulations (QQI, 2017).

Interest in professional development

Eighty-nine percent of respondents reported they were interested in learning to use technology in their classroom, with only one respondent saying they were not

interested and five reporting they were not sure. When asked to provide a reason for this, responses could be categorised into three central themes: upskilling, the future, and the sense that learning to use technology in the EFL classroom was 'essential'.

Responses to the first theme included, "It's good to expand knowledge and expertise."; "It's always useful to get more ideas, especially with the number of tools available. I'm always open to experimenting to improve my teaching!" and "The internet is such a vast resource that it's always good to learn new ways to exploit it for the learners' benefit (and my convenience)". These responses showcase a willingness to learn and an enthusiasm to develop within their profession. The fact that teachers felt this strongly about CPD during the pandemic also indicates not only their resilience to develop during an uncertain time, but also their determination to provide quality teaching to Irish students in language schools.

Comments from respondents who foresaw professional development as an important part of their future noted, "It looks like online teaching will be part of teaching in the future". Some teachers envisioned how teaching will change post-pandemic suggesting, "Even after the lockdown, learners will be better able to access online resources and synchronous collaboration" and "Blended learning will be the new trend after Covid-19". These comments give a snapshot of teachers' thinking during the pandemic when language schools closed and teaching moved online. Responses also reflected teachers' concern with online teaching in the future: "Now that we've been forced [to teach] online, it's important to understand what technological tools are available and to assess them in terms of how they might facilitate all 3 ways lessons will now be delivered: in person, online or blended".

This sense of concern may also be evident in the third theme, those who reported

professional development with technology as ‘essential’. Teachers commented, “It’s a necessity in the contemporary classroom” and “Even before the pandemic, it was becoming increasingly important to use technology for teaching, but it is now essential”, a sentiment that strongly correlates with UNITE ELT Branch findings (2020a). For some, this sense of need derived from external forces within society and what they felt was anticipated by their students: “I need to keep up with the changes that are taking place in the world”, and “it is expected by students”. Despite teachers reporting technology in the classroom as a need, they also noted this would not happen without support from their language schools: “[I’m] always interested in new resources, but [the] school would have to guarantee that the technology would work correctly before I would commit to including it in the lesson plans.” This indicates that teachers, though motivated to learn, may not feel their school would support them to develop further as teachers, a finding further supported by responses in survey two. Teachers who reported they were not sure regarding their level of interest in professional development cited the uncertainty they experienced during the pandemic, such as, “Not sure I will stay in the job after covid-19”, and “If we return to normal (i.e. classroom-based) conditions, I would feel confident using the technology tools [I currently have] at my disposal. If teaching from home becomes the norm, then I would like to further develop my technology skills”. It is understandable that teachers who were uncertain if they would remain in the profession, would be hesitant to commit to further professional development.

Reasons for professional development during the pandemic

Given the uncertainty EFL teachers experienced at the height of the pandemic, asking about their motivation towards professional development during this time was critical.

Thirty-seven respondents reported that the pandemic did not impact their interest in developing themselves professionally, providing comments such as, “No, but it has to take a digital development direction”; “I feel I’ve been teaching myself a lot over the last few weeks, I’m more interested now to explore new areas”; “No, I have more time to learn things now”; “No, I’ve been doing a lot of online short courses and attending webinars” and “No, I have always been a proponent of CPD, paid or unpaid”. These responses show that teachers saw an opportunity to develop during the pandemic with one noting specifically that it provided “a welcome opportunity to engage with no cost and low cost CPD”. Fourteen respondents reported the health crisis did affect their interest, citing issues such as being uncertain what their teaching future would be post-pandemic, again consistent with UNITE ELT Branch (2020a; 2020b). One response noted that “teaching has become more time-consuming and stressful after the pandemic” which acknowledges the mental state of teachers. Three respondents noted mixed feelings towards professional development during the pandemic.

Overall, findings from Survey 1 reinforce the idea of these ELT practitioners as a motivated workforce seeking professional development outside of their language schools, even during times of uncertainty. This is evidenced in their commitment to seek out online developmental opportunities given the time they had and the motivation that technology would become an integral part of their future as a teacher. Responses from Survey 1 reflect a dedicated Irish workforce committed to teaching their students and to improve themselves during challenging circumstances. Survey 1 was redistributed online the following summer in 2021 and asked similar questions to determine whether teachers’ motivations and interest in CPD had changed a year later. Responses for this second distribution in 2021 reflected similar findings as its

predecessor, with a majority of teachers still reporting a desire for CPD for their development.

