Change in Primary Education

Challenges for Teachers

AN INTO REPORT

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Foreword

Teachers, perhaps more than any other profession, appreciate the need for change. Discussions in many school staff-rooms today include change in relation to inclusion, planning, evaluation, collaboration, collegiality and curriculum. The profiles of our pupils have changed. Many classes now include pupils with special needs, non-Irish national pupils and pupils with different learning abilities. Society has changed. There is a greater variety of family structures. Authoritarian relationships are less acceptable, attention spans appear to be shorter, and pupils are more exposed to a culture of entertainment through computers and television. And, of course, recent legislation has impacted on the professional lives of teachers.

The INTO has always been to the forefront of change and has often sought change in order to enhance teaching and learning in schools. However, the change process must be supported and funded at school level. The School Development Planning Initiative has been well received in schools as a mechanism to prioritise, manage and implement change. On its own it is insufficient, and must be accompanied by continuous funding to schools for resources, equipment and professional development. Time for planning must also become an integral part of the school timetable. And schools must continue to have access to support and advice as required.

This report is in two parts. Part one includes the background document on Managing Change which was presented to the Consultative Conference on Education in November 2001. Part Two contains the proceedings of the conference, including presentations and the rapporteurs' reports. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Education Committee for preparing the background paper and for their presentations at the conference. A special word of thanks also goes to Dr Andy Burke of St Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra, whose guest presentation to the conference is also included in this publication. The organization also appreciates the contributions of Claire Garvey, Ann McConnell, Lori Kealy, Publications Official, Merrillyn Campbell, Peter Mullan, Senior Official/Press Officer and Deirbhile Nic Craith, Senior Official/Education Officer who prepared this report for publication.

The INTO hopes that this publication will highlight the challenges for schools arising from recent educational and societal change and contribute to current debate on how best to manage the process of change in primary schools.

John Carr, MA (Ed)
General Secretary
April 2004
Part I

MANAGING CHANGE IN IRISH PRIMARY EDUCATION

Discussion Paper
 Managing Change in Irish Primary Education

In recent years, schools throughout the country and in particular the teachers who staff them have had to deal with rapidly changing responsibilities and expectations. Many of these changes are easily identifiable with clear origins and intended outcomes. Others are less easily identifiable and their origins and intended outcomes less transparent. It is true that teachers have, in many cases, demanded, initiated and co-operated with reform and renewal of many aspects of school life aimed at improving and ensuring quality in education. Many of the changes introduced have been as the result of national initiatives while others have been implemented in individual classes and school and/or groups of schools in response to local needs or developments. Many of these changes have been implemented in full in the recent past while more are being planned or phased in over a period of time.

The most obvious expression of this activity has been the unprecedented co-operation at national level and local level with the development of the revised primary school curriculum and the beginning of its implementation in all schools in the country. Other changes and proposals for change have been introduced with less transparency and agreement such as proposals to change school inspection procedures (Whole School Evaluation) or, for example, the recent proposals to introduce Pupil Profiling into primary schools. Other general changes in policy such as the general policy decision to promote whole school planning have resulted in rapidly expanding demands on schools and teachers.

Primary teachers have demonstrated an on-going commitment to educational improvement. They have researched barriers to literacy and numeracy and have made persistent demands for the introduction of learning support in all schools. The use of standardised tests and diagnostic testing in schools is becoming widespread and there have been developments in the area of strategies to improve teaching and learning. This commitment takes place against a background which recognises that many of the reasons for literacy and numeracy difficulties lie outside the direct sphere of influence of the school and the classroom which makes the task of the teacher in the school increasingly complex and difficult. Many teachers now have or are expected to assume responsibilities outside of their classrooms altering the traditional role of the teacher. Such changes in roles and responsibility reflect the changed nature of Irish society.

It is widely recognised that Irish society has changed radically in the past two
decades and that, in the context of the European and global dimensions of modern living, schools have been expected to accept a major responsibility for developing a sense of Irish identity. New and ever more complex challenges are thrown up by developments of modern living including issues such as pluralism, a respect for diversity and the importance of tolerance. The importance of the equality agenda is widely accepted and major demands have been made of schools in relation a range of equality related issues such as racism, gender equity, combating disadvantage, the place of Travellers in education and the integration of children with special needs into the primary schools. Teachers are attempting to meet all of these challenges as they seek to improve the service offered to pupils often without the necessary supports and resources.

In addition, new programmes are being introduced to schools in response to societal needs and changes. The most high profile of these has been the Relationships and Sexuality programme which has involved teachers in inservice training and curriculum delivery. Less obvious are local and national initiatives undertaken by many schools involving a diversity of programmes including environmental awareness (an umbrella term for many programmes), road safety, drugs awareness and misuse prevention, healthy diet and dental hygiene programmes. All of these programmes require curriculum time for implementation in addition to teacher time for preparation and follow up which is not always available.

Schools have met the challenge of change posed by developments in the area of information and communication technology. The success of IT2000 is in no small measure the result of the enthusiasm and dedication of primary teachers to embrace change and to invest their energies into re-skilling. Enormous progress has been made in many schools as a result of the efforts of teachers to provide the hardware and software to underpin change. This project is perhaps the best example of a new approach to policy implementation whereby government allocates money to schools and within broad guidelines, demands that schools embrace change.

In addition to the introduction of specific programmes in primary schools teachers are, at present, implementing a major change in the curriculum for primary schools. One subject which brings the issue of change into sharp focus is Gaeilge. In relation to the central place of the Irish language in our cultural heritage it is widely recognised that unfair and unrealistic expectations have been placed on primary schools without the full support of central government and the communities in which schools are situated. Although much has been achieved in primary schools in relation to Gaeilge the need for change in the approach to teaching Gaeilge is accepted and indeed demanded by teachers who were first to recognise the need and call for a major change in approach. These changes will make enormous demands on teachers in terms of training, implementation and resourcing and indeed place the school in the position of agent of change in the local community.
A new consensus has emerged on the benefits to be gained from the establishment of partnership in education. Teachers have played a major role at national and local level in the fostering of partnerships which have contributed and will continue to contribute to the development of an inclusive approach to educational decision making. Practical expression of this at local level is the time and energy invested by principal teachers and teacher representatives in the management of schools through participation in boards of management and the ever increasing number of meetings attended by teachers in relation to individual pupils and groups of pupils. Teachers regularly attend meetings on a wide number of issues including learning difficulties, the promotion of reading, sacramental preparation of children and Stay Safe. In addition, many schools have a parents' association at which teachers make an input in the form of attendance at meetings, explaining policies and practices and organising events and school activities.

Teachers at both national and local level have engaged in dialogue on a range of issues relating to the work of the primary school as evidenced by teachers' commitment to seeking improvement in areas as diverse as early childhood education, transition to post primary and the development of lifelong learning. This is in line with the reasons many teachers give for their choice of profession, ie they wish to make a difference in the lives of children. Therefore, education for many teachers has an almost moral purpose. Over the years teachers have continually striven to make improvements in the lives of their students, through piece-meal change in classroom practice, often against great odds in terms of resourcing and support. Hence, practices altered. In recent years, however, a culture of change pervades. The pace of change has accelerated considerably over the last ten to fifteen years. Teachers are now faced with a very different classroom, very different pupils and, more importantly, a multiplicity of changing norms vis-à-vis education in general. The result is that teachers today find themselves trying to implement change, plan for further change and assess proposals for even more change. Finding ways to manage and cope with change is a high priority because change can threaten to invalidate teachers' experience, robbing them of skills they have learned and confusing their purposes. Change does not occur without some loss, anxiety or struggle.

It is essential that change is documented and evaluated so that its scope and extent is understood and its effect on teachers and schools appreciated. In general terms, there is a need to analyse what is an increasingly complex and challenging environment in order to produce an element of coherence and clarity. It will not suffice simply to observe that teachers are tired at the end of the week and exhausted at the end of the year as if this is some kind of natural occurrence. At both national and school based level ways must be found of managing change in order that it be effective and that it not lead to an inability to deliver the intended outcomes of change. Schools and teachers need assistance to enable them to cope with change. There are
implications for the role to be played by the INTO in this regard.

As the collective voice of teachers the challenge for the INTO is to direct and shape strategies to enable members to cope with change and ensure that the assistance needed is provided. In this respect there is a need to look at internal policies, procedures and practices. There is also a need for the INTO to look closely at its place in external partnership arrangements that have been developed over recent years. There is no doubt that much has been achieved by such arrangements but it is debatable if, at a time of such rapid and widespread change, that all members are fully appreciative of such arrangements.

However, there is a need to be specific about how much and what kinds of assistance and resource support teachers need. It is also essential that adequate recognition and reward be sought for teachers who have brought and will continue to bring these changes about. This document does not seek to provide easy solutions to the challenge of change. However, it seeks to promote debate and dialogue through which potential solutions and ways of coping with the issues concerned might emerge.
New Legislation – New Burdens or New Opportunities?

The last decade has witnessed unprecedented legislative change affecting schools and education. Several major pieces of legislation have been passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas which have had or shortly will have a profound effect on how schools effect their business. It is impossible within the scope of this paper to detail each and every aspect of these pieces of legislation and, therefore, what follows is a consideration of the main points of the legislative changes in the context of their impact on the professional lives of teachers and schools. That these pieces of legislation present new challenges and make increased demands of schools and teachers is without question. However, they also present opportunities to improve the education service to pupils and make the professional lives of teachers more rewarding. The challenge to all in the education system is to find ways of implementing change effectively so that intended improvement becomes an educational reality rather than a bureaucratic aspiration.

THE EDUCATION ACT (1998)

Since its establishment in 1831 the national school system has operated under what can best be described as a quasi-legal status. The Stanley Letter (1831) provided a basis for the operation of the system and subsequent change was made by ministerial order, circular letter and some Acts of the Oireachtas. It is arguable that this lack of an overall legislative framework led to a certain ad hoc development of the system. This is a point of view which has been put forward by the INTO over many years as it argued for the introduction of an Education Act. It was also confirmed by OECD examiners of Irish education in their Review of the Irish Education (1991) “The first point to be made about the Irish Education system is that it is difficult to understand. It was not planned methodically but expanded in piecemeal fashion in order to respond to importunate pressures. There have been no grand designs in the classic mode of centralised Government.” Nowhere has this piecemeal planning and lack of grand design been more evident that in the primary sector.

The passing of the Education Act (1998) was the result of an extensive consultation
process starting with the Green Paper *Education for a Changing World* (1992), followed by the White Paper *Charting our Education Future* (1995) and the National Convention on Education (1994). Careful analysis of these documents and publications issued in response to their proposals such as *Among School Children* (INTO, 1992) shows that a great deal of discussion, debate and negotiation informed the process. At all stages of this consultation process the INTO played a constructive role arguing consistently for improvements in the system. In addition, the organization, at many stages in the formulation of proposals for change, led the way and protected children, schools and teachers from some of the more 'extreme' proposals for change which were put forward at times.

The end result of the above publications and consultation process was the Education Act (1998) which provides a legislative basis for the education system. However, this Act makes a number of new demands on teachers and schools which increase existing responsibilities and obligations to pupils, parents, administrators and others in the system. It also defines and makes clear, for the first time, a number of existing duties which heretofore were not made explicit in legislation, changing many procedures and practices from what might be called best practice to legal requirements. The most obvious of these changes are considered under a number of headings:

**Educational Needs of All Students**

According to the Act it is the function of the school to ensure that the educational needs of all students including those with a disability or other special educational needs are identified and provided for. This requirement places responsibility on schools to meet educational needs without any specific commitment on the part of the Department of Education and Science to provide the required resources. Teachers have many years of experience of this issue in the context of unsupported integration of special needs pupils in our schools. A review of the number of times that this issue has been raised at the INTO's Annual Congress and the content of the contributions made gives an indication of the level of change that teachers have been expected to embrace without effective support from the Department of Education and Science.

Even where support is provided it must be set against the context of a National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) that is still in its infancy and can meet the needs of a tiny minority of schools. Many pupils are in mainstream education awaiting assessment without which resources are not provided. This legislative demand will further entail teachers using an increasing diversity of assessment instruments, liaising with health boards, visiting teacher services, school psychological services and the Department of Education and Science in seeking to meet those needs when resources are provided. Current government policy of providing resource
teaching hours for some pupils with special needs requires detailed examination in this context as it is debatable if this practice is meeting the needs of all special needs children in the system. It must also be considered in terms of the increased demand it makes on schools in terms of the administration of this scheme.

There is little doubt that, particularly in recent years, much progress in the area of special education has been made. The recommendations of the Report of the Special Education Review Body (SERC, 1993) have, in large part, been implemented. Yet much remains to be done and circumstances have changed since its publication. There is a need for another full examination of special needs education which must also take account of how, in many cases, lack of government supports for children with special needs leaves schools and teachers increasingly isolated, frustrated and unable to cope adequately with the demands that are made.

**Equality**

Under the Education Act schools are required to promote equality of opportunity for both male and female students and staff of the school. This entails the development of policy, the promotion of principles, the enacting of procedures and the constant monitoring and revision of procedures and practices. While such developments are laudable and worthy of support they create extra workloads on teachers, making particular demands on personal time given the absence of non-contact time for school planning purposes. It is essential that such additional requirements and responsibilities are reflected not only in terms of remuneration but that they are also addressed in terms of additional time needed to carry out the related duties.

**Admissions Policy**

Each school is obliged to devise and publish its own admissions policy providing for maximum accessibility. Heretofore, schools generally devised such policies in response to local circumstances and were often in the form of understandings rather than published documents. The obligation to publish makes the obvious demands on boards of management to devise such a policy but makes additional demands on the principal teacher to circulate the policy. It also places the principal teacher in particular, but also other teachers in the school, in the position of having to implement and defend the policy as they are the point of contact with parents in relation to the enrolment of pupils in the school. Additional demands are being made on schools and teachers by the imposition of enrolment policy by patron bodies which at times appear to be in conflict with the provision of maximum accessibility to the school.

It is arguable that an admission policy needs to take account of a school's ability to meet particular needs (e.g. special educational needs, Traveller children's needs,
religious minorities). If this is to be the case then it is essential that government provide the resources to enable schools to meet these needs fully. It is unacceptable that government will simply demand that schools meet needs without putting in place the resources to enable schools to meet those needs fully.

**Board of Management**

The Act requires of principal teachers that s/he shall supply the patron and the Minister with such information regarding the board's functions as the patron or the Minister may from time to time require. This requirement has yet to be defined but could result in the demand for an annual written report or attendance at meetings in response to specific issues. It must be recognised that attendance at board of management meetings and participation in the workings of the board of management is a vital contribution to local democracy and partnership but one that is provided for the state gratis by teachers. It is time that teachers, and indeed others, were recognised and rewarded for the responsibility undertaken in the form of allowances and expenses for attendance at meetings.

**Reports and Information to Parents**

The Education Act places an obligation on schools to put in place procedures for the reporting to parents on the operation and performance of the school. The production of an Annual Report is a suggested mechanism for achieving this obligation. Such a duty will inevitably fall to the principal teacher and make demands of time and energy in relation to the preparation and circulation of such a report.

However, the production of such a report will involve input and effort from all teachers. The report must make particular reference to the achievement of objectives set out under the school plan. Teachers are thus to be required to be accountable to the parents of the school and to invest time and effort into the process. This formal process also increases the accountability and responsibility of all who work in schools in that, heretofore, schools and teachers were accountable to the board of management and to the Department of Education and Science. There is now another layer of accountability placed on teachers which may have been implicit in the past but which is now made formal under the Education Act.

**The School Plan**

Every school is obliged by virtue of the Education Act to produce a School Plan and circulate a copy of this plan to the patron, parents, teachers and other staff of the school. This clearly places huge demands of time, energy and commitment on
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Teachers. It also changes what was in the past a best practice concept to one of a legal requirement. While the School Development Planning Support (Primary) initiative is a substantial support mechanism for primary schools there is no doubt that much will be asked of teachers as a result of this requirement.

Assessment and Evaluation

The principal and the teachers in the school under the direction of the principal teacher are required by the Act to regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents. Given that the range of assessment instruments available to teachers is limited and not provided for centrally this makes individual teachers and groups of teachers responsible for the design of many assessment materials, the purchase of assessment materials, the assessment of pupils and reporting of results to parents.

Alternatively, the central production of assessment tools such as the Drumcondra Pupil Profiles in English appear to create an enormous increase in workload for teachers. The educational and assessment effectiveness of Profiles as they have been developed to date is debatable, therefore, one must posit the question whether teachers are to undertake such work for little or no educational benefit to the pupils? What is not in doubt, however, is a change in work practices and increased workload. To date teachers have not been consulted on the design of these profiles nor have they been consulted about how and when they are to be managed. Such a development is unacceptable to the Irish National Teachers' Organization given the commitment to partnership that has been adopted by all in recent years.

The School and the Local Community

Herefore, very many schools have initiated and participated in projects to promote co-operation between the school and the local community which it serves. This was done on a voluntary basis and involved teachers in a diverse range of activities with sporting, social, religious and community groups. The Act now requires schools (the principal and the teachers) to collectively promote such co-operation.

This will require school personnel to become involved in a range of activities and projects with a range of community bodies. Such co-operation and contact will make demands on teachers outside of school hours in order to plan and undertake many of these activities. It will in many cases make increased demands on the abilities and competencies of teachers. It will also change what was a voluntary participation in such activities to a compulsory one without adequate reward or time allowance to carry out such duties. It is a further example of the changing role of the primary
teacher away from the traditional classroom based role to one which places the teacher in a much wider, less defined theatre of operations.

**Parental Involvement**

The principal teacher of the school is obliged by the Act to encourage the involvement of the parents of children in the school in the education of the students and in the achievement of the objectives of the school. Such a requirement makes demands of time and energy on the principal teacher in terms of meetings and the production and circulation of newsletters and information sheets to parents. It is also an obligation that cannot be discharged effectively without the cooperation and active involvement of all the teaching staff in the school. There appears to be no doubt that this requirement will require extra work on the part of teachers in the production and circulation of such information.