Results of Survey 2: Workplace condition findings

Eighty-one valid responses to Survey 2 represented a cross-section of teachers from eight counties in the Irish Republic, with a majority (66 percent) from Dublin-based schools. Twice as many females (67 percent) replied as males (33 percent), reflecting an existing demographic in many schools. Sixty-eight percent of respondents identified as Irish, while the remaining 32 percent comprised of fourteen different nationalities, an interesting departure from a native-speaker-teacher only staffroom landscape. Of key significance was that 42 percent of respondents were in the 31–40 age bracket, debunking the myth of the typical ELT practitioner being a young, transient backpacker (O’Keeffe, 2001; Thornbury, 2001), instead representing a more settled, steady-career teacher. No respondent was an inexperienced teacher, 19 percent having an average of 11–15 years’ teaching experience, and 70 percent of respondents were qualified to post-graduate level. In addition, almost 70 percent had worked abroad, demonstrating a highly skilled, experienced cohort.

Qualifications

The most common undergraduate qualification was surprisingly not a BA in ELT, held by only three percent of respondents, but a BA in English Language and Literature (held by 32 percent), while a diverse range of disciplines under ‘Other’ qualifications constituted more than half of recorded responses. As to whether a postgraduate course in ELT/ESOL had been available after completing their undergraduate course, over 80 percent of respondents stated either not knowing of the availability of one in their institution or of having access to one in some way.

Regardless, over 70 percent of respondents were qualified to postgraduate level, with 56 percent holding a certificate or diploma – the CELT (QQI Ireland) and CELTA (Cambridge) being the most prevalent – and 42 percent an MA. Of these, 6 percent held an MA in ELT, 7 percent an MA in English Language and Literature, and 9 percent an MA in Applied Linguistics. Twenty percent of remaining responses recorded an MA in the ‘Other’ category.

The lack of available undergraduate and postgraduate courses specifically catering for the practical needs of ELT as a discipline has been identified as a potential contributing factor in diminishing the career viability of Irish ELT for its teachers (Willoughby, 2019, pp. 86–7). Despite this reality, these data suggest a talented cohort from immensely rich and varied subject backgrounds, but raise questions as to why so few of these respondents had access to either an undergraduate or postgraduate experience, specifically in ELT as a discipline, to enhance their academic repertoire, and as such merits further investigation.

It is also worth highlighting that 81 percent of respondents had personally funded their own courses. Only 13 percent of respondents were aware that their fees for courses would be fully covered by their employer, while 29 percent stated a course would be partially funded. However, almost 35 percent of respondents were not aware of what kind of funding their employer would provide for courses at all.

CPD attendance/uptake

These data mirrored Survey 1 findings in terms of interest shown in CPD participation. More than half of Survey 2 respondents had attended 1–2 workshops or conferences during the previous year, with 50 percent stating it had been primarily for their professional development. However, when the question of payment and

expenses for attendance at conferences, workshops, courses and meetings was examined, only 53 percent reported that they had been paid for so doing. Just over half stated that they had never been paid for attending conferences or workshops, while nearly 47 percent had received no expenses for attendance at conferences or workshops that were not at their workplace, with nearly 20 percent reporting actually not knowing whether they were entitled to be paid or receive expenses for such attendance. Why such knowledge was unavailable to these respondents remains unclear, but it is certainly an area which needs addressing if schools are to retain highly qualified teachers, given 31 percent stated outright that courses would not be funded in any way.

Resources at teachers' disposal

Basic resources teachers had to carry out their teaching duties were found to be adequate, but concerns were voiced regarding inadequate technology at a number of schools, suggesting they were lagging behind in the area of technological delivery. Given the overnight shift to the virtual-classroom environment demanded by the pandemic, and the subsequent upheaval experienced by many schools and their teacher and student populations (Unite ELT Branch, 2020a, pp. 10–11; 2020b, pp.7–8), this demonstrates a clear need for school owners and management to use their teachers' observations as a source of feedback on lesson delivery and resource updating and supports the need for CPD in classroom-based technology unearthed in Survey 1.

Payment findings

The majority recorded being paid hourly, the lowest specified rate being €10 and the highest €28, with an average hourly rate calculated as €20.30 for face-to face contact

teaching. Annual pay rates were recorded among 12 respondents, with an average calculated at €26,860 per annum. There was difficulty in ascertaining any kind of consistent pattern between what respondents were paid and level of seniority, years of teaching experience, qualifications held, duties, days, times of day or number of hours worked, with little evidence of any consistent incremental pay-scale among this cohort, reinforcing findings of “anarchic pay structures” throughout the industry (Unite ELT Branch, 2020a, p. 7). Only 7 percent were paid for lesson preparation or correction, and 5 percent for exam correction or preparation despite the regular extra time this required, correlating with previous survey findings of 82 percent of teachers consistently being unpaid for such work, pre- and mid-pandemic (Unite ELT Branch, 2020b, p.7).

How much pay is awarded for face-to-face teaching time against planning and administrative work carried out by teachers is rarely clearly broken down; it is described as “included in your hourly rate of pay” and disregarded as additional, with none of this work actually “logged or officially counted” in the sector (Unite ELT Branch, 2020b, p.11). This corroborates with Aherne’s study (2014, pp.48–50) where poor work conditions were found to be a demotivating factor for 75 percent of his Irish-based ELT practitioner cohort, citing better pay, greater job security and a better-defined career as influencing elements in improving teacher motivation, their professional profile and that of the industry as a whole.

Holiday and sick payment and force majeure entitlement

Only two respondents recorded receiving no holiday pay, with an average holiday time calculated as 20.16 paid days; hence the majority of these respondents enjoyed the minimum entitlement period of leave as provided for in Irish work legislation (8

percent of worked hours in the annual leave year). However, where sick pay and force majeure were concerned, the scenario was different. Irish employees do not have automatic legal entitlement to either. Only 17 percent claimed that their employers granted them paid sick days, almost all receiving between three to five days.

The lack of provision in many schools for both sick pay and force majeure has been consistently raised by ELT practitioner advocacy groups (Unite ELT Branch, 2020a, p.7). Until June 2021, Irish employment law stated employers must give an employee clear written information about their sick leave policy (Citizens Information, 2020), but paid sick leave was granted entirely at the discretion of the employer, with only 44 percent of Irish employers found to have provided any form at all (Fry, 2020). Lack of statutory sick pay was identified as a disincentivising factor for employees who might be displaying symptoms of Covid-19 from taking sick leave during the pandemic, and roundly criticised by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) because of its possible impact on the spread of the virus (Fry, 2020). At time of writing, legislation has been introduced, The Sick Leave and Parental Leave (Covid-19) Bill 2020 (Bill), to phase statutory sick pay into law in Ireland by January 2023.

Nor do Irish employees have automatic legal entitlement to force majeure leave (limited, compassionate leave from work following a family crisis, but generally granted only if there is a provision in the employee's contract of employment, or an established custom and practice in one's place of work). Twelve and a half percent of respondents reported entitlement to force majeure, yet the remainder stated either having no entitlement or no knowledge of such entitlement at their school, with only one respondent being aware of three days' force majeure clearly stated in their contract. This suggests that unpaid sick days and lack of force majeure continues to be

a fact of life for a significant percentage of this cohort, with many teachers unsure as to what exactly their sick and compassionate leave entitlements were despite the legal obligation on their employers to make this information clearly available to them. It is imperative that these areas receive attention and a standardisation be considered across the entire industry going forward.

Pension and medical insurance status

Of 62 recorded answers, only eight respondents had made any provision for a pension plan, just three of whom had contributions made by their school employer. Almost 81 percent of teachers had no pension plan whatsoever, more than one and a half times the national average of Irish working adults with no pension provision, and positions Irish ELT schools firmly among the 75 percent of national employers who do not provide company pensions (Zurich Life, 2020). Medical insurance was somewhat better, with 23 out of 62 respondents holding their own private medical insurance, yet only two had the benefit of school contribution to this, while nearly 60 percent stated they had no form of medical insurance at all. These are areas that need attention if the sector is to be truly considered a profession for its teachers.

Accommodation status

This section reflected how terms of employment could be directly impacting the living arrangements of this cohort. Of 62 responses, fewer than 17 percent of teachers recorded 'yes' to having a mortgage on their own home, with nearly 84 percent stating they did not, and 60 percent living in rented accommodation. These findings are highly consistent with previous survey findings of nearly 80 percent of ELT practitioners either renting or assumed to be, making them two and a half times more likely to be so doing than the general population (Unite ELT Branch, 2020a, p.5;

Central Statistics Office, 2016).

The fact that the majority of respondents were from schools in Dublin may have had a significant influence on results, given the city's exorbitant housing market. It is nevertheless a cause for concern in terms of the direct link between precarity and lack of a permanent address or access to home ownership (Pembroke, 2018, pp. 80–81).

Whether the living arrangements of this teacher cohort was by choice or circumstance would entail further investigation.