The Act provides for the establishment of a parents' association in every school to promote the interests of the school in cooperation with the board, principal, teachers and students of the school. The parents' association may advise the principal teacher and the s/he shall have regard to any such advice. A programme of activities which will promote the involvement of parents in the operation of the school is to be adopted in consultation with the principal teacher.

This requirement makes formal demands on the time and energy of the teaching staff of the school. There can be little doubt that what was, heretofore, given freely in many schools is now to become an obligation without any adequate reward.

**Consultation**

The principal teacher is required by the Act to consult, wherever practicable, with teachers and other staff of the school. Despite the fact that participative processes of school leadership are to be commended it must be remembered that the obligation to consult greatly increases the workload of those involved, particularly the workload of the principal teacher. It also changes the role of the class teacher from that of a teacher responsible for the education of the pupils in her/his class to that of a team member with collective responsibility for the operation of the whole school.

To date, no time has been negotiated for this consultation and, therefore, an obligation is placed on teachers in the school to consult in their own time. The Irish National Teachers' Organization has long stated that this cannot be undertaken in the form of a staff room discussion at lunchtime or in the form of a hurried conversation in a school corridor. Consultation is central to effective administration and school planning and this is increased by the demands of the Revised Primary School
Curriculum. There is a need to look at professional development practices and policies and consult widely with teachers on how best to proceed in this respect.

School Records

Parents have the right to access school records including financial records relating to funds provided by the Department of Education and Science. This places the onus on the principal teacher, and indeed other teachers, to not only maintain records but to do so in a manner that will facilitate access by others. It is also safe to assume that there will be a need for teachers or the principal teacher to interpret these records and answer questions that may arise.

There is a need to look closely at the secretarial services currently available to schools. The lack of proper support services makes the maintenance of records difficult and places demands upon teachers to store and retrieve information needed for reporting purposes. The transfer of money from the Department of Community Affairs to the Department of Education and Science to support the employment of clerical/caretaker services does little to inspire confidence that these supports are a high priority for government. If such demands are to be placed on schools there must be a concurrent commitment to the provision of the resources necessary to implement them.

Information to Students

The board of management is obliged by the Act to establish and maintain procedures for the purposes of informing students in a school of the activities of the school. This will, in effect, fall on the principal teacher and the teachers in the school.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the Education Act provides a clear rationale for the education system and focuses on principles that are repeated throughout the Act. It contains many statements in relation to schools which by and large reflect the best of existing practices. However, it also contains specific new measures which schools are required to put in place particularly in relation to parental involvement, planning and policy development, equality and accountability.
EDUCATION WELFARE ACT (2000)

The Education Welfare Act 2000 replaces the School Attendance Act (1926) and other related pieces of legislation and has as its central aim the promotion of school attendance. This aim is in agreement with INTO policy as stated in its document Promoting School Attendance. The Act is concerned with participation in school, home education, matters relating to the employment of young people, and specific matters relating to school discipline such as suspension and expulsion. It also provides for the establishment of the National Educational Welfare Board.

The Act makes a number of specific demands on schools and school staffs.

School Register

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act the school principal is obliged to:
- establish and maintain a register of all students attending the school;
- register pupils as soon as a school place has been accepted;
- inform in writing the principal teacher of the previous school of the child registering in the school;
- inform the principal teacher of a school to which a child transfers of any problems relating to school attendance.

School Attendance Records

The principal of the school is obliged to maintain/have maintained a record of attendance/non-attendance on each school day. The record of attendance is to contain not just a record of non-attendance but the reasons for such non-attendance. The form of this register will be specified by the NEWB.

The principal teacher of the school is obliged to inform an educational welfare officer in writing when a student is absent for more than 20 school days in a school year, when a student’s name is removed from the register or where, in the opinion of the principal teacher, a student is not attending school regularly.

The board of management is obliged to report to the Educational Welfare Officer within 6 weeks of the end of the school year on the levels of attendance during the immediately preceding school year. The Act provides for the right of an educational welfare officer to enter the school and inspect the register maintained at the school in effect causing school principals to make themselves available to the EWO.
Strategy to Promote School Attendance

The board of management is obliged, in consultation with the principal teacher, parents, teachers and the assigned educational welfare officer, to prepare a statement of strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning and encouraging regular school attendance.

The statement is to provide for:

- the rewarding of students who have good school attendance records;
- the identification of pupils at risk of developing school attendance problems;
- the establishment of closer contacts between the school and the families of pupils at risk of developing school attendance problems;
- the fostering, promoting and establishing of contacts with other schools, bodies engaged in youth work programmes or services and bodies engaged in the organising of sporting activities;
- co-ordination of programmes and the exchange of information with other schools;
- identification of aspects of the operation and management of the school and of the curriculum of the school that may contribute to truancy and the removal of those aspects in so far as they are not necessary or expedient for the proper and effective running of the school.

Code of Behaviour

Following consultation with principal, teachers, parents and the assigned educational welfare officer the board of management will have to prepare a Code of Discipline specifying the types of behaviour that may require disciplinary measures, procedures to be followed before suspension or expulsion may be imposed, the grounds for the lifting of a suspension and the steps to be taken to ensure that a student expelled will receive a prescribed minimum education.

The principal teacher is obliged to provide a copy of the code to parents upon registration of a child and provide, on request, a copy of the code to a parent or student.

While the INTO unreservedly supports the overall aim of the Act in the promotion of school attendance, there are some concerns with the provisions of the Act in terms of what is actually expected at school level or what exactly the intended outcomes of the legislation are. The possibility exists that the Act will dramatically increase the administrative burden on teachers and principals for little or no real improvement in the area of school attendance. Recording and reporting absences in themselves will do little to promote school attendance. Placing the obligation on schools to devise and implement strategies to improve school attendance without the provision of resources to enable them to tackle the issue in a meaningful way will simply add to the frustration of teachers.
HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE AT WORK ACT (1989)

A less obvious piece of legislation that has impacted on schools is the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act (1989) which lays down general principles for all places of work aimed at preventing accidents and ill health. It imposes duties on all people in all places of work and, as such, has an application to schools. There is little doubt that the Act has brought many benefits to schools and has enabled schools to greatly improve many aspects of school life. Nevertheless, it has imposed specific duties on teachers specifically relating to practices, policies and procedures, safety statements and recording of information. It provides for the drawing up of a safety statement and review of that statement. It provides for the regular carrying out of a safety audit a report being made to staff and to the board of management. All records of accidents and ill-health must be monitored in order to ensure that any safety measures required can be put in place to minimise the recurrence of such accidents and ill-health.

The board of management is required to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practical, the design, provision and maintenance of all places in the school are safe and without risk to health. It must ensure that there is safe access to and from the school and that work systems are planned, organised, performed and maintained so as to be safe and without risk to health. In addition, staff must be instructed and supervised in so far as is reasonably possible so as to ensure health and safety at work. Plans for emergencies have to be drawn up, complied with and revised as necessary.

In general terms, under the Act it is the duty of every employee while at work to take reasonable care for her/his own safety, health and welfare, and that of any person who may be affected by her/his acts or omissions while at work. Each employee must co-operate with the employer and any other person to such extent as will enable her/his employer or the other person to comply with any of the relevant statutory provisions. They must report without unreasonable delay, any defects in plant, equipment, place of work, or system of work, which might endanger safety, health or welfare.

As the principal teacher is responsible for the day to day running of the school much of the work falls directly on the principal teacher or on teachers in promoted positions. A great deal of this work relates to policy formation and periodic inspection of plant and procedures. Fear of litigation in areas relating to safety has increased dramatically and has led to increased pressure to produce written policy statements.
THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (1997)

The purpose of the Freedom of Information Act which came into force in April 1998 is to enable members of the public to obtain access, to the greatest extent possible consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy, to information in the possession of public bodies and to enable persons to have personal information relating to them in the possession of such bodies corrected. The Freedom of Information Act creates three new legal rights for members of the public:

- the right to obtain information held by government departments and public bodies;
- the right to obtain reasons for decisions affecting oneself;
- the right to have official information relating to oneself amended where it is incorrect, incomplete or misleading.

To date, in the education world, much of the focus relating to the Freedom of Information Act has fallen on the issue of access to state examination results. This has, perhaps, deflected attention from the fact that, while schools are not formally covered by the Freedom of Information Act, information provided by schools to the Department of Education and Science regarding particular students may be accessed by the person to whom it relates at a future date. There is, therefore, a changing circumstance under which reports are written and information provided for which schools are under prepared.

DATA PROTECTION ACT

The Data Protection Commissioner implements the Data Protection Act, the aim of which is to protect the privacy of individuals about whom there is personal information on computer. The Act has recently been extended to cover personal information kept on paper. If an organization holds personal information about an individual on computer, the individual may ask if such information is held and for access to it. Refusal to do this/refusal to correct information/failure to respect rights under the Act may lead to complaints to the Commissioner who has power to enforce the provisions of the Act.

This Act has implications for schools in relation to the holding of information on computers and the transfer of such information. The question arises, for example, regarding a school's right to provide information to the Health Board even for routine matters like medical examinations.
WHITE PAPER ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The publication of the White Paper on Early Childhood Education Ready to Learn in December 1999 is a significant event in Irish education. This is not simply for the fact that it is the first of its kind but also because the Minister for Education and Science announced at its launch the government’s intention to implement the proposals contained therein. It discusses crucial issues such as structures to support and shape early childhood education, the curriculum for the early years, teacher education and qualifications and methodologies that should be used. These issues are highly relevant to Irish primary teachers given the nature of the proposals and increasing change that is taking place in early childhood education.

The INTO has responded to this issue in the form of a conference in February 2000 in conjunction with St Patrick’s College of Education, Drumcondra. In a presentation to that conference Catherine Byrne, INTO Assistant General Secretary, commented on issues of concern to teachers including structures in early childhood education, adult:child ratios in infant classes, teacher education and qualifications, the needs of young disadvantaged children, special needs, curriculum and methodology and inspection and evaluation. It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail every proposed change and every response from participants at that conference. It is, however, relevant to highlight the issues of an appropriate curriculum for the early years and pupil teacher ratio in infant classes as ones that pose enormous challenges to teachers today.

The INTO has long recognised that high pupil teacher ratios in infant classes have adversely affected the educational rights of children. The reality is that children in Early Start classrooms with a ratio of 15 children to 2 adults (lower in many private preschools) can and do move to an infant class in a primary school where the ratio can be as high as 35 to 1. There is a need to ensure that persistent INTO demands for a significantly reduced pupil teacher ratio in infant classes be implemented as a matter of priority in any proposed reforms. This issue must also include the appointment of qualified classroom assistants in all infant classes. The issue of an appropriate child centred curriculum is one that also needs close monitoring being as it is largely affected by existing pupil teacher ratios.

TEACHING COUNCIL ACT

The Teaching Council Act is a further piece of legislation that must be considered in terms of its impact on teachers. The establishment of a Teaching Council has long been pursued by the INTO arguing for self-regulation for the teaching profession. The
Act provides for the Council to have 16 functions including drafting and maintaining a code of professional conduct, establishing a register of teachers, advising the Minister for Education and Science and conducting inquiries into fitness to practice.

It is too early to assess the impact that this piece of legislation will have on teachers. It will make itself known to teachers through the election of Teaching Council members and the payment of a registration fee. Whether the Teaching Council will, as claimed by its advocates over many years, bring about a significant rise in the status of the teaching profession, would best be left for history to decide.

**COMMENT**

The introduction of legislation affecting schools and their operation has changed the context in which schools function. Examples of best practice have become legal requirements and demanded of schools and teachers. Yet teachers and schools have been in the main unprepared for the reality of such changes at school or classroom level. To date the Department of Education and Science has not played an effective role in informing and training teachers about major changes. The sheer volume of material that has been produced by the Department of Education and Science in recent years and sent to schools has, in many ways, not taken account of the time and resources available to schools to take account of such changes. This has, in effect, diluted the impact of information relating to change.

The INTO has, to its credit, made enormous efforts to inform members about change through conferences, meetings, publications and the use of ICT. However, the scope and scale of change at the present time raises the question of the ability of the organization to respond effectively to all its members' needs. A major challenge for the INTO is, therefore, to ensure that each proposal for change is accompanied not only with agreement on the need for change but also with strategies and resources to ensure that change can be managed and therefore implemented at school level. It is simply not enough to agree that change is required and formulate responses. Proposals for change must contain specific commitments to teachers and schools that will ensure that the necessary resources are in place to effect change.
New Policies – Whole School Change

Many new initiatives are in the process of being implemented or are intended for implementation in schools in the near future that are not directly linked to legislative change. Many of course have a basis in legislation such as the requirement to engage in school planning. However, published legislation does not provide the intended detail and a number of proposed initiatives have been planned which require careful examination in terms of their impact on schools and teachers. Other changes are less easily classified such as the ever expanding role of the principal teacher and the changing roles expected of class teachers outside of what might be termed their traditional instructional role.

New programmes are being introduced into schools affecting teachers, not only in their classrooms at the point of delivery, but in the context of the school team of which they are a part. This makes increased demands on teachers in terms of discussion and planning prior to implementation. Partnership at local level has changed the way schools are managed and developments in the area of parental involvement in the education of their children have led to increased demands on teachers. Other issues such as the inadequate financing of primary education mean that principal teachers often feel obliged to compensate at local level for the failure of central government to provide for an effective, modern and efficient education service by involving themselves in fundraising activities.

This document seeks to examine a cross section of these issues under a number of broad headings including school administration, whole school policies, issues relating to disadvantage, school management and the financing of primary education. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of every issue in the area of school change. It recognises that under the headings selected, there are many other similar examples of change and the management of change.
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

School Development Planning

The origin of the concept of school planning in Irish primary education can be traced to Curaclam na Bunscoile (1971) when principal teachers were given increased responsibility to consult with teachers and to outline a plan of work for the school as a whole. Circular 16/73 reinforced this point of view and in the years that followed some schools began to plan collaboratively. The Curriculum and Examinations Board, the Primary Curriculum Review Body and the White Paper on Education Charting our Education Future (1995) subsequently supported the concept of the development of a School Plan.

The INTO Education Committee in 1990 produced a report on the subject of school planning in response to requests for advice and guidance from members. It contained a historical review of school planning, definitions of a school plan, approaches to school planning, strategies for developing school plans and survey results along with a number of conclusions and recommendations. Critically, it stated the importance of involving teachers in the internal decision making process as a means by which professional autonomy and interdependence might be reinforced. However, it also recognised that it may be viewed as an unfair imposition on teachers who are not being given the appropriate support in terms of resources, inservice education or release from teaching duties to review and reflect on their individual practices and procedures.

School Development Planning became a statutory requirement under the terms of the Education Act and the Department of Education and Science became more proactive in the process. Guidelines for Primary Schools: Developing a School Plan were drawn up and issued to schools by the Department of Education and Science and the School Development Planning Initiative was established and first introduced into schools in 1999. School Development Planning Support (Primary) was launched in 1999 to promote the practice of planning in primary schools. The Service aims to support collaborative planning as a means of promoting school effectiveness and renewal.

An examination of the web site of the School Development Planning provides an indication of the present scope and breadth of school planning. Under the heading of 'Administrative Policies' it makes the general comment that policies should comply with the requirements of the Employment Equality Act (1998) and the Equal Status Act (2000). It states that schools should consider the necessity of having written policies in many areas, as appropriate to the school's individual needs and circumstances and some of the policy areas which might be included are:
Administration of Medication
Allocation of Classrooms
Ancillary Staff
Annual School Calendar
Audio-visual Aids
Booklists/Text Supply
Class Masses/Assemblies
Classroom Assistants
Curriculum Formulation
Enrolment Policy
EPV Days
Exceptionally Able Pupils
Fire Drills
Fundraising
Health and Safety
Homework System
Induction of Infants/New Pupils
Infants Remaining after 2pm
In-School Communications Internet
Policy
Litter Control
Open Days
Parental Complaints' Procedure
Pastoral Care
Posts of Responsibility
Promotion of Pupils
Psychological Assessments
Pupil Illness in School
Pupil Insurance
Remedial Provision
Resource Allocation
RSE
Savings Schemes
School Calendar
School Development Planning
School Medical Service
School Tours & Excursions
Sexual Abuse Reports
Sports Days
Staff Meetings

Allocation of Classes
Altar Servers
Annual Pupil Reports
Assembly/Dismissal of Pupils
Book Loan Scheme
Bullying
Class Meetings
Code of Behaviour/Discipline
Emergency Closures
Environmental Awareness
Evaluation and Assessment
Extra-Curricular Activities
First Confession/Communion
Gender Equality
Home-School Communication
Hours of Opening
Induction of New Teachers
ICT
Library Facilities

Lunches
Parental Access to Records
Parent-Teacher Meetings
Photocopying
Post-Primary Liaison
Provision for Special Needs
Pupil Absences
Pupil Injuries
Record Keeping
Requisite Supply
Room Supervision
Salespersons
School Brochure
School-Community Communication
School-Home Communication
School Milk Scheme
Security
Shared Resources
Staff Development
Stay Safe Programme
Many schools have policies on some of the above areas in place as a result of their own initiatives over many years. Others have what might be termed well-established practices or understandings in relation to many of the areas mentioned above but have yet to document the policy.

A further example of such a list of policies that might be included under the development of a school plan can be found in an edition of *Solas* (March 2001). In it the CPSMA listed 42 policies under the title *What Policies do we Need?* The article states that each school is required to draw up and publish policies on a number of issues. The board of management should draw up policies in consultation with the staff and with parents, where relevant in the following areas:

- Access by parents to records relating to the educational progress of their child.
- Integration of children with special educational needs/physical disabilities.
- Complaints Procedure.
- Appeals Procedure.
- School Plan.
- Certified accounts.
- Anti Bullying/Sexual Harassment Policy.
- E Mail Internet User Policy.
- Use of mobile phones.
- Safety Statement.
- Administration of medicine.
- Health education.
- Management and staff development.
- Admissions/Enrolment Policy.
- Code of Behaviour.
- School attendance strategies.
- Report on attendance levels.
- School tours.
- Transfer of essential information.
- Notification of absences.
- Supervision Rota.
- Text Book Selection/Book Rental Scheme.
- Class and classroom allocation.
Homework assignment and correction.
School organisation and discipline.
Pupils' lunch/break time snacks.
Use of common areas in building and grounds.
Keeping of class records and roll books.
Use of audio visual and other facilities.
Regular reports to parents.
Parent teacher meetings.
Meetings for specific purposes.
Induction of new pupils.
Reception of student teachers.
School security.
Staff meetings including chairing and recording secretary.
Assessment and testing of pupils.
Car parking.
Participation in competitions and festivals etc.
Contacts with other schools.
Financial accountability.

The article further states that each school would be likely to require additional policies arising from the particular circumstances of the school and local practices. While it is clear from the article that it is the responsibility of the board of management to have such policies in place, the reality is that the onus falls upon the expert input and professional advice of the teachers in the school. Clearly policy development of this kind takes a large commitment in terms of time and energy and certainly well beyond what was traditionally understood by participation in a board of management.

The extensive lists of policies above shows how a concept like drawing up a school plan can continually expand until it becomes a major imposition on schools and teachers. It should be noted that the above lists do not even include planning in relation to the core work of the school i.e. curriculum planning. It should also be noted that the above bodies (CPSMA and the School Development Planning Support Primary) and other groups that have addressed the issue of school planning have provided guidelines to schools on how to undertake school planning and various frameworks to assist in school planning. However, the onus is placed on each individual school to develop its own individual policy. While there are undoubted benefits in this in terms of ownership by the school of the school plan, there are questions relating to the need for each school to undertake the process alone for every policy. While recognising the individuality of every school at the very least, it suggests the possibility of duplication of time and effort at local level. Viewed from another perspective many of the policies are legal requirements and many others have a
quasi-legal status. In this respect there is a need for expert input that, if possible, could be provided centrally as could large blocks of policy statements through the use of ICT.

The publication of the *Primary School Curriculum* and the *Learning Support Guidelines* in paper format only provides a striking example of how individual schools are required to invest large amounts of duplicated time and effort in the production of policies. The placement of these and other documents on the internet, or their distribution to schools in electronic format, would remove some of the burden associated with school planning and allow schools to focus on making them real, meaningful and implementable at school based level.

**Posts of Responsibility**

Another development that demonstrates the changing role of teachers is the concept of posts of responsibility. The practice of teachers taking formal and paid responsibility for issues, activities and duties outside of the formal setting of their own classrooms is a relatively recent development in Irish primary education. The increase in the number of posts allocated to primary schools, changed appointment methods and new duties and responsibilities have led to more and more teachers performing duties outside of their classrooms.

Proposals for the implementation of revised in-school management structures in primary schools were adopted as part of the Programme for Competitiveness and Work and resulted in significant additional posts of responsibility in primary schools and in new procedures for making appointments to such posts. Circular 17/00 outlines the schedule of duties for posts of responsibility and the number of posts of responsibility warranted in primary schools. It incorporates all procedures relating to the filling of posts of responsibility and also contains an appeals procedure which was agreed between the managerial bodies and the INTO. Under the terms of the PCW new management structures were introduced into primary schools which re-titled the existing types of in-school management posts – Principal, Vice-Principal, Grade A and Grade B. These posts are now referred to as Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal and Special Duties Teacher.

The revised management structures were generally designed to:

- match the responsibilities of the posts more closely to the central tasks of the school, and clearly specify responsibilities for the various posts;
- focus on the provision of opportunities for teachers to assume responsibility in the school for instructional leadership, curriculum development, the management of staff, and the academic and pastoral work of the school; and

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1. The Primary School Curriculum has been available since October 2003.
establish selection procedures for deputy principals, assistant principals, and special duties teachers, with the aim of ensuring that the most suitable people are appointed.

It is recognised that in-school management needs and priorities vary from school to school depending on a broad range of factors. Accordingly, it was intended that in-school management structures would generally be responsive to flexibility and change. Duties which may be delegated to post holders cover curriculum, academic, administrative and pastoral matters. Post of responsibility duties may be varied from time to time following a consultative process as the needs of the school require. It is open to either the board of management or the post of responsibility holder to initiate a review of the duties assigned to the post.

The overall process in relation to filling posts of responsibility involves procedures relating to consultation, advertising, application, interviews, notification and an agreed appeals procedure. The selection of the successful candidate is based on three criteria each of which have equal weighting:

(i) willingness to participate in the school's middle management structures by undertaking the additional responsibilities specified in the list of duties;

(ii) experience gained through length of service in the school;

(iii) capability to perform the duties attaching to the post.

However, many teachers who do not hold posts of responsibility in schools undertake additional duties in primary schools. Teachers of classes where children are prepared for the sacraments generally give increased time, energy and commitment regardless of whether they are in a promoted post or not. Many teachers who do not hold posts of responsibility continue to involve themselves in after school activities such as games, drama, music and community activities. This is a very valuable addition to Irish primary education.

It must also be recognised that changes in relation to posts of responsibility have greatly increased the responsibilities and duties of principal teachers. Again a great deal of this work might be provided for centrally in terms of standard application forms, standard advertisements, centrally produced lists of work appropriate to a particular post such as a special duties teacher. However, in general terms in relation to managing change it should be noted that as recently as 1991 the OECD reported that effective middle management capability scarcely existed. The PCW agreement provided for more promotional opportunities in an increased number of schools. The research of Bush (1996) which indicates that teachers wish to participate more and that a collegiate model of management in schools is more likely to be effective, must be kept in mind. New middle management structures in primary schools, if encouraged and supported, could facilitate this.
The Role of the Principal Teacher

The role of the principal teacher is not laid out in any one single document or publication but can be compiled from several sources. These include the Rules for National Schools, Circular Letters from the Department of Education and Science, Boards of Management: Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure, The Primary School Curriculum and Acts of the Oireachtas. In 1995, in response to concern about increasing responsibility, the CBC published the following list of duties of principal teachers.

Administrative duties include:

- Ensuring that the requirements of the Rules for National Schools are carried out.
- Maintaining an adequate stock of books and other requisites.
- Ensuring that work in relation to heating and cleaning is properly performed.
- Outlining, in consultation with the staff, the layout of the school day and school year, closures, vacations.
- Notifying the inspector of school closures.
- Complying with rules regarding recording of attendance and absences.
- Completing the daily attendance book, updating the register.
- Administration of the free book scheme.
- Ensuring the recording of the arrival time and departure time of teachers.
- Co-operation with School Attendance Act enforcement authorities.
- Preparing the school monthly returns; and
- Completing the October Statistical returns.

Professional duties include:

- Ensuring that Religious education is a fundamental part of the school course and that a religious spirit informs and vivifies the whole work of the school.
- Attending to the moral and general conduct of the pupils.
- Preparing and implementing a Code of Discipline.
- Study of the subjects of the Curriculum and the methods of teaching them.
- Controlling and managing the teaching staff and co-ordination of the work to ensure continuity and to avoid duplication.
- The promotion of pupils.
- Deciding which books are used by children.
- Holding staff conferences.
- Outlining the plan of work for the school as a whole.
- Encouraging staff members with particular knowledge to advise and guide others.
- Inducting and advising new members of staff.
- Helping weak teachers and teachers on probation.
- Co-ordinating time tables.
- Cultivating a Gaelic atmosphere through the school.
• Establishing a consistent attitude to homework.
• Fostering good home school relations.
• Arranging for the distribution of teaching duties.
• Ensuring preparation by staff of short term and long term plans of work.
• Keep records of progress of work.
• Deciding on the organisation of pupils for teaching purposes.
• Arranging for the assessment of pupils.
• Organising and arranging for additional help for pupils who need it, or for the gifted pupils.
• Arranging adequate supervision and work for pupils whose teacher is absent.
• Advising and offering guidance for parents and pupils on opportunities in post primary education.
• Arranging school tours and visits.
• The promotion of saving; and
• The supervision of the school library.

Management duties include:
• Serving as a member of the board of management.
• Consulting with the chairperson of the board of management and keeping her/him informed on all matters relating to the school.
• Ensuring that the lawful instructions of the board of management are carried out.
• Making known to the chairperson of the board of management on the occasion of a vacancy the desirable qualifications of a new teacher.
• Serving as a member of the selection board in appointing teachers.
• Arranging for school transport services.
• Overall responsibility for fire precaution routines and equipment.
• Ensuring the implementation of the Health Safety and Welfare at work Legislation.
• Completing and returning forms to the Department of Education and Science.
• Dealing with other school related correspondence.
• Ordering supplies.
• Arranging for the repair of school equipment.
• Meeting parents.
• Dealing with matters relating to repairs heating and cleaning.
• Updating of school records; and
• School planning.

In the case of smaller schools principal teachers have teaching duties in addition to the above responsibilities.

The report of the working group on the Role of the Principal Teacher (1991)
recognises specifically that the modern school principal teacher is operating in a climate of change. These changes include alterations in the profile and shape of the family unit, increased education and awareness in society, challenges faced by young people, changing norms of behaviour, partnership at school level and with the Department of Education and Science, Information and Communication Technologies, society and culture. The report notes the evolving concept and nature of leadership in schools and makes specific reference to instructional leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership. It states that many principals are finding it increasingly impossible to deliver effectively on leadership tasks due to increasing responsibilities in management, administration and communication with parents, the community and an increasing number of other professionals. The special case of principal teachers with full time teaching duties who are experiencing considerable difficulties arising from conflicting demands of their leadership/managerial duties and their full time teaching obligations is cited.

The area of school strategic and developmental planning places specific requirements on principal teachers in respect of the following key areas in which leadership skills are pivotal:

- creating, developing and sustaining an overall educational vision for the school;
- establishing a commitment to providing the optimal learning experiences for each child;
- defining key educational goals and outcomes which are appropriate to the needs, aptitudes, interests and abilities of the children;
- creating an awareness of essential curriculum elements and deciding on priorities;
- identifying, in collaboration with the staff, clear expectations of staff and pupils;
- encouraging strong parental and community involvement in the school;
- establishing an effective and appropriate system for the monitoring and assessing of pupil performance and achievement;
- nurturing a deep awareness of the distinctive nature of the school as a unique organization;
- identifying the particular needs of the school;
- understanding the environment in which the school is operating;
- identifying the strengths and capacities of the school; and
- understanding the dynamics of change.

The report on the Role of the Principal acknowledges the central role of the principal in areas such as managing curriculum change, curriculum planning and management and creating structures and strategies for staff development. Specific requirements including enthusiasm, dedication, commitment, patience, determination and kindness are acknowledged. The management functions of the principal teacher in relation to the board of management are detailed. The principal is expected to provide
a report to the board of management at each meeting on all aspects of school management. S/he is expected to propose and seek support for new initiatives, ensure that policy documents are drafted, agreed and circulated and submit proposals and plans for capital expenditure for approval by the patron. In addition, the principal is often the first point of contact with the DBS and other agencies such as health boards, National Educational Psychological Service, school attendance officers/education welfare officers, gardaí and religious advisors.

There is no doubt that the impact of change with respect to a range of issues has been strongly felt by principal teachers. John Carr, INTO General Secretary Designate, speaking at the INTO Principals’ Consultative Conference in October 2001, highlighted some of these when he stated that, "teacher shortages are placing greater strains on serving teachers, leading to lower morale with the profession generally. Fewer and fewer teachers are prepared to allow themselves to go forward for the difficult role of principal because of the lack of any worthwhile pay incentive. Disillusionment is settling in amongst serving principals as the whole reform process keeps failing to address the basic organisational constraints within which teachers work". Recognising the pivotal role expected of the principal teacher in the area of change he argued that the "principal is, in fact, becoming the most important leader and change agent in the system". However, he concluded that "principals feel undervalued and misrepresented". Yet the central role played by principals in managing change must be acknowledged. Berman & McLaughlin (1977) "found that projects that have active support of principal were most likely to fare well".

WHOLE SCHOOL POLICIES

In the recent past, Irish primary education has witnessed a number of whole school projects that have been implemented by teachers resulting in substantial change in schools. Among these are IT2000, Stay Safe, Walk Tall, Children First, the Modern Languages Initiative and the revised Learning Support Guidelines. It is important to note how these were introduced, the level of initial and ongoing support provided and the impact such changes have had on the professional lives of teachers. One example of such a policy is IT2000 which greatly increased the availability and usage of ICTs in schools.
**IT2000**

In 1997 the government launched IT2000, a policy framework for the development of ICT which involved an investment of €69,835,000 million targeted at classroom resources and infrastructure, teacher skills development and support, and policy and research. Its objectives were to ensure that pupils had the opportunity to achieve computer literacy and equip themselves for participation in the information age and that support was given to teachers to develop skills, which would enable them to utilise ICT as part of the learning environment of the school. It provided for the establishment of the National Council for Technology in Education to oversee the implementation of the project.

It was decided at the outset that hardware and software would not be purchased centrally but that schools would be grant aided in their purchases thus allowing schools to maintain ownership of the process, establish priorities and fund them accordingly. This method also allowed for a diversity of solutions and platforms and the use of local suppliers, support and maintenance services. NCTE provided guidelines to assist schools in the purchase of ICT equipment and software. In December 1999 additional funding was made available to schools to be applied to software purchase, remedial education and staff development.

The principal partner in IT2000, Eircom, undertook to provide every school with a multimedia internet ready computer, a free phone or ISDN connection, free rental for the duration of IT2000, call credits and connection to an Internet Service Provider representing an investment of £15 million. This policy ensured that every school has the technology in place to access to the internet.

Teacher professional development was identified as a key factor in the successful integration of ICT into teaching and learning and over 34,000 teachers participated in NCTE developed courses. A range of teacher training materials was developed and produced, tutors were recruited to deliver courses through the local Education Centre network and support groups were established again through local Education Centres. These have the scope to allow teachers to re-visit and update skills and also allow the holding of workshops to encourage peer-to-peer communication and collaboration on the effective classroom use of ICT.

There is no doubt that there has been huge progress in the area of ICT in primary schools in recent years as the INTO Education Conference (2000) clearly demonstrated. However, much of this was achieved in schools by the efforts of individual teachers and whole school staffs rather than by the publication of IT2000 alone. This effort has been largely unrecognised and unrewarded compared to the publicity and recognition that surrounded the launch of IT2000. This publicity also created huge expectations among pupils and parents which left schools and teachers under pressure to meet those expectations.
The INTO expressed its concerns about IT2000 at the time. While accepting that it was a 'policy framework', it was nonetheless, over-aspirational, vague and lacking in detail. Schools were treated as a generic grouping in the initiative and no distinction made between school types such as special schools, Gaelscoileanna or disadvantaged schools with specific needs in the area of ICT. Another significant omission was the failure to recognise the role of ICT in early childhood education. This was equally true when it came to the area of school planning where each school was left to plan for the introduction of ICT at local level.

Other issues that are emerging as concerns for teachers are organisational arrangements for the on-going development of ICT in schools. The lack of a coherent plan makes future development uncertain. There are issues relating to inservice education as teachers require new courses and new models of delivery need to be examined. The issue of equipment renewal due to obsolescence and the long-term funding requirements of ICT in education must be addressed. The reality is that schools, having supported the introduction of ICT in schools, are paying the bills now that introductory offers have expired. Teachers are left to maintain a government initiative that was at best part funded as there appears to be little long term commitment to the project.

Teachers are left with a lack of relevant information relating to the development of ICT in schools, without curriculum development opportunities and support, and to face the ongoing pace of technological change alone. Few could blame teachers and schools for being wary of the implications of further change initiatives and viewing policy proposals in terms of anticipated burdens to be shouldered rather than opportunities for real and lasting improvements.

**Whole School Evaluation**

Inspection procedures are not new to primary schools and the history of the INTO provides an insight into how these procedures affected teachers and their work in the past. In recent years the system of carrying out school inspections or tuairiscí scoile was agreed and implemented. This was far from perfect and teachers often made reference to the fact that there were no open, transparent and agreed criteria against which schools were judged and reports written. A number of proposals from the Department of Education and Science on the issue of Whole School Evaluation have been put forward to change the way schools are inspected. Initial proposals were outlined at a Consultative Conference in March 1996. These were subsequently piloted in 1998 and 1999 and as a result of the pilot project and the responses of the partners in education the evaluation criteria for WSE have been revised and extended.

The most recent documentation received from the Department of Education and Science outlining draft criteria for the evaluation of schools states that external
evaluation under WSE will provide schools with an outside view which will assist in encouraging and supporting the process of school self review and evaluation. It further states that it will also assist in developing methodologies for school self-evaluation. This is based on a model of internal self-review and school development planning.

Preliminary analysis of the document leads the INTO Education Committee to conclude that the process is similar to the process of the tuairisc scoile, with the added component of published criteria which have the potential to make the process more open and transparent. However, the INTO has concerns relating to the introduction of any change in the way schools are evaluated prior to full implementation of the school development planning initiative. If the process of school evaluation is to be based on internal review and development planning it is imperative that this initiative be introduced to all schools and that schools be given the time and the resources necessary to exploit it to the full. It is also clear that the proposed revised procedures make increased demands of teachers in terms of familiarising themselves with and implementing new practices and procedures in terms of self review for which appropriate allowances must be made. Whole School Evaluation based on agreed criteria may prove to be a successfully surmountable challenge as long as a product or check list is not adapted in a top-down model. It must be remembered by those evaluating schools that curriculum in a school consists of the full range of learning experiences provided for students many of which can never be tabulated, assessed or graded. The challenge for us all here is to prioritise informal as well as the formal learning and teaching in our schools.

Finally, it is vitally important that the process be implemented only following agreement on all of the issues involved. The INTO has long supported the need for quality assurance procedures in schools that are agreed, transparent, fair and workable.

Learning Support Guidelines

Learning Support Guidelines were issued to all schools by the Department of Education and Science. The introduction to the document provides an idea of the scope of these guidelines which specifically emphasise and provide guidance on:

- the enhancement of classroom based learning for all pupils, the prevention of learning difficulties and the provision of early intervention and learning-support programmes;
- the development of a school policy on learning support, within the context of the school plan;
- the role of the learning support teacher in co-ordinating the provision of special needs and learning support services;
• the dual role of the learning support teacher in providing supplementary
teaching to pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning difficulties and
in supporting and consulting with colleagues;
• the role of class teachers in the implementation of learning-support
programmes;
• the review of this policy on a yearly basis;
• the development of learning-support programmes for pupils at risk of
educational disadvantage;
• the identification of pupils experiencing low achievement and/or learning
difficulties and the implementation of structures and procedures for diagnostic
assessment;
• the selection of pupils for supplementary teaching based on the outcomes of
diagnostic assessment;
• collaboration between teachers in the planning and implementation of
supplementary teaching and other learning-support programmes;
• collaboration between parents and teachers in the planning and implementation
of learning-support programmes;
• individual programme planning and record keeping for pupils who are in receipt
of supplementary teaching;
• the use of specific methodologies for supplementary teaching in English and
mathematics.

Modern European Languages

In 1990, the Report of the Primary Curriculum Review Body decided against
recommending the introduction of a modern European language into the primary
school curriculum. The report specifically cited arguments relating to time and
curriculum overload as well as the demands of the two languages on the present
curriculum as particularly influential in reaching this decision. In a minority report the
National Parents' Council (Primary) dissented from this view and, while recognising
the arguments that led to the decision not to recommend such an introduction, called
for a recognition of parents' wishes on the issue.

In the late 1990s the Department of Education and Science launched a pilot project
on Modern European Languages in Primary Schools. From 1,300 schools who applied
to take part in the project 270 schools were selected. At present the language is taught
for 1.5 hours per week in 5th and 6th classes for the most part, within the normal school
day. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has been charged with
drawing up curriculum guidelines and teacher guidelines which are currently being
piloted in participating schools. ITB have been appointed by the Department of
Education and Science to carry out an independent evaluation of the initiative. In June
2002 the initiative was designated a Modern Languages Initiative by the Department of Education and Science. It is organised through the Kildare Education Centre.

PROGRAMMES IN RESPONSE TO SOCIETAL NEEDS

In recent years a number of official programmes have been introduced into primary schools in response to problems or needs in society. In many cases teachers were among the first to recognise and highlight these problems and the effects on children. While it is true that teachers have themselves called for the development and introduction of programmes into schools, it can be argued that those who made such calls never envisaged that these programmes would be the main response or, in some cases, the only response. While many of these are optional, teachers, in general, feel obliged to implement them. There is an expectation from parents, boards of management, the DES and society as a whole that teachers should include such programmes in their teaching with little or no regard to the extra work involved in researching, preparing, and presenting such topics. This paper seeks to highlight a number of these programmes.

Walk Tall

The substance misuse prevention programme, the Walk Tall Programme, is an example of a recent development in Irish primary schools introduced in response to the growing problem of substance misuse in society. The programme is a voluntary one for schools and involves an information giving meeting for principal teachers and a full day’s inservice training for teachers. Following this inservice training schools may opt, according to the school plan, to implement part or all of the programme which is outlined in resource materials for each class level.

Stay Safe Programme

The Stay Safe Programme is a well established programme in primary schools to provide children with the skills necessary to prevent child abuse. Introduced into schools following the production of teaching materials and teacher inservice training the programme involves consultation with parents, the teaching of a number of lessons and the implementation of a whole school policy in relation to related issues such as bullying.
New Policies – Whole School Change

Relationships and Sexuality Programme

A further policy development that placed demands for change on schools was the call to implement the Relationships and Sexuality Programme. Although it was intended that such a programme would be part of the Revised Curriculum under the subject Social Personal and Health Education it was fast tracked and introduced into schools as a programme in its own right. The programme made demands on schools and teachers in terms of reading documentation, consultation with parents and management, school policy development and classroom implementation.

Children First

A more recent introduction to schools is Children First which focus on procedures for the protection and welfare of children. These guidelines are intended to assist people in identifying and reporting child abuse and to improve professional practice. Teachers have attended information giving seminars organised by health boards and have had to organise or re-organise school policies or practices to comply with the guidelines. A limited amount of teacher inservice has been provided.

Such programmes are without doubt essential to child protection and welfare. Teachers have a pivotal role to play in relation to this issue and have given generously in terms of time and effort to ensure that they are effective. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that programmes of this nature make increased demands on teachers’ time in terms of preparation and on class time and on the time of the principal teacher in particular.

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Boards of Management

Since 1975 teachers have been central to school management through their participation on boards of management. Current structures mean that the principal teacher and an elected teachers’ representative (in schools of more than one teacher) are members of the board of management. Among the responsibilities of board of management members under the Education Act are to:

- manage the school on behalf of the patron for the benefit of the students and their parents and to provide an appropriate education for each student at the school;
- uphold the characteristic spirit of the school;
- consult with and keep the patron informed of decisions and proposals of the board;
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- publish the admission policy of the school;
- have regard to the principles and requirements of a democratic society and have respect and promote respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society;
- have regard to the efficient use of resources;
- use the resources provided to make reasonable provision and accommodation for students with a disability or other special educational needs;
- establish procedures for informing the parents of students in the school of matters relating to the operation and performance of the school;
- make arrangements for the preparation of a school plan and ensure that the plan is regularly reviewed and updated;
- make arrangements for the circulation of copies of the school plan to the patron, parents, teachers and other staff of the school.

Other details relating to the roles and responsibilities of board of management members are to be found in Management Board Members' Handbooks.

At present teachers and principal teachers who participate in boards of management do so in their own time and at their own expense as it must be said, do other members of the boards. The roles played by teachers and principals in management of the school are substantial given their professional knowledge, expertise and experience. To date there has been no research done into this commitment and the INTO Education Committee strongly recommends that such work be undertaken.

Parents as Partners

Until recently parents were not able to contribute effectively to the educational development of their children in a direct way. In spite of constitutional principles they were not given scope to exercise their responsibilities as partners in the education system. In recent years relationships between school and home have become an integral part of the educational agenda both at local and national level and parental involvement in education at both national and local level has increased. The emergence of parental involvement in education is perhaps best seen in the active participation of parents in the development of the Revised Primary School Curriculum.

Attention is increasingly focused on the relationships that exist between teachers, parents and pupils, between home and school. Significant changes in the understanding of those roles and their inter-relatedness are taking place and changed perspectives that lead to changed practices and policies are providing teachers and parents alike with a range of new challenges. Such challenges give rise to the need to rethink policy and reformulate or refine practice to take account of changing
circumstances.

In the past study of the relationship between home and school have tended to follow rather narrow and separate tracks each with its own characteristic approaches, literature and followers. A cause for some concern in this area has been the less than clear place of home-school relations in the professional lives of teachers and schools. There is anecdotal evidence that home school links do not feature greatly in the preservice education of teachers. Today it is accepted that parents have a right to be consulted about and involved in a process that initially affects both the short term and the long term development of their children. It is taken for granted that parents have important knowledge and experience which are crucially important to a child’s school career and in getting a picture of the effects of policies and practices upon individuals. Their experience is both dynamic and continuous, complementing that of the professional in important ways. It is also accepted that parents have an enormous capacity as a resource to help and support the education and development of young people.

At national level the most profound change has been the establishment in 1985 of a National Parents’ Council for primary schools. The Department of Education and Science Circular 7/85 urged school authorities to have a parents’ association formed in every school. This matter was again addressed by the Department of Education and Science in Circular 24/91: Parents as Partners in Education. This circular stated that partnership for parents in education was a stated policy aim of Government, that the Department of Education and Science recognised that school/family relationships were particularly important at primary level and that it viewed Parents’ Associations as essential for developing partnership for parents in education at the level of the local school and in supporting and encouraging individual parents to become more involved in the education of their children. Each board of management was requested to take whatever steps were necessary to ensure that a parents’ association was formed. Each parents’ association was urged to affiliate to the National Parents’ Council.

The Education Act has further recognised the place of parents in education and introduced a number of changes such as the requirement placed on principal teachers to consult with a parents’ association and to have regard for their advice. The INTO has long supported the development of positive home school links as the policy statement agreed with the CPSMA demonstrates. This policy recognised that good relations between home and school play a critical role in ensuring that every child derives maximum benefit from his/her time in school.

Aspects of this policy exemplify how times and issues change. The agreed policy stated that no teacher could be compelled to participate in home school activities outside of school hours and that meetings should be arranged as far as possible at times convenient to teachers and parents alike. In recent times, perhaps in response to
increasing employment, there have been calls for such meetings to be held outside of school hours. Teachers and schools are therefore left to respond to calls for change either by ignoring rules or by providing such a service during their own time and at their own expense. The majority of schools do not have suitable interview rooms and an expense allowance for attendance at meetings has not been conceded.

Funding of Primary Education

The funding of primary education is a major cause for concern among teachers at the present time. The disparity in funding that exists between first and second level schools must be redressed in the interests of equity. Primary teachers have noted commitments given by successive governments to tackle this issue. Yet the reality remains the same. Students at second and third level education receive far higher capitation payments. In addition, increased payments to schools in the form of capitation grants from the Department of Education and Science have been effectively reduced by the decision of management bodies to cease the local contribution to primary schools.

In recent years primary schools have received extra funding to meet specific changes such as curriculum implementation. In addition, once off grants have been received by schools for the purchase of equipment for infant classes and for the purchase of library books. These have been in addition to what might be described as regular payments to schools such as the minor repairs grant or the grant for the payments of secretaries and caretakers.

The INTO is concerned about the lack of an overall strategy for the payment of grants to schools and calls for the rationalisation and increase of payments to primary schools in the form of one single payment to primary schools. This payment must adequately cover school administration and management, curriculum implementation as well as standard operating costs such as heating, lighting, cleaning and insurance.

Ancillary Staff

Ancillary staffing has become a feature of primary school life in recent years. Under the Community Employment Scheme operated by FAS many schools provided work for non-teaching personnel in various capacities including classroom assistant, caretaker, and secretary. The decision to phase out these schemes in schools affected many schools dramatically. While the level of funding available to schools increased in order to provide for secretarial and caretaking services many schools that previously operated, FAS schemes did not receive the level of funding to enable them to continue as before.
A feature of the employment of ancillary staff in schools that has not received sufficient discussion is the increased administrative and managerial responsibility that accompanies such employment. Responsibility allowances are based on the number of teachers employed in the school rather than the number of employees which in most cases is a significantly larger number. No account is taken of the increased time and effort that is expended on recruitment, training and management of such personnel. The scheme to facilitate the employment of escorts on buses highlights this case, in that a grant is paid directly to qualifying schools who are then responsible for the implementation of all aspects of the scheme including recruitment, training, payment, deduction of tax and PRSI.

POLICIES TO COMBAT EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Home/School/Community Liaison Scheme

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme began in November 1990 in fifty-five primary schools in areas of designated disadvantage. An initiative to counter educational disadvantage, it sought to increase co-operation between schools, parents and other community agencies involved in education. A National Steering Committee was established and a National Co-ordinator was appointed to co-ordinate the scheme and to liaise with the home school liaison teachers.

The aims of the Home School Community Liaison Scheme are:

- to maximise active participation of children in the participating schools in the learning process, in particular those who might be at the risk of failure;
- to promote active co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children;
- to raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational process and to assist them in developing relevant skills;
- to enhance children's uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level and their life long attitudes to learning;
- to disseminate the positive outcomes of the scheme throughout the school system generally.

The duties of Home School Co-ordinators include:

- assisting and supporting the principal teacher in the development of a home school community policy;
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- supporting class teachers in working with parents/families;
- establishing contact with parents;
- identifying parents who would act as leaders and be likely to influence others in contributing to the educational development of children;
- encouraging and helping parents in organising groups for children under school age;
- establishing links with preschools and with voluntary and statutory groups in the area;
- organising and facilitating activities to affirm and develop parents' roles as educators and as partners with the school in the children's education;
- addressing the needs of children with poor attendance and other problems;
- keeping the local committee informed of progress and receiving proposals from local committees;
- preparing such reports as may be required from time to time by the National Steering Committee and the Evaluation Team;
- developing attitudes of co-operation in and between the home, the school and the community.

The New Deal

The absence of a supportive home and community environment has been recognised as an adverse factor in levels of pupil attainment contributing to under-achievement, poor retention rates of pupils within the education system and poor participation rates in higher education. These factors have been particularly identified with areas of socio-economic disadvantage although it is recognised that these factors affect pupils from all areas albeit to a less noticeable and dramatic extent in some areas.

The New Deal, published by the Department of Education and Science in December 1999, proposed a revised disadvantage scheme designed to give consideration to all schools. The Department of Education and Science commissioned the Education Research Centre (ERC) to conduct a survey and a questionnaire was issued by the ERC to all schools in April 2000 without any consultation with the INTO. The questionnaires were to be completed and returned within the space of a week. The CEC protested about the lack of consultation with the INTO in relation to such an important survey, the disregard for partnership and the inadequate time frame for completing the returns.

In January 2001, the Minister for Education and Science announced a £26m initiative to tackle educational disadvantage in primary schools. The programme involved the appointment of 204 extra teachers and extra funding of £3.9m in grants in 2001, 2002 and 2003 involving 2,276 schools. The programme had two elements – urban and rural. The urban element included the allocation of 150 posts to 89 selected schools to enable
them to implement a maximum class size of 20:1 in junior classes and 29:1 in senior classes over the course of the Programme. Grants were also provided to 807 urban schools in 2002 for initiatives focussed on disadvantaged pupils. The rural element comprised the allocation of 54 posts to 73 clusters of schools each of which share the services of one teacher co-ordinator. Grants were also provided to 1,469 targeted rural schools in 2002.

The manner in which schools were notified caused many negative reactions and much resentment. In order to participate in the programme schools were requested to sign a pro-forma agreement committing the school to undertake additional duties. The General Secretary of the INTO wrote to the Department of Education and Science objecting to the addition of such an additional burden to already overstretched school staffs and stating that it showed remarkable disdain.

Teachers in primary schools have made countless innovations over many years to counteract the effects of educational disadvantage both within and outside Department of Education and Science schemes. That much more needs to be done is evident from the INTO’s pre Budget submissions over the years which called for:

- the immediate establishment of the Statutory Committee on Disadvantage under the terms of the Education Act (1998);2
- the provision of resources to provide diversionary programmes, family conferences and community sanctions for young children at risk and for young offenders;
- the extension of the Teacher Counsellor scheme to all designated disadvantaged school;
- the appointment of additional Learning Support teachers to all designated schools;
- the reduction of class size in all schools designated disadvantaged;
- the extension of the Early Start and Breaking the Cycle schemes to all disadvantaged schools;
- the extension of the programme of assistance, including social, medical and education services in designated schools which would include the provision of a hot meal service to pupils;
- the development of a comprehensive support system for the children of non-nationals; and
- the introduction of home-work support and after school programmes in designated disadvantaged schools.

2. The Statutory Committee on Disadvantage was established in March 2002.
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Different Children – Changed Classrooms

The classroom where the teacher is a facilitator is replacing the traditional teacher-dominated classroom where s/he was the instructor, the giver of knowledge. The modern teacher is one who reflects constantly on her/his practice to help develop understanding and encourages the children to construct their own learning, developing within them a capacity for both individual and collaborative learning. Teachers today are conscious that we are living in a knowledge society, where students can access their own information through the use of ICTs, where rote learning is being replaced by active learning, where student testing is giving way to more authentic forms of assessment such as portfolio work and where newer methodologies such as problem-solving are replacing 'the correct answer' syndrome.

For the modern child education will be a life-long concept; schooling in the early years of one's life will not be its only contributor. The focus is now on the child as learner. Learning is no longer linear nor is it solely dependent on instruction or extrinsic reward. It is no longer enough for a child to be literate, to grasp the three Rs. S/he must be facilitated into higher order thinking skills to accommodate the demands of working life in the 21st century.

However, the primary school student of the 21st century is a product of the entertainment society. S/he has endless sources of visual stimulation and distraction including television, videos and computers. Teachers have to compete with this in the environment of the classroom and are finding concentration levels in pupils more difficult to maintain. Children are less compliant and seem to be suffering a lot from the modern syndrome of 'boredom', despite enjoying the advantage of modern living conditions. In many cases, disruptive behaviour and discipline problems are taking over the school day to the detriment of pedagogy. In addition, increasing social problems outside school for example, poverty, separation, violence, divorce, alcohol, drug and sexual abuse, all contribute to a breakdown in behaviour among pupils. Teachers regularly deal with psychologists, gardaí, social workers as well as resource and home school links personnel. Teachers report an increasing amount of social work attached to the job. Children are expected to be nourished across multiple intelligences through an ever broadening curriculum, with more and more decisions being devolved to school level.
Teachers in today's schools are expected to be sensitive to the signals and cues these children may or may not emit, have infinite patience and be accessible. Yet no one asks how the teacher is to manage this multi-faceted role of psychologist, teacher and carer and where s/he is to find the time. Fear of litigation may put further pressure on the teacher to make decisions and take particular action. How does the teacher manage this changing role? The call for increased intervention of other professionals or other teachers may not provide satisfactory solutions to some of these problems for there are limits to the number of specialists (teachers or otherwise) that primary students can engage with before the continuous, caring relationship they have with their own class teacher is damaged.

Despite or maybe because of the Celtic economy, the divide between rich and poor appears more pronounced. Schools are expected to mitigate the effects of poverty on the child by providing extra support, or taking special interest in deprived children. Teachers are advised to help parents so that they, in turn, can help other children. This in turn places extra pressure on teachers.

The overriding question for teachers in a changing school organisation is how to deal with all these challenges. Furthermore, if in trying to deal with so much are teachers in danger of reinforcing the behaviours through ignoring them or their consequences. However, schools cannot solve all the problems of society. They must find ways of minimising the negative impact of such problems on the teaching and learning process. It is only teachers who can do this. But schools are no longer isolated institutions. They must connect to the world around them and change and develop accordingly. Yet it must be recognised that there are limits to the school's capacity to change radically within a short time frame. In addition to changes among children, teachers are faced with increases in workload.

The introduction of the revised curriculum is increasing teacher workload involving inservice, planning and implementation. This increase in workload may be to the detriment of the school curriculum in the long term because the broadening of the curriculum and the addition of new topics could lead to the dilution of existing subjects. A potential disadvantage of the menu-type curriculum is that only certain areas of the menu will receive attention while other areas may suffer as a result. The attempted introduction of curriculum profiles also threatened to add to the workload of teachers. Indeed, these could be the greatest single imposition on the workload of teachers unless they are developed properly. Current examples are too long and too time-consuming. It requires considerable further research to develop profiles that are competent and concise enough for ease of use and yet detailed enough for communication and interpretation.

Increased workload will lead to reduced teacher/pupil contact time and will lead to inability to cover all aspects of the primary school curriculum. The experience of teachers in the UK, in particular, has shown that increased workload leads to more
Different Children – Changed Classrooms

preparation time, more assessment and recording time, more inservice time, more school planning time and less time available to actually teach children or meet parents.

CURRICULUM CHANGE

Perhaps the greatest change that teachers are required to manage is the implementation of the Revised Primary School Curriculum (1999) that involves new subjects, new programmes and changed approaches, emphases and methodologies. The scope of this change can be seen in an analysis of An Curaclam Nua Gaeilge which is the most fundamentally changed aspect of the Revised Curriculum. Most other subject areas involve a revision of existing curricula but, a new Gaeilge curriculum has been designed which will:
- put a particular emphasis on spoken language;
- not be dependent on any one philosophy regarding teaching methodologies but will encourage a variety of methodologies and;
- be consistent with the stated aims of the curriculum.

On foot of these recommendations, the Coisti Curaclaim Gaeilge decided the revised curriculum would be based on a communicative approach to language teaching and learning. This approach, with its emphasis on creating opportunities for real communication in the classroom, has huge implications with regard to change for teachers.

When the cúrsaí cómhrá with their audio-visual methodology were left to die a slow death by Department of Education and Science indifference, a great deal of 'ad hocery' entered the system as individual teachers and school staffs attempted to compensate for official neglect. Today the teaching of the language is often driven by textbooks and workbooks. To switch to a genuinely communicative approach from this background will represent a major change for many teachers.

Materials from publishing companies have been produced to aid the implementation of the revised English curriculum. In contrast, despite the fact that the Coisti Curaclaim Gaeilge drew up specifications for publishers encompassing a wide range of required materials, as yet no materials specific to the implementation of curaclam na Gaeilge have been produced. This will make the implementation of a task-based approach difficult. This is particularly true for teachers in Gaeltacht schools and scoileanna íl-Ghaeilge who are now expected to implement the new approach. Section 31 of the Education Act proposed a new structure to support Irish medium education and the teaching of Irish.3

3. An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscoiliochta was established in March 2002.
The new approaches have implications for classroom management techniques as group work and pair work will be used more frequently. The greater the elements of change in a subject area the more onerous the planning process will be. Implementation and planning for cura clam na Gaeilge will consequently be more difficult. The lack of support in the community and the indifference of many parents to their children’s progress in Gaeilge is a further difficulty.

Developing an understanding of the theory and principles of communicative language learning and teaching will require substantial time and study which has yet to be provided. Teachers will need to be supported in their implementation of this curriculum and be convinced that the new approaches will achieve worthwhile results. Many teachers would argue that, at present, the standards being achieved by pupils in schools where Gaeilge is being taught as a second language are not commensurate with the teaching effort being expended. Teachers in general now come from a different linguistic background compared with their counterparts of a generation ago and a growing number feel, or will feel in the new situation, that their own communicative competence needs to be developed. To date no suitable initiative to provide this support has been developed.

The effect of anticipated change on the competencies and tasks of teachers can be examined under a number of headings.

Planning

Implementing Cur a clam Nua na Gaeilge with the new emphasis on the communicative approach will require detailed planning of lesson content to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to use the various language functions which are central to the curriculum at a level appropriate to their age and ability. Planning for the use of appropriate materials for language games and communicative tasks will also be required. Whole school planning will also be important to ensure a suitable developmental approach to realising the objectives of the curriculum.

Recording

The post-communicative phase in each lesson where developmental errors are corrected will require recording of such errors during the communicative phase of the lesson. Assessment procedures to quantify progress will also be required and there are implications here for recording same.
Flexibility/Openness to Change

The new strategies and approaches in this area of the curriculum – in a system where the teaching of Gaeilge has been traditionally structured and grammar and vocabulary based – will require great flexibility and openness to change as teachers move to a more functional view of 2nd language learning and teaching.

Communication with Students, Parents, Colleagues

The implementation of the above changes will require skilled communication with colleagues, pupils and their parents. The responsibility to inform parents of the value of the new approaches and the importance of their support in motivating their children towards positive attitudes to the learning of the language will inevitably fall on the shoulders of teachers.

Facilitation skills

Facilitating children involved in pair work and group work and managing the materials required will require new skills and class management techniques over and above what has been necessary heretofore.

Managing Discipline

Ensuring that pupils stay on task while playing language games and completing tasks in structured situations in the classroom will require sophisticated and sensitive approaches to classroom control while at the same time encouraging real communication.

Problem Solving/Decision Making

Inevitably there will be a period during which teachers, given the emphasis on freedom of choice of methodologies, will experiment with the various recommended methodologies and make decisions on which of the suggested approaches best suit the particular circumstances of their class and school. This will involve teachers in substantial extra work in their own classrooms as well as within their own school staffs.

Diagnosis

Identification of individual children's difficulties in the language learning area will require assessment techniques and close pupil observation and the tailoring of teaching approaches to the needs of such pupils.
Personal Motivation

Language teaching, in general, requires particular pedagogical skills but it can be argued that, in addition, the teaching of Gaeilge requires a special commitment and motivation. This is in view of the lack of support in the community and the parsity of opportunities for most pupils in the system to use the language they have learned in any real communicative situation outside of the school environment. Consequently, the enthusiasm of the teacher and the ability to enthuse pupils about Gaeilge are of particular importance in this context. Updating the knowledge and skills required to implement this new communicative approach will also require renewed professional motivation.

Technical Knowledge and Skills

As this is the most radically changed area of the revised curriculum, implementation requires a detailed knowledge of the principles of the communicative approach to language learning and teaching, study of the importance of language functions, themes, task-based language learning and the recommended methodologies. An updated knowledge of language acquisition theory and theories relevant to second language learning will also be essential.

A Review of Research and Development into Teaching and Learning Irish in Primary School by Harris and Murtagh for Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Béreann in 1999 shows the extent of the challenge facing teachers in implementing curricular change. The investigation of Irish attitude/motivation indicates that pupils are reasonably well disposed towards the Irish language itself and towards the idea of integrating with the Irish-language-speaking ‘group’. But motivation or actual commitment to learning is less positive. Pupils’ reactions to the Irish lesson, expressed in their own words, indicate that they often experience the materials and lesson content as boring, old-fashioned and repetitious. Results show that pupils’ disposition to the general idea of learning a second/foreign language is more positive than their attitude to learning Irish. A substantial minority of pupils do not believe that they have the support and encouragement of their parents in the task of learning Irish. What they like in the way of lesson content and materials are conversations, games, drama, songs, and poems and a desire to make the lesson more modern, more fun, more realistic and non-sexist.

The direct observation of the Irish lessons revealed that emphasis on communication is associated with positive outcomes such as higher achievement in Irish, higher levels of attention and interest and lower levels of anxiety. Generally negative outcomes are associated with traditional language-practice activities. Classes which devote more time to activities involving the pupil ‘reading aloud’ are significantly more likely to have lower achievement in spoken Irish, less positive class attitudes to Irish, higher levels of anxiety and reduced levels of attention to and
interest in the Irish lesson.

Where parental encouragement is present, it has a positive effect on pupil achievement in Irish and an even stronger effect on attitude/motivation. When parents themselves were surveyed they were generally positive about Irish and supportive of the notion of their children being taught Irish in school. In practice, however, many have a lukewarm, hands-off attitude to the enterprise of their children actually learning Irish and a majority of parents do not directly promote positive attitudes to learning Irish.

The following quotes from children illustrate a range of views in relation to learning Irish in school:

"I don't like the Teilgeoir because the pictures are no good and the storyline is always the same old "Mammy! I'm off faoin tuath because tá an ghriann ag taitneamh."

"I don't like learning briathra – it's boring and there are a lot more interesting things in Irish than running down dhún mé, dhún tú."

"I don't like the way boys are always the popular people. I would like fashionable things and real life, the brothers and sisters are friendly and at home we fight, we are not always very friendly."

"What I don't like about the Irish lesson is if you get homework and you don't understand and no-one in your house has a clue about Irish, you're stuck."

"I don't like the Irish Today, Tomorrow, Yesterday because I get confused in them."

"I like our song and I like our game. The teacher picks an Irish thing and we have to ask her questions about it in Irish."

"I like oral Irish because you don't have to do any writing when you are talking Irish."

"I like drama the way you can act out stories because it is fun and we learn while doing it."

"I like plays in Irish – it gives me a chance to speak oral Irish. It is interesting and is good for helping to improve your Irish."

"I like Irish when you know what you are talking about. And you don't get embarrassed in front of your friends. It's great fun when you know it."

"I like playing games in Irish."

(Harris and Murtagh, 1999)

**NON CLASSROOM TEACHING STAFF**

The modern teacher seeking to implement change in the classroom cannot do so alone and requires the support and back up of a range of other teachers. This should include teachers based in schools and also located outside the school and should
include resource teachers, learning support teachers, teachers for Travellers, visiting teachers, special class teachers. At present, access to such supports can best be described as haphazard. Larger schools and urban schools tend to enjoy greater access but even this is limited. There is an onus on individual schools, or even individual teachers, to seek and fight for access to services. It should be a matter of right and not a privilege that all schools and teachers have full and unequivocal access to all services, if and when required.

It is a national scandal that access to supplementary or specialist teaching for many children with special needs is allocated more as a result of geographical location than based on individual needs. There needs to be a large increase in the numbers of support teachers, each catering for a different type of need, so that all schools and children can have adequate access. Schools also need to devise new ways to facilitate the use of support teaching skills.

ANCILLARY STAFF

There has been increased access to classroom assistants / special needs assistants in recent years, although it is still a limited service. Teachers have to change work practices in many instances to accommodate full-time or part-time assistants. Coordination and administration responsibilities are increased but the overall benefit to individual children is appreciable. Teachers face more disruptive change when existing services are curtailed or withdrawn. There is a need to develop the use of classroom assistants where they are needed and to maintain their involvement where their inputs have been shown to have a beneficial effect.

Many schools do not have access to secretarial and caretaker services or their access is limited. It is unacceptable in this day and age that these essential services are not universally available. The amount of paperwork required in schools demands a substantial secretarial service, while the security and maintenance of multi-million euro establishments necessitates an adequate caretaker service. The lack of such services places additional burdens on teachers and especially principal teachers.

External ancillary services that should be available to all schools include psychological services, social services, medical services, library services and legal services. Parents are becoming more aware of their individual and constitutional rights. This is the greatest single reason that social, medical and psychological services are gradually being improved. However, access for individual children is still inadequate. The development of a full and accessible psychological service remains the most pressing resource for the support of children with special needs.
ASSESSMENT

The Primary School Curriculum contains detailed assessment statements which advocate a balanced approach to assessment and suggest a number of assessment methods. Many of these are commonplace in Irish primary schools while others are relatively new. The INTO has always supported the principle that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning and that assessment instruments should be developed for use in schools that will provide meaningful information without compromising teaching time. One of the suggested approaches to assessment in the Revised Curriculum is 'Profiling'. English Profiles were compiled by the Education Research Centre and issued to schools by the Department of Education and Science in 2000. The introduction of these profiles, without consultation, caused grave concern among teachers. Among the issues raised by teachers were:

- how the Profiles relate to the English Curriculum statement;
- concern that the Profiles would narrow the aims and objectives of the curriculum in terms of the breadth and balance that are essential features of the curriculum;
- the time factor involved in operating the Drumcondra English Profiles;
- inservice training for using profiles;
- current assessment practices in schools given that, in recent years, there has been a considerable increase in the use of standardised testing in schools;
- interference with teaching time;
- the reliability of the Profiles as a basis upon which to report progress to parents; and
- how profiling might form the basis of reporting to others such as pupils, other teachers, other professionals and other schools.

The INTO is of the opinion that profiles can be a valuable form of assessment but does not support the way the English Profiles were introduced to schools without consultation and agreement.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Because of changed government policy relating to the provision for children with special needs, teachers today find themselves teaching children with very particular special needs. Heretofore, government policy was to provide special class and special school facilities for children with special needs. One goal of integrated education is to lead all children to be valued equally not just at home or in school but also in the community at large. Integration of children with disabilities or special educational
needs into primary schools, rather than into special schools or special classes is seen as a way of breaking down barriers and promoting social inclusion. This policy of inclusion is driven by human rights movements, governmental policies, parental concerns as well as by educational research.

However, the practice poses several major challenges to teachers and schools. The attitudes of the staff in a school are vitally important for the successful implementation of integration in a school. Teachers need to formulate their philosophy of integration and equal opportunities and examine the constraints that exist before exploring the best way forward. Once a school has defined its philosophy and policy on integration, there are a number of practical considerations that must be examined and incorporated into the school's strategy. These include the level of support service available for the students, the supports that teachers need and the training that teachers need. Should resources be provided in the form of, for example, a special needs assistant, there are other issues to be resolved such as how teachers and classroom assistants collaborate in the classroom and what level of assistance should be given to a child to avoid dependence?

Basic issues remain unresolved at national and, therefore, local level. In the absence of curriculum guidelines for special education, teachers have had to devise suitable programmes drawing on available resources. Practicalities relating to the integration of a special needs child in the classroom include participation in group work and co-operative learning opportunities to the benefit of all children. Teachers must also make provision for the learning needs of other pupils in addition to monitoring the development of pupils with special needs. Curriculum guidelines for pupils with general learning disabilities are in the process of being prepared by the NCCA at present.

Unfortunately, many barriers to success arise as a result of current policy. Department of Education and Science policy gives little opportunity for advance planning and as a result integration is usually introduced before support services are put in place. This places extra and unnecessary strain on teachers and principals. Even where a special needs assistant is available, the teacher has responsibility for teaching and learning, without any reduction in class size or professional development provision. The level of teacher education in the area of special needs education is a further cause for concern given this changing educational context.

The sanctioning of resources by the Department of Education and Science is extremely slow and bureaucratic and, as a result, much valuable time is lost which places special needs pupils at an even greater disadvantage. Furthermore, the continuing under resourcing of the National Educational Psychological Service is adding to the delay because referrals, assessments, and subsequent placements are inordinately delayed.

Many teachers may well feel that, without training, they do not possess the skills
and competencies that are required to teach children with special needs. Teachers need to update skills and to explore a variety of approaches to working with children with special needs. Schools need opportunities for the sharing of knowledge and experience in order to raise the general expertise in a school. There is little doubt that there are positive potential outcomes to a policy of integration including better social development and improved self-esteem.

NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The importance of updating initial training is a continuous challenge for teachers. With the advent of so many 'new' theories teachers find it difficult to find the requisite time to develop an understanding of these theories. There are increased opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development activities but, given the rate and the scope of change, there is simply not enough time to engage fully with these. Yet these theories impact on classroom practice. Among some of the 'new' perspectives that teachers must consider are:

21st Century Learning Initiative

The brainchild of John Abbott, this initiative begun in the USA in 1996 and recommends a radically different approach to teaching and learning based on five key issues and bodies of knowledge.

1) The biological nature of learning.
2) Meta-cognition.
3) The construction and organisation of our system of learning.
4) The impact of new technology.
5) The nature of future communities.

Abbot proposes that change has to be dramatic rather than incremental. He argues that funding for education should be greater at pre-school rather than at third level and that there must be a significant reduction in class sizes and pupil teacher ratios. To connect community and school more closely 10% of educational expenditure should be allocated to educational initiatives linking both. Due to the importance of ICT in education, it is recommended that major re-investment be made in this area. He argues that ICT provides the potential to dramatically change formal instruction in uniform stages to one that may better suit the self/ starting, quick thinking, problem solving pupils needed for the 21st century. Professional development for teachers must be budgeted for and he advocates a figure of 10% of total spending. He argues that
assessment must change and that it should measure not only the content of what is taught and learned but the process skills as well.

Constructivism

Cognitive scientists use the term constructivism to explain how an individual moves from the position of being an inquiring mind to acquiring new knowledge. When children ask questions they learn. When they work together they learn. When they build on previous experience and knowledge they learn. Learning is essentially active rather than passive. Students try out practices to see what went well. New knowledge is assimilated into a living web of understanding. The simple yet profound statement that one cannot bring children up to be intelligent in a world that does not seem intelligible to them, has profound implications for teachers. The onus is on teachers to create the necessary environment to allow constructivism flourish – not an easy task in a class of 35 pupils.

Multiple Intelligences

Since first mooted in Frames of Mind (1983), Howard Gardiner’s theory has found widespread respect amongst the teaching profession. In his most recent work, The Disciplined Mind (1999), he builds on the theory by describing seven different ways in which one can approach subject matter, ranging from telling stories (linguistic), developing hands on activities (bodily-kinaesthetic), to putting on plays or dialogues (inter-personal intelligence). He advocates the use of multiple intelligences as “providing powerful points of entry”. He believes the disciplines of truth, beauty and goodness are best developed in schools – a challenge for the consumerist teaching environment of today.

Teaching for Understanding

Teaching for understanding was developed at Project Zero in Harvard. Perkins and Blythe based their framework on the belief that providing ‘generative topics’ for learning, in which pupils understand their goals and take an active part in these collaborative ‘performances’ can result in quality learning, in which on-going assessment is taking place. It is envisaged that subsequently this ‘thoughtful engagement’ will enable pupils to apply the skills and knowledge to other learning situations. An example of this might be when children are encouraged to use higher order thinking skills such as analysing, inferring, deducing, or critiquing in more than one area of curricula.

The above are just some of the ‘newer’ theories of education that teachers today are
required to consider in classroom teaching. However, at present there are few opportunities for reflection, which would lead to increased understanding. Professional development opportunities are underdeveloped and dominated at present by the training requirements of the revised curriculum and other system based initiatives.

**CLASSROOM ORGANISATION**

The way schools and classrooms are organised is changing. Classrooms were traditionally confined, isolated spaces where the teacher managed between 25-35 students for up to 6 hours per day. This concept is now giving way to a more open environment where the teacher is still expected to teach a class but allow for other adult inputs with students throughout the day, capture student interest in a subject and vary levels of instruction according to individual difference.

What does this student-centred classroom mean for the teacher? It requires a complete overhaul of classroom organisation and, to an extent, places the practical burden of change on the shoulders of the teacher. Little wonder many fear and are reluctant to upset their established routine for the unknown. Teaching, by the very nature of the people who enter it, i.e. those already favourably disposed towards schooling, tends to breed a preference for stability and caution towards change. Teaching is one of the few occupations where one learns first hand about the job, while sitting a few yards away year after year. It is arguable, therefore, that very many teachers teach as they were taught. This makes the case for increased teacher professional development opportunities.

It is clear that the teacher of the future will need to be much more than a mere imparter of knowledge. The skills required by teachers encompass educational, social, and psychological areas. Teachers need to be skilled and knowledgeable in a wide array of subjects, and be able to deal with the increasing demands of children and society. Teachers must have the ability to meet change head-on and to deal with it adequately. As teaching evolves, it will be teachers who develop the best coping skills that will be able to facilitate changes most successfully.

The ability to cope with change is one of the prerequisites for the primary school teacher of today. Many teachers are forced to develop their own strategies because so little support is available to them. Where support services do exist they are being developed at a frustratingly slow pace.

One of the most pressing requirements is the need to develop comprehensive and high quality inservice training. This training must be broad enough to cover all aspects of change and deep enough to cover them accurately. Inservice training must be
developed not only in curriculum areas but in all aspects of teaching, interpersonal skills, communication, sociology and psychology, counselling, technology, and life skills. The development of such a resource for teachers is problematic because of the scale, time, and resources required to accomplish it. However, it cannot be allowed to remain an aspiration. Investment in teacher inservice training is a necessity and must be provided with increased budgetary provision.
Managing Change – Can Teachers Cope?

Previous chapters have outlined in detail the changing nature of Irish primary education and the changed roles and increasing responsibilities of those who work in it. There has been significant progress in recent years along a range of issues as diverse as tackling disadvantage, the appointment of learning support teachers, special education and curriculum development. That much more remains to be done is obvious. However, there is little doubt that expectations of schools and teachers have increased dramatically and seem set to grow. Teachers today are subjected to inordinate pressures to perform ever-increasing workloads giving rise to feelings of being overwhelmed by demands for change.

It is often in the gap between demand and capacity that we begin to get a clear idea of the mental burden of modern life. With change being continually demanded of the teaching profession, those advocating change need to take stock and assess the capabilities of those implementing change. A critical issue is the control of change because according to Fullan (1992), “the fact that those who advocate and develop changes get more rewards than costs and those that are expected to implement them experience more costs than rewards”. This goes a long way in explaining why the more things change, the more they remain the same. If change is seen to work and be of benefit to the pupil or the system the individual teacher gets little of the credit. If it doesn’t work the teacher gets most of the blame.

In the light of new programmes contained in the Revised Curriculum, additional programmes, changed expectations and new initiatives, many teachers have begun to question the capability of the teacher and school system to respond given the time constraints involved. “How much can you pack into a school day?” is a common question. Moreover, there is a danger that because of the huge change being implemented that the rationale for change is not properly understood and it is being seen as change for change sake. This is simply not acceptable to the Irish National Teachers’ Organization. The purpose of change is to help schools accomplish their goals more effectively by replacing some structures / programmes / practices with better ones.

It can be argued that the metaphor of growth in western thought has seduced us in to falsely assuming that change was development. Perhaps we should ask the question why schooling appears pretty much the same as it has always been, given so much
reform has taken place in the last century. It is essential to examine and make clear the purposes of proposed educational change because, as Fullan has pointed out, many educational innovations were not ends in themselves. In particular, he highlighted the part economics and politics has played in driving such changes.

In an effort to bring more understanding into considerations of educational change Fullan has enumerated eight basic lessons on educational change.

- You can't mandate what matters - the more complex the change the less it can be forced; what we should do is use change to re-examine/re-evaluate what we do.
- Change is a journey not a blueprint - here change is a "planned journey into uncharted waters in a leaky boat with a mutinous crew". Many teachers will empathise with this concept when they think of their classrooms and schools. We should remember change goes on as long as we do!
- Problems are our friends - only by working through problems do we come up with creative solutions.
- Visions and strategic planning come later - vision emerges from reflecting on one's practice and shared vision takes time. Teachers would only be committed to a vision if they were involved in its creation. Imposed change produces compliant but not committed individuals.
- Individualism and collectivism must have equal power - though teamwork is the buzzword of the moment, solitude also has its place as a strategy for coping with change. We might also respect warnings that groups can be more vulnerable to faddism than individuals.
- Neither centralisation nor decentralisation work - both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary. Pascale has described this as "change flourishing in a sandwich".
- Connection with the wider environment is critical for success - the best organisations learn externally as well as internally; we must be plugged into our environments. This has huge implications for the adoption of IT in teaching.
- Every person is a change agent - change is too important to leave to the experts. It is individuals who bring about change.

Changing formal structures is not the same as altering habits, norms of school culture, skills and teacher beliefs. As Fullan states, "Focusing a restructuring prior to working on re-culturing puts the cart before the horse." Teachers as well as students have to learn to be effective collaborators and continuous learners. However, as change occurs tensions will always exist between the need for state accountability and the autonomy of the teacher, yet both are required for successful change.

Cuban has made some interesting observations on stability and change in teaching. He argues that schools reflect society and the prevailing social norms, values and behaviours that will prepare students for participation in the larger culture of society are inculcated initially in school. So obedience, uniformity and productivity have been
viewed as necessary and worthwhile. In Ireland, as elsewhere, the external demand of universities and the marketplace have been determining pedagogical practices and keeping them stable. Yet there are contrasting demands for the development of independent behaviour, more student choice, increased opportunities for group learning and collaboration, increased expressive behaviour and account to be taken of the knowledge society. These competing demands give a further indication of the huge challenges that teachers face.

The central question for the INTO, therefore, is how to manage change in a way that brings real improvements to pupils, teachers and the state from investment in education and the efforts of those who work in it. The INTO has been a driving force for change since its inception. Many of the changes that have come about in recent years have been demanded and agitated for by previous generations of teachers. The challenge facing this generation of teachers is to continue to seek real improvements but also to put in place structures and systems that will allow change to be introduced, managed and controlled in such a way that it actually achieves its purpose.

The INTO must, therefore, look to itself, its membership, structures and practices and prepare and implement a coherent plan of action that will enable its members to face the challenges, exploit the opportunities and reap the benefits of change. In addition to looking inwards, the INTO must also look outwards, forge alliances and control and direct the nature and pace of change.

INTERNAL CHALLENGES FOR THE INTO

The Irish National Teachers' Organization is the voice of 31,500 practising teachers and has represented teachers' interests for 130 years. Like any organization it has its rules and regulations, structures and procedures which are kept under review and altered as necessary. This is the remit of Annual Congress which is the governing body of the Irish National Teachers' Organization. The organization has, since its inception, changed its structures and practices to meet members' needs.

Equality Issues

Since its establishment the Equality Committee has, in general, focussed on the issue of gender equality although, at times, it has looked at areas which have not been gender specific such as participation, bullying, leadership and self-esteem. A great deal has been achieved since the establishment of the Equality Committee in the area of gender issues and in other areas examined. There remains little doubt that, despite work undertaken to date, much more needs to be done. Women constitute a
significant majority of the teaching profession yet they continue to be under-represented at leadership level. At school based level there remains an imbalance in the number of women being appointed as principal teachers. Examination of the gender breakdown of holders of posts of responsibility indicates a more favourable position for women. However, until recently such positions were not filled by competition but by seniority. The allocation and nature of these posts and the implications for promotion must be monitored including duties relating to posts. An imbalance still appears to exist in the allocation of classes in the majority of schools in that women appear to be taking junior classes and men taking senior classes. The feminisation of teaching and its effects needs to be looked at in general. The Organization needs to seriously consider the questions such as, do women react differently to males in relation to pay issues? Will the increasing feminisation of the profession have an impact on future pay deals?

Yet there is a wider equality agenda that needs to be examined including the rights of special needs pupils, their families, peers and their teachers. Equality of access to education for all children must remain an issue for the INTO.

Participation

There is under-participation at all levels of the Organization, especially amongst younger people and women and especially at District and National Committee level. There is an urgent need to promote awareness and encourage more women and younger people to participate. Increased participation has the potential to lead to changes in positions of power.

Structures

Structures and practices such as meetings at branch and district level must be examined in terms of frequency and format in an effort to encourage meaningful participation. Duplication at meetings must be examined in terms of the same reports being given at Branch Committee meetings, District Committee meetings and at Branch quarterly meetings. New ways must be used to increase the amount of information being disseminated to teachers by means other than attendance at meetings. Equally, it must be borne in mind that information overload can be as damaging as lack of information. The problem in today's world is not, in fact, access to information but the difficulty associated with selecting what is essential knowledge from less important information.

A culture has developed among some INTO members where their first reaction to a query is to contact Head Office rather than look for the information from other sources. Increasing demands being made on CEC representatives reflect in a
Policies

There appear to be gaps in knowledge among many members about teachers’ entitlements, conditions of service and rights. This information needs to be made more accessible to members. Current practice needs to be reviewed and strategies changed or new strategies established.

Policy Formation

The charge might be levelled at policy makers that they often consider that the job was completed once policy had been developed. In this context it can be argued that the bulk of the work needs to be concentrated, not on policy formation, but on implementation. Evaluation and review procedures need to be addressed to assess the success of policy.

EXTERNAL ISSUES FOR THE INTO

Salary

In terms of pay, teachers and in particular young teachers point to disparities that exist between their salaries and those earned by their graduate peers working in the public and private sectors. Hence, the current pay strategy of the INTO is of vital importance to members. Under the Benchmarking process the INTO demanded:

- a general increase of 20% to reposition the teachers’ scale from €25,295 to €50,790 by 2002 with a view to making some progress in reducing the gap identified between teachers’ salaries and those in the private sector, and to reflect increased demands and workload and reduce pay differentials with overall earnings in comparable professions in the public sector.
- a repositioning of incremental points along 10 annual points and 2 long service points. This is similar to the administrative officer scale structure and other public sector scale structures and will have some impact in addressing the question of overall career-long earnings. It will also assist new teachers in progressing at a rate comparable to other professions.
- adjustments to the 10 year maximum of scale allowance (long service allowance) to 10% of the maximum point of the scale.
- a restructured allowance system to include the payment of the higher diploma allowance to all BEds and NTs, significant increases in qualification allowances, the introduction of ‘enhanced qualification allowances’, the establishment of a...
Change in Primary Education

‘Challenging Post’ allowance, the application of ‘special location’ allowance and an increased part time rate.

Teachers’ claims for fair pay are in part based on the fact that they have played their part in national recovery in terms of pay restraint, extra workloads and deferring delivery on improvements in conditions of service. They have accepted new roles, tasks and responsibilities. All of these have meant substantial extra work for teachers.

Conditions of Employment

While pay is a high priority for teachers, improving teachers’ conditions of employment must also be pursued. Not only do primary teachers demand adequate resources to enable them to improve the quality of their professional lives, the INTO must also demand similar professional working conditions to those enjoyed by teachers in other sectors of the education system. Issues such as the number of working hours and the length of the school year, inspection procedures, school development planning and school accommodation only serve to highlight the disparity that currently exists between the primary and post primary system. Inequitable conditions of employment only serve to undervalue the work of primary teachers.

Primary teachers have long accepted conditions that other sectors would not tolerate. They have worked with inadequate resources, without lunchbreaks and in substandard buildings. Improvements in this area were continually promised when economic circumstances permitted. It is now time to appoint to every school secretarial and caretaking staff, provide the necessary resources and staffing for children with special needs and make available the resources necessary to deliver a curriculum for the 21st century.

Teacher Shortages

There are simply not enough teachers to fill the number of teaching jobs available. Teachers now have more choice about where they teach and this is affecting schools in all parts of the country but particularly in Dublin and in disadvantaged areas. Disadvantaged schools are becoming more disadvantaged because teachers don’t want to remain there.

Teachers have delivered a professional service, yet this professionalism is eroded by government policy failure that allows hundreds of unqualified personnel to work in schools on a daily basis. It says a great deal about the status of children and at school based level means that teachers work harder to support untrained personnel. The reality is that every day, in many schools, teachers are shouldering the burden and are compensating for government failure in the area of teacher supply.
Pupil/Teacher Ratio

Despite improvements in our pupil/teacher ratio Ireland continues to have the largest class sizes and one of the highest pupil/teacher ratios in the European Union. To achieve the European average we would require a reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio to 18:1. Up to now the INTO has been prepared to facilitate a gradual reduction in pupil/teacher ratio through utilisation of the demographic dividend.

There are many other areas in the primary sector that require additional teachers. One such area is the need for a panel of supply teachers in order that every teacher absence is covered by a trained teacher. The INTO demands the immediate expansion, on a nationwide and on a permanent basis, of a panel of supply teachers.

Investment in Primary Education

Previous reference has been made to the main aspect of the Education Act and other pieces of legislation affecting schools and teachers. This legislation is welcome in that it brings a level of order and structure to the education system. However, the INTO argues that policy position papers or education legislation will not enhance primary education in this country unless such initiatives are accompanied by commitments to allocate resources to the primary education sector. Tampering at the edges, with small-scale projects, while worthy in themselves, will not be sufficient to bring the Irish primary sector in line with its European counterparts.

The continuing underfunding of primary education presents a challenging reminder to this generation of teachers, that it is essential to wholeheartedly engage in the process of continually demanding equity and equality of treatment at primary level. It is unfair and unjust that a child in the primary school warrants less funding than his or her peers at post primary level. How can a nation tolerate treating children so differently at certain stages in their educational development?

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS

Increasing Accountability

There is a new emphasis on accountability and teachers feel that they are now expected to be accountable to a range of different people and bodies. Parents have become more aware of their role in education in the recent years and are more vocal of their children’s needs. There is more involvement by parents in the education of their children and a partnership has developed between teachers and parents in the interests of the children. Today’s parents have increasing expectations of their children.
and their children's teachers. Often teachers find that they are not just expected to fulfil their traditional role but to give a comprehensive account of it to an increasing number of parents. At other times teachers find themselves having to defend an under resourced system or shoulder the blame for the anti social behaviour of some pupils when it affects the education of others.

**Behavioural Problems**

Teachers are becoming increasingly involved in dealing with behavioural problems in class with little or no back up from social and/or psychological services. In addition, they are increasingly being faced with the task of catering for the needs of individual children. Again, this impinges on teaching time. The absence of home/school/liaison time in most schools puts the responsibility for these matters on the class teacher and raises further issues for inservice training. More teaching time is being lost by teachers being involved in dealing with disputes between children and in some cases, parents. Teachers sometimes report that they feel their role is viewed as that of childminders rather than educators. Children need to be supervised in the school premises in many schools outside of class time because of transport arrangements. Teachers have always done yard duty and coped with emergencies as they arose.

There is a general expectation by parents, management, government and society in general, that teachers should be policing the morals of what is a changing society. They are expected to do this with little or no support. Teachers are having difficulty improving school discipline due to the general decline in self-discipline of children in today's society. In many cases, teachers are expected to develop discipline in children who are being failed by parents/society.

The changing social fabric of society, the breakdown in traditional standards in law and order as we know it, is producing a child who challenges teaching professionals each and every day. The 'new learner' as Cuban (1998) termed him, who is physically and mentally developing at a younger age and has problems ranging from distractibility to hyperactivity and beyond to lack of control is proving a 'challenge' to parents, society and sometimes the social justice system. Yet this child still has to be taught in a class of thirty or so peers with few supports available to the teacher and school.

**Incareer Development**

The challenge facing teachers over the immediate future hinges upon changing the culture of professional development from one which limits the range and quality of professional development opportunities to one which regards them as entitlements. The INTO believes that life long professional development opportunities should be an
expectation for all teachers in Ireland. This concurs with the OECD examiners' view contained in their Report of National Policies for Education: Ireland that, "a national policy framework should be established whereby various forms of inservice education for every teacher would become both a right and a responsibility, while acknowledging that the actual provision will vary enormously in both content and form." The INTO also concurs with the OECD examiners' view "that the best returns from further investment in teacher education will come from a careful planning and construction of a nationwide induction and inservice system using the concept of the teaching career as the foundation".

**Induction**

The INTO believes that the major investment made by the Department of Education and Science in preservice education should be fully maximised and further enhanced through the provision of a comprehensive programme of induction, available as an entitlement for all new teachers upon entering the system. In an effort to achieve such a goal the INTO was prepared to enter into discussions with the Department of Education and Science and with other relevant authorities with a view to establishing a nationwide induction programme for beginning teachers. Special inservice programmes must, therefore, be provided, as a matter of urgency, to enable teacher mentors to acquire the necessary skills and understandings to induct beginning teachers into the education system.

**Continuing Professional Development**

The INTO recognises the complexity involved in providing professional development opportunities for over 20,000 primary teachers. There is a diversity of geographic conditions, varying needs of teachers and schools and different models of inservice education which must be designed to impact on classroom practice. Inservice development must take into account the needs of the system, the needs of the profession, the needs of school communities, and the personal and professional needs of teachers, regardless of whether they occupy promoted or unpromoted, specialist or general positions. However, the central focus of provision should be on practical, relevant and effective classroom related inservice opportunities. The INTO believes, however, that with proper planning the individual needs of the school and community and the collective professional needs of teachers can be reconciled with the needs of the system as a whole.
The Needs of the System

Change is inevitable. The challenge facing the INTO is to recognise its acceleration and to devise strategies which will manage and control change. Pressures are continuously mounting upon the education system, from a variety of sources, manifesting themselves in demands for a broadening of the curriculum. The system cannot ignore these demands which have far-reaching consequences for the way in-service education should be integrated into the working lives of teachers in a planned and cohesive manner. Involvement in the design, discussion and implementation of new programmes such as the Revised Curriculum has been a recognition of teachers' professionalism resulting in teachers feeling a sense of ownership. It is important to remember that in the implementation process things can often get worse before they get better!

However, attributing to teachers the power to change thinking and methodologies is not concomitant with the actual power they hold, or rather do not hold, in decision-making, vis-à-vis their classroom. Do teachers have a right to 'say no' to any of the vast array of new initiatives especially when some of these initiatives are set up to combat society's ills and where the school is targeted as the mediator? If not, then some serious negotiation has to begin, otherwise overload will ensure a negative approach to change with consequences for the primary education system.

The Needs of the Profession as a Whole

The status of the teaching profession as a whole must continue to be based upon its acquired expertise. It is the responsibility of teachers to commit themselves to ongoing professional development – a responsibility, however, which must also be recognised and supported by the Department of Education and Science. It is imperative that the profession responds to the changing demands of society in a controlled and manageable way. However, the ability of the profession to meet challenges posed by change will be contingent upon the extent to which the State is prepared to make available the resources, conditions of service and realistic incentives in order to encourage teachers to enhance their existing skills. Fighting over an hour here or an hour there will not move the system forward sufficiently to meet the challenges of a modern society. Rigid and value laden stances must be replaced by policies which will demand foresight, flexibility, partnership and courageous thinking from all sides. The vast number of uncertified courses currently in operation, will not be sufficient to develop the profession to meet present and future challenges. More long-term and sustained courses must, therefore, be provided on a nationwide basis to equip teachers to meet the challenges of a modern society.
Managing Change – Can Teachers Cope?

The Needs of School Communities

The growing demands of a changing society are manifesting themselves at school based level in a variety of ways. If schools are to be empowered to assume greater control over, and responsibility for, their own enterprises, then teachers must be given the necessary time and resources to engage in effective school based collaborative planning and evaluation and to promote proper staff development. Inservice education should begin in the schools. It is here that learning and teaching takes place and curricula and teaching techniques are developed. Schools, therefore, should be encouraged to establish their school based needs but they must be given an expectation that the system will respond to their needs in a planned and cohesive manner. Teacher development should be balanced between out-of-school learning, classroom practice and collegiate discussion on site. New initiatives must be sufficiently grounded in the curriculum and teachers given adequate opportunities to learn.

The Personal and Professional Needs of Individual Teachers

The individual teacher is the key to change. According to Hargreaves (1994) if teachers don't like change, don't understand it, don't think it is practical or don't agree with it, then change will be implemented incompetently, insincerely or not at all. The demand for change, however, affects the school and teachers differently. The individual needs of teachers vary from professional demands such as classroom management, assessment procedures, children with learning difficulties, integration, school planning, various curricular areas to personal needs such as the demand for postgraduate studies, management courses, skills development and updating the knowledge base.

Teachers have spent their own time and money providing for their own inservice training for many years. Inservice for the revised curriculum and for school planning is limited and cannot go into the detail that teachers really require. Achieving success will depend upon the establishment of a national framework which can reconcile the personal and professional needs of individual teachers and schools with the needs of the system. There is always the temptation to resource system priorities areas at the expense of teachers' true needs. However, the needs of teachers and of the system are not mutually exclusive. With proper planning and goodwill both these needs can be reconciled.

The lessons that many countries are learning is that teacher development and school development must go hand in hand to ensure the successful implementation of change. Education Centres also have a role in providing fora for teachers to meet, in developing expertise and in capacity building and sharing it throughout the system. Schools also need to open their doors to change and teachers may need time and
encouragement to broaden their perspectives. They need to interact frequently - otherwise new materials may be used without new ideas being assimilated. McLaughlin and Marsh claim that the culture of an educational system or school cannot be changed if it feeds off itself whereas it can benefit from exposure to outside forces.

Keeping of personal accounts/journals, involvement in action research, maintaining a 'reflective practitioner' stance, and getting involved in peer groups, mentoring and co-operative or collaborative work cultures are some of the strategies for change open to teachers. Analysing, evaluating and experimenting in co-operation with colleagues is how teachers best manage change. Teachers need motivational opportunities throughout their careers. At the same time, teachers also demand that those who engage in research and development, which benefits the system, are rewarded.

Curriculum Change

The teaching profession can take a positive or negative approach to the challenges. If we are to take control of our teaching lives as professionals then we need to feel less victimised. Undoubtedly, change can be top-down at times but it can also be pushed from below. Teachers repeatedly demanded a revision of the curriculum and more help in whole school planning. To implement these effectively, teachers will have to be given a number of supports:

- The pace of and expectation to change have to be commensurate with the capacity of schools to absorb the changes even if this involves a slower adoption of revised curricula.
- A time allowance has to be built in on an on-going basis into the working life of the professional teacher. Whole school planning will not occur without regular meetings to sustain teamwork amongst staffs. Teachers need to talk about teaching not just pass on tips!
- A culture of reflective practice will need to be encouraged in an era of life long learning. We need to become aware of what we do not know as well as what we know, encounter problems openly and explore solutions together. We need to learn to observe other teachers and be willing to be observed in our classrooms by our peers. Teachers do not lack vision as is often claimed but lack the fora in which to bring the vision to fruition!
- Teachers will need to be in close touch with the community and environment of the school. Unfortunately, 'buffer zones' can often exist between schools and parents. Moreover, it is often only the areas of difference between teachers and parents that are highlighted and polarisation can develop. Continuous communication with more parental involvement like that achieved by home
school liaison initiatives demonstrate how genuine mutual understanding can be fostered and the areas of common ground expanded.

The Education Committee recommends a positive open approach to change which, at times, will mean accepting the bona fides of those advocating change and examining proposed change for potential outcomes for pupils.

The last decade has seen unprecedented change in Irish primary education. A new curriculum has been devised and is being implemented in schools alongside other curricular initiatives. Teachers are attempting to meet the needs of a radically changing pupil population often without the most basic resources. However, in many other ways Irish primary education is generally outperforming other better resourced and better structured systems of education. Problems have arisen because of the scale and pace of change that has been telescoped into such a relatively short time scale. A further difficulty is the lack of an overall strategic plan for primary education and a sense that some proposals for change are ad hoc and not fully thought out.

However, change is inevitable. It can be good or bad and it can be sudden or gradual. This document has highlighted numerous changes that are long overdue in primary education. It has also pointed out changes that pose threats to teachers’ conditions of service. What must be remembered is that change is made more manageable when teachers and others start small and think big. Prioritisation is a vital first step. Momentum develops from active participation, often initially by a few with a risk-taking mentality. Both pressure and support are necessary ingredients of success. Untapped competence can surface and flourish in this environment. However, those actively promoting change need to put their advocacy in perspective or risk not bringing others with them.

The ability to cope with change and to manage it successfully is the greatest challenge facing teachers today. However, the right combination of education and support will provide all the prerequisites for the successful management of change. The gradual introduction of an improved educational service, fully supported and resourced, with committed and rewarded teachers, will ensure good changes and lay the foundation for a successful primary school sector for the 21st century.

In the final analysis, teachers’ management of change will depend on teachers’ abilities to connect the wider world and the knowledge society with life in the classroom. A foot in both camps will pave the way for a successful journey. However noble, sophisticated, or enlightened proposals for change and improvement might be, they come to nothing if teachers don’t adopt them in their own classrooms and if they don’t translate them into effective classroom practice.
PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

Galway, November 2001
Change in Primary Education
In my opening remarks I wish to lay to rest a commonly held myth that teaching is, by its very nature, a conservative profession. On the contrary, research clearly indicates that teachers are not resistant to change in all its forms. They, perhaps more than any other profession, appreciate the need for change. However, teachers will rightly argue that centrally driven education reforms have subjected schools to a never ending barrage of externally imposed, randomly timed, and sometimes badly managed initiatives with little or no consideration given to the capacity of the school to create the necessary conditions within which change and innovation can flourish. With the education system in near perpetual reform it is timely that we, as the main implementers of change, should reflect on what is happening in and to our pupils and schools.

It should be borne in mind at the outset that, irrespective of the plethora of policy and legislative initiatives that currently confront the education system, it is only teachers who are in a position to create good teaching and appropriate learning environments. However, too often teachers are the last group to be considered in the rush towards education reform. Schools are systematically being driven towards a greater emphasis on ‘performance management’ with consequential implications for the teaching learning process. Schools are expected to plan for continuous change, to profile learning outcomes, to engage in continuous self-evaluation, to meet the requirements of whole school evaluators, to meet the needs of children with a whole range of disabilities, to implement major curricular reforms, to achieve a close balance between homes, schools and their wider communities and to respond to escalating reform measures arising from legislative changes. Yet, teachers are not being given the time, the opportunities nor adequate resources to meet the ever increasing demands for change – bearing in mind that those reforms are occurring at a time when communities are changing, children are less compliant, and there is an increasing emphasis on social work in the job. As life in general becomes more synonymous with work, when children are no longer free to explore their neighbourhoods and learn from quality home experiences, when learning outcomes are given precedence over learning experiences, there is greater emphasis on the school to compensate for the love, direction and motivation for learning once provided by parents, neighbours and
extended family.

Yet, as many education reforms render teachers more compliant and directed, the learning needs of an increasingly dynamic society and economy are more compatible with many of the ideas associated with the progressive educational movement, and enunciated in the Revised Curriculum – with its emphasis on the importance of "effective interpersonal and intrapersonal skills" and the acquisition of "skills in communication" which are essential for personal, social and educational fulfilment.

"The ability to think critically, to apply learning and to develop flexibility and creativity" are the bedrock on which the curriculum is based. Another important aspect of the Revised Curriculum attempts to enable children "to learn how to learn and to develop an appreciation of the value and practice of lifelong learning". To "instill a love of learning" that will remain with the child is also central to the curriculum in the hope that it "will express itself in an enquiring mind and a heightened curiosity". Because of the added influence given to experience in the learning process, the classroom context which is created for children is vital for success. This will involve the "formulation of a stimulating environment, of an atmosphere and a climate characterised by friendliness, trust, acceptance, supportiveness, warmth and sensitivity". These are the issues that matter in a child's development. Let us nurture the young children and find space for them because there is the danger that schools will increasingly be driven towards seeking solutions to immediately pressing problems, with teachers spending most of their time and energy in 'maintenance' rather than on development activities. A lot of our thinking time in schools is devoted to 'housekeeping' with its emphasis on planning, attainment and meeting bureaucratic needs. People are in a hurry now to have answers, to plan to solve problems, to satisfy the system. It is time to slow down, to consolidate and to manage the pace and ability to meet the demands of a rapidly changing society.

If the school system is to become more relevant to the lives of children in a modern, yet economically divided Ireland, inhabited by the 'time-poor rich' and the 'time-rich poor', then the Irish primary education system must be catapulted into the 21st century by giving teachers and schools the necessary means to cope with the changes that are deemed essential for effective schooling.

My term of office as General Secretary will be dominated by the pursuit of ideas and resources designed to modernise the education system, improve the professional working lives of teachers and enhance the learning opportunities of children.

I subscribe to the notion that teachers should, and do, provide a high quality education service, often in adverse conditions. These conditions must, however, also keep pace with a rapidly changing society. No child, irrespective of age or location, in this day and age in a modern economy, should be subjected to substandard accommodation conditions. We must name, blame and shame the perpetrators of filthy, rat infested, unsanitary, dilapidated and badly furnished school buildings. The
scourge of poor and inadequate school accommodation must be confined to the past. If children are to benefit fully from modern educational experiences, then class numbers must fall dramatically. Teachers, who increasingly are being expected to make a significant difference in children's lives, must be given the necessary time and space to give appropriate attention to each individual child. As teachers, we have a professional duty to continually emphasise the importance of one-to-one teaching as well as group teaching, irrespective of the cost implication involved.

No infant, disadvantaged, or multi-grade class should ever be greater than 20 pupils and all other classrooms should not have more than 25 pupils. To achieve this goal will entail the appointment of over 5,000 extra teachers to the primary education system on a phased basis. As large as the number may seem, it only represents less than an average of two teachers per primary school.

The day of a fixed staffing schedule, applied rigidly, should rapidly be drawing to a close because of the complexity of modern day demands on our schools. In addition, children with disabilities must be given additional individual attention. The current provision, significant as it may be, is insufficient to meet the needs of children with disabilities in mainstream schools and represents a mean bureaucratic mechanism to keep the Minister's cheque as 'blank' as possible.

Increasing individual teaching time for children with disabilities to a minimum of one hour per day, which is surely not too much to expect, would result in the appointment of at least a further 750 teachers. The full implementation of curricular reform is only possible with the help of co-operation from experts. To that end, promotional opportunity must be provided to enable teachers to become curricular leaders, particularly in the areas in which new skills will be required, in areas such as science, ICT, modern languages, including Gaeilge, social, personal and health education and the arts.

Sweeping systematic reforms must be accompanied by a major investment in resources and modern education equipment. Modern school systems demand the availability of full time caretakers and secretaries, not ad hoc Community Employment Scheme arrangements. Skills for a technological age can only be acquired on a hands-on basis. The day of using a banana to improve telephone skills has long departed. Technological education demands technological equipment. Surely it is not too much to expect that each teacher, charged with motivating and enthusing children in the proper use of technology, should be supplied with a laptop and appropriate software material. Whereas teachers supplied their own chalk sticks in the past, not to mention practically all other educational material, it is surely not too much to ask that the State should now intervene and provide the necessary equipment and resources to ensure modern teaching and learning opportunities. You cannot teach a modern Irish Curriculum or a Revised Curriculum through the medium of Irish without the provision of appropriate learning materials. It is a scandal that such
materials are not available. As we embark upon the implementation of the
curriculum, we must move to motivate teachers to do well. As Andy Hargreaves
remarked: "Good teaching is not just a matter of being efficient, developing
competencies, mastering technique and possessing the right kind of knowledge. Good
teaching is infused with desire and involves emotional passion." It also involves
emotional work. It is in developing our teachers – we must engage their hearts as well
as their minds.

I could go on. Suffice it to say, however, that we must move the primary education
system on to a different plane if we are to transform the capacity of our schools to
deliver a modern education service to our children.

Finally, teachers must, as always, not become slavishly dependent upon the system
and its needs. Rather, as Brian McMahon aptly wrote: "Pupils must be lured to enter
the mystery, to explore the magic cave before they can unlock the world about them.
Identify what will preserve a sense of wonder for children in our charge in the context
of aims, objectives, performance indicators, profile components. Planting a seed in the
imagination of each child that will fructify later and find the gift that is latent in each
one of them is perhaps our greatest challenge as we cope with the demands of an ever­
changing society."

To conclude, my hope for the future is that we will engage in the kind of dialogue
that will lead to genuine reform and change in the education system, a reform that is
based upon what really counts in primary education:

- That puts a premium on the imaginative aspects of learning.
- That encourages children to retain the "wonderful fantasy magic and speculative
  ability" that they displayed in infant classrooms.
- That provides opportunities to children to master numeracy in meaningful and
  enjoyable ways.
- That introduces children to multiple forms of literacy, including literature, visual
  arts, music and dance.
- That enables children to realise, often perhaps for the first time, their own
  positive uniqueness and to find their particular niche in the education sun.

(Elisner: 1991, p.16)

Recognising and responding to variances and individual differences, not
homogeneity or standardisation, will dominate my agenda over the coming years.
Change in Education

Peter Mullan, Education Committee

In introducing the topic of change in education this morning I want to state emphatically that the Irish National Teachers' Organization is and always has been a pro-change organization. Throughout our history we have continually sought and achieved change in Irish education. During the last two decades we have led campaigns to seek:

- Social inclusion in education.
- Increased resourcing in primary education.
- Curriculum reform.

We have put educational change on the political agenda. Consider where we were 20 years ago:

- the needs of educationally disadvantaged pupils and their school communities were ignored;
- special education was segregated, under resourced, and only provided in certain geographical areas;
- Travellers were largely outside the school system;
- sub-standard schools were common;
- resources, where they existed, were teacher made, begged or borrowed;
- all primary schools were below a financial poverty line;
- class size was larger;
- not many schools had even heard of remedial or learning support teachers.

We could go on.

Let us recognise today that we have made substantial progress in many areas and have been a successful force for change. Let us acknowledge that much, much more needs to be done in our primary schools and re-commit ourselves to ensuring that it happens.

It is wrong that we still have the largest class size in the developed world.

It is wrong that untrained personnel are in classes in place of qualified teachers.

It is wrong that the wealth of the Celtic tiger has not benefited the most needy in our society.

But our task today is to focus on the change that we have by and large demanded, and are seeing coming into our schools. We are not here to celebrate these
achievements. We must recognise that the changes that have been introduced pose challenges for us and we must decide as professionals how to manage and control these changes so as to maximise the benefits of what we have achieved.

The background paper to this conference spells out our change agenda in terms of what we have achieved and it examines some of the impacts of such changes. I ask you to consider every aspect of change in these terms:

- Why we needed change.
- What we demanded.
- What we now have.
- What do we still require?

We rejected governance of primary schools by autocratic, non-consultative ministerial circulars at national level and by individual school managers at local level. We now have a legislative framework at national level, boards of management at local level and active parental participation in education. We now need to spell out what we require to make these changes effective in terms of resources, training, and yes – we’re not afraid to mention remuneration.

We rejected attempts to impose a narrow, aims and objectives curriculum that downgraded the professional role of the teacher and took away professional discretion. We now have a menu curriculum designed by practising teachers and the opportunity to devise school plans that respect, enhance and indeed protect our professionalism. We must focus on issues and resources that are now needed to make school planning a positive professional enterprise.

- We need time in the school year.
- We need specific training.
- We need support material.

We need to recognise that schools all over the country deliver a quality service every day of the school year and that the requirement to engage in school planning does not involve a race to accumulate written policy documents. If school planning is to be successful it will take a great deal of time and effort. I ask you today to examine carefully how that time might be best spent.

We expressed our dissatisfaction with an outdated method of school inspection as a form of quality control that was by and large non-transparent. We now have an opportunity to make a contribution to a process of quality assurance – not in terms of the detection of failure but in terms of continuously improving the service. Whole School Evaluation offers real possibilities in this area but we must state our requirements before it can work effectively. We need time and support to plan, time for meetings and we need real dialogue regarding criteria against which schools will be evaluated.

This conference is our chance to examine these and other issues and spell out in detail what we require. Let’s also recognise that, perhaps, in our haste to see change...
that was long overdue in schools take root that we failed to look at long term consequences.

- We demanded the introduction of ICT in schools.
- We welcomed IT2000.
- We trained, we changed.

But we failed to secure long term support for teachers in schools. Where are the back up and support services when our computers break down? Where is the finance to support on-going ICT development? Where is the on-going professional development of teachers? Is on-going change now being funded by teachers' efforts and the seemingly ever present 'local fundraising'? What can we now do about it?

But let us also look at ourselves as an organization and examine how we, as an organization, are capable of responding. What needs to change to enable change to be less stressful? Are our structures suitable for ensuring that the voices of teachers are heard? If not, what needs to change?

It is also time to call for a major review of primary education. The last review took place over a decade ago. The Rules for National Schools have been in service for nearly forty years – time for retirement in anyone's language. Schools, children, curriculum, teachers and society have changed radically. Today, I call for such a review to be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

One of the great dangers that I see in the present climate is that we allow change to divide us into different groups of teachers pursuing different agendas. We must recognise that change affects all teachers. We know the role of the principal teacher has changed and that more is expected. We also know that the role of the classroom teacher has changed and that more is expected. Many teachers are undertaking different types of work to the traditional class teaching role of the teacher – such as home-school-community liaison, learning support and resource teaching.

What we must do is unite and recognise that, first and foremost, we are all teachers and while changes may impact in different ways, we are all delivering on change. What we must not allow to happen is that we become down hearted and divided. We must keep pride in our profession, recognise our strengths and be prepared to say that we want change and that we will implement it. We need to control change not become the victims of change. This is our opportunity to start the process of control.
Perspectives on the Impact of Change on Primary Teachers in Classrooms Today

Dymphna Mulkerins, Education Committee

Within the context of the overall theme of change in Irish primary education, I wish to consider the impact of change on primary teachers in classrooms today. My input is divided into three sections. First of all I will give a brief outline of some insights in relation to the changing role of the classroom teacher with specific reference to the implications of the revised curriculum and the increased number of specialist positions within primary schools. I then propose to highlight the changing social context for the primary school pupil of the 21st century. I will describe the central role that parents and the community can play in minimising the negative impact of increasing social problems on the teaching and learning process. Finally, I will refer to the central role of the teacher in educational change.

CHANGING ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Since the 1960s the discourse surrounding childhood has changed dramatically. Prior to the introduction of the 1971 curriculum the child was viewed as a passive being which needed to be socialised into adult norms. This was reflected in teacher centred didactic pedagogy and traditional paternalistic and authoritarian relations between teacher and pupils. Discipline problems were few.

The discourse surrounding childhood today reflects a greater awareness of children's rights and of children's issues in general. This has lead to a change in curricular, pedagogical and disciplinary practices in schools with a much stronger focus on meeting children's needs in addition to meeting society's needs. For example, the primary school curriculum today – an integrated child-centred curriculum, emphasising activity and discovery methods and environment based learning – celebrates the uniqueness of each child, recognises the integrity of the child's life as a
child and seeks to nurture the child in all dimensions of his/her life. However, this shift in our approach to the understanding of childhood also has implications for teacher/pupil relations, which are no longer based on an authoritarian relationship, but on a respect for the dignity and individuality of each child. This is not simple in classrooms which consist of up to 30 or even more individual pupils, each with his or her own individuality, his or her own needs, his or her own interests and his or her own demands. It is in the interests of both pupils and teachers to ensure that class sizes reflect the changing nature of this relationship.

As suggested by Handy and Aiken (1986) in *Understanding Schools as Organisations*, the fundamental role of the teacher is changing. And I quote:

*The role of the teacher, as we have seen, will inevitably change to more that of an agent than expert, to counsellor and facilitator, manager of learning situations, co-ordinator of projects, team leader or network resource. These are all new words for new roles and consequently have the tinge of jargon, but they signal, like all new words the need for new behaviours.* (p.125)

The guidelines for teachers in relation to the revised curriculum focus on the role of the teacher as a facilitator of children’s learning. This concept has profound implications for how teachers plan, monitor and evaluate their work both individually and collectively. Schools must be seen as centres of learning for both pupils and teachers. It could be argued that when teachers stop learning so do their pupils. The principles of life-long learning, the foundation of which are set in the primary school, must also apply to teachers. While welcoming the curriculum implementation programme, we cannot ignore the need for continuous professional development opportunities or for ongoing curriculum support for teachers in primary schools. The implementation process is only the beginning. The embedding process will require more time leading, hopefully, to a natural cycle of continuous curriculum review and development. Therefore, investment in this process must continue beyond the initial implementation stages, if teachers, by enhancing their own learning, become facilitators and guides who interpret the learning needs of their pupils. It is the quality of teaching more than anything else that determines the success of a child’s learning and development in school (Primary Curriculum: Introduction 1999:20).

A major challenge in this context is the facilitation of teacher collaboration. Time must be allowed for teachers to plan collectively. Class teachers are becoming increasingly involved in collaborative planning with others in relation to meeting the learning needs of their pupils. As more specialist teachers – such as special needs resource teachers, learning-support teachers, support teachers, resource teachers for Travellers, home-school-community liaison teachers – together with other support staff, including classroom assistants and special needs assistants, are appointed to primary schools, more demands are made on teachers’ interpersonal skills as they seek...
to collaborate with colleagues and other professionals in relation to their pupils' learning. There are issues of time and skills development regarding the development of communication processes, building of mutual trust and creating an understanding of each other's roles. Effective working relationships between class teachers, specialist teachers and support staff enhance the teaching/learning process for all children, but are particularly important in the context of the child with specific learning difficulties and children with special educational needs. However, collective planning of support provision for such pupils brings its own challenges. We cannot ignore the research findings of Fullan and Hargreaves which indicate that "there are limits to how many specialists young primary students can meet without damage being done to the continuous, caring relationship they have with their own teacher". It is crucial, therefore, that class teachers are fully supported in meeting the learning needs of pupils with difficulties, as the primary responsibility lies with them.

**CHANGING SOCIAL CONTEXT FOR CHILDREN**

Teachers today are very aware of the ever increasing pace of demographic, social, economic and technological changes in society and the demands those changes are making on their capacities to adapt personally and professionally. They are very conscious of the fact that we are living in a knowledge society, where pupils can access their own information on computers and the internet, where rote learning is being replaced by active learning, where pupil testing is giving way to authentic forms of assessment such as, portfolio work and where newer methodologies such as problem solving are replacing 'the correct answer' syndrome.

However, the primary pupil of the 21st century is a product of the entertainment society. S/he has endless sources of visual stimulation and distraction, in the form of television, videos and computers – to name a few. Teachers have to compete with this environment in the modern classroom. They are finding concentration levels in pupils more difficult to maintain – placing more demands on teachers' pedagogical skills. It is unfortunate that in many cases disruptive behaviour and discipline problems are taking over the school day to the detriment of teaching and learning. A reduction in class size would go a long way towards addressing this issue.

In addition, increasing social problems outside school – for example poverty, separation, violence, divorce, alcohol, drug abuse and sexual abuse – are impacting on the classroom. All contribute to a breakdown in pro-social behaviour among pupils. Whereas new programmes have been introduced to help address these issues – for example, *Stay Safe*, RSE, *Walk Tall* – all positive and constructive in their own way, overloading the curriculum will only add to the stress levels of teachers and may
impact only marginally on the pupils unless a co-ordinated approach involving the broader community is taken. Teachers increasingly deal with psychologists, gardaí and social workers in the course of carrying out their duty of care towards their pupils. In this context we should consider carefully the words of Fiske:

*Schools cannot solve all society's problems, but they must find ways of minimising the impact of such problems on the teaching and learning process. To do this they must build allies... to the communities of which they are part.*

Crucial allies for any class teacher are the parents of the children in her/his class. Parents bring to their children’s education the unique expertise derived from intimate knowledge of their child’s development, of her/his child’s particular needs and interests and of circumstances outside the school. Research world-wide, [as indicated by reports given to the seminar organised by the Bernard van Leer Foundation on *The Parent as Prime Educator: Changing Patterns of Parenthood* which took place in Lima, Peru in 1986,] shows that where there is partnership between teachers and parents there are significant educational, social and behavioural gains for children. Research evidence also shows that the most effective schools are those where parents and teachers come to share common goals and values. This is a fact which has been recognised by the Home-School-Community Liaison Programme and has led, in many schools, to a review of current practices and procedures for communicating and working with parents. Many possibilities for collaboration regarding certain policy areas including homework, self-esteem, positive discipline and school attendance have been identified and explored. In further instances, comprehensive after-school programmes and holiday provision for children living in designated areas of disadvantage have been organised by schools in consultation with parents and the voluntary and statutory groups who work in the community of the school.

**TEACHERS ARE THE KEY TO EDUCATIONAL CHANGE**

In conclusion, I would like to state that teachers are the key to educational change. The climate of the school, as expressed in the nature and quality of interpersonal relationships within the classroom and within the whole-school community, will determine how the school will cope with educational change and how effective it will be in providing for the changing needs of its pupils. Schools must become learning organisations for the whole school community. In the words of Senge:
To become a learning organisation a school community needs to question the assumptions which prevail in the school about such issues as family life, the world of work, teaching, learning, authority and achievement.


Educational change will remain at a superficial level unless it strikes at the heart of how pupils learn and how teachers teach (Hargreaves 1994). An investment in teachers, in their personal and professional development is the key to ensuring that the enhancement of pupil learning remains at the core of all educational change.
Change in Primary Education
Challenging Teachers

Emma Dineen, Education Committee

My colleagues Peter and Dympna have outlined for you some of the system and school changes which have altered the educational landscape in our primary schools. My focus will be on the capacity of the teacher to enable these many changes transfer into effective practice.

Teaching, by the very nature of the people who enter it, tends to breed a preference for stability and caution towards change. As Larry Cuban pointed out, "Teaching is one of the few occupations where one learns first hand about the job, while sitting a few yards away, year after year". The tendency could be, therefore, to teach as we were taught. In the early years of teaching, with little or no mentioning, we learn enough to survive. Once comfortable with our strategy, any new programmes may be tinkered with rather than adapted into school systems. Despite this, individual primary teachers have demonstrated an on-going commitment to educational improvement, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and learning support. So the challenge for us, as teachers, is to ensure that worthwhile changes get worthy and widespread support across the system. Tackling teacher belief, therefore, must surely be one of the first starting points in any successful change programme.

As teachers, we must ensure that our professional behaviour is consistent with our beliefs. We need to be, as Roland Barth termed it, "psychologically self-employed". Teaching as a profession has been taking a battering in recent years and as a result, teachers are questioning their own abilities to deal with new substitutes. Bandura's study on self-efficacy reminded us that our self-belief contributes hugely to our performance. Teachers need to rekindle that self-worth and self-belief in order to make their classroom expertise interface with the changes that are happening. The unwelcome alternative is that we would be compliant in the face of change. Teachers will be committed to change if they are given time to engage with it and interpret it for themselves. This does not necessarily mean we say 'yes' to every new initiative - but it does mean that we do not say 'no' until we have given it due consideration.

What, therefore, are the key factors teachers need to look at in order to note change? Research has indicated that they are threefold: firstly, teachers need to participate in the actual process; secondly, there needs to be a willingness to take initiatives to kick start it; and thirdly, teachers need to feel a sense of ownership over,
and empowerment by, any change they facilitate.

While we may concur that in the partnership model of education in this country, teacher representatives have participated in most of the major initiatives — and I cite the Revised Curriculum and School Development Planning Initiative as examples — the question remains as to how involved the classroom teacher feels, or will feel, in the evaluation of these very worthwhile changes, unless opportunities to interact frequently are provided. The lesson that many countries are learning is that teacher development must go hand in hand to ensure success. We must not over-emphasise resourcing the system — to the detriment of the true professional needs of the teacher. Government and authorities need to follow through, once initiatives are begun, with sustained support for their implementation. Whether in the area of school administration, school planning or curriculum development, teachers and principals need direction in bringing the benefits of these initiatives to fruition in the actual school setting.

Education Centres also have a role to play in providing fora for teachers to meet and to develop expertise. They also have a role in capacity building for the dissemination of good practice and new ideas. Furthermore, to facilitate the pursuance of post-graduate studies in the many specialised areas now requested of us, both curriculum and administrative authorities need to provide structured systems of release, thus enabling teachers to become the life-long learners suggested in modern educational thinking.

How best can this organization, the INTO, facilitate change for its members? In negotiating candidates for innovation and improvement, is the present structure at branch level the best way forward or is there an alternative? Does the organization have a role in mitigating the affects of change for teachers? Should general school policy documents, for example in the areas of health and safety, discipline and homework, be drafted centrally and disseminated for adaptation locally?

It is interesting to consider management guru, Peter Drucker’s perspective on managing change in education. Schools, he claims, will no longer be the sole purveyors of learning in the future. If this is so, then we can no longer work in isolated institutions. The challenge for us will be how best to bring about partnerships in learning and teaching with parents and communities. The knowledge society and internet access, in particular, have made information giving redundant. The critical thinkers and collaborative learners required in the future will force us, as teachers, to re-evaluate what we teach, how we teach it, and even if we need to teach it at all.

We would do well to remember that most of the new initiatives cited in the discussion document were called for, by teachers. Change works best when there is pressure from below as well as above or as Pascale (1990) said, “change flourishes in a sandwich”. Teachers displayed vision in calling for necessary change and this type of change has a better chance of success because it is desired and not mandated. However, we must encourage a positive approach to any potential problems that may
be incurred on the road to implementation. As Fullan indicated, problems can be our friends. We need to focus our energies on discussing issues and coming up with creative solutions. Stress will result if the gap between what is demanded of us and what we are capable of delivering is not bridged. Therefore, we need to remind ourselves and others that:

- The pace and scale of change has to be commensurate with the capacity of schools to absorb it.
- Teachers need ongoing planning and discussion time built into the system.
- Ever aware of our ignorance, teachers must encounter problems openly and explore solutions together.
- And by starting small and thinking big we can make change happen.

In the final analysis, delivering on the challenges of a 21st century learning environment will depend partly upon the establishment of a National Framework which can reconcile the personal and professional needs of individual teachers and schools with the needs of the system. But more importantly, it will also depend on the individual teacher who will continue to focus on the one important issue in the change process - the child.
Change in Primary Education
The Centrality of the Teacher’s Role

Dr. Andy Burke, St. Patrick’s College, Drumcondra

The theme of the Consultative Conference was Change in Education. While different speakers outlined the significant contributions of the Irish National Teachers’ Organization and its members to the implementation of change in Irish education, the present author concentrated on the indispensable role teachers play in the implementation of change in all education systems. Historical examples, philosophical arguments and research evidence were drawn upon to support the claim that school improvement is possible only if school-based personnel are critically involved and have the knowledge, skills and support services they need to understand and implement proposed improvements.

Awareness of the centrality of the teacher’s role in the implementation of education reform and the determination of school effectiveness has been growing in recent decades. Planners, policy makers and administrators, however, often display a lack of clarity and conviction in this regard. As a result, the level of respect for teachers, the seriousness with which they are treated, investment in their training and support for their classroom work are frequently inadequate. While teachers are often blamed for the shortcomings of education systems, not infrequently the fault lies with the systems themselves and their failure to adequately support the work of teachers by way of appropriate and ongoing professional development and adequate resources.

This paper:
- Describes the changing perceptions in recent decades of the importance of the teacher’s role.
- Documents the evidence from several sources (historical, philosophical, research) underlying those changed perceptions.
- Discusses the implications of the evidence