Teacher attitudes to ELT in Ireland

Finally, participants were asked four broad questions on the Irish ELT sector and how they positioned themselves within. Question 1, *Do you regard ELT as a profession?*, saw 78 percent of respondents replying 'yes', elaborating with positive keywords such as 'professional', 'important', 'talented' and 'opportunity'. Only 15 percent stated 'no' and were highly critical of the field, with 7 percent undecided, generating keywords of negative semantic prosody including 'precarious', 'capitalist' and 'racket'.

In response to question 2, *Do you regard yourself as a professional?*, 90 percent categorically identified as such within the Irish ELT industry. Eighty percent chose 'Definitely yes' and 10 percent chose 'Probably yes', offering justifications such as having high qualifications, a capacity for hard work, dedication to their job, fulfilling student needs and a love for what they do. Yet, doubt was expressed over perceptions held by those outside the sector towards the ELT practitioner role. Decreasing certainty was expressed in 'Might or might not' responses, while the 'Probably not' category garnered only two responses, one indicating that the sector itself was what was lacking in professionalism, the other citing inexperience as the reason for

selection. It is worth stating that no recorded responses were found in the 'Definitely not' category.

When asked question 3, *What are the typical attributes of a professional ELT teacher?*, a word cloud generated the words 'patience', 'good', 'people', 'creative' and 'language' at its heart. Of keen significance was a side-by-side positioning of the word 'student' with 'teacher', clearly suggesting the regard these respondents had for their learners, and where they position them in the Irish ELT world. However, question 4 responses caused concern: *What are your longer-term career plans? Do you see yourself continuing in ELT?* It received 52 responses, with an almost fifty-fifty split: 25 (48 percent) stating they would remain in ELT seeing it as a viable, longer-term career option, and 22 (42 percent) simply did not, with five (10 percent) unsure as to what their long-term plans were.

Conclusions and comment

On one hand, the results of both surveys are most encouraging. Despite the "appallingly poor working conditions" officially recorded among many Irish ELT practitioners elsewhere (Unite ELT Branch, 2020b, p.10), combined with the many challenges faced by the cohorts in both surveys, they demonstrated empowerment, high self-esteem and commitment to CPD, despite lack of remuneration among the majority of respondents and a sense of self-assuredness in terms of their professional identity. These teachers identify as professionals within a community of practice, as they share the same sets of concerns and problems in their day-to-day experiences, are dedicated to their work and take it very seriously, particularly in their commitment to undertaking CPD and enhancing their skill-sets. It leads one to wonder the true

potential of this cohort if regulated, consistent, improved conditions were government-led across the sector. To this end, teachers must be directly included in and represented at all government-level negotiations concerning post-Covid-19 recovery plans for the sector; continued exclusion of their voices “indicates a disturbing lack of respect” from both government and other industry stakeholders, and “will not succeed in the short-term or otherwise” (Unite ELT Branch, 2020b, p.12).

Regarding whether ELT is profession, the emergence of the word ‘racket’, offered by a participant in Survey 2, is cause for concern. It is consistent with issues raised by Jordan and Long (2022) of excessive profiteering at the expense of both teachers and students throughout the international ELT sector, particularly through the British Council and various examination bodies, prompting Geoff Jordan’s statement: “we think it’s important to expose the current ELT industry as a commercial racket that defrauds students and impoverishes millions of teachers and support staff” (TaWSIG 2022). Of keynote is Jordan and Long’s (2022) estimation of global ELT’s current worth at \$200 billion generated by what they term “the four-headed hydra of ELT”, comprising publishing (i.e., syllabus-driven textbook and resource book sales), teaching (i.e., commodifying and packaging English-language lessons for sale), teacher training (i.e., selling CELTA, DELTA and similar teaching qualifications) and testing (i.e., the marketing of overpriced tests to non-native speakers). Jordan and Long’s observation of the British Council’s continued status of being taxpayer-funded and a registered charity (despite profits of \$1 billion per annum) leads to their conclusion of “how blurred the distinction between the private and public parts of the ELT industry has become” and summation that “the current global ELT industry is driven more by commercial interests than by educational principles” (2022, p. 236–7).

To conclude this study, the findings from these surveys raise integral questions on stakeholder status, who it includes and what it is to be a stakeholder in the Irish ELT industry, consistent with Unite ELT Branch findings that “first, we need proper regulation and recognition of teachers as stakeholders” (2020b, p.12). Once this happens, perhaps the question of where we go as Irish-based EFL practitioners can finally be answered.

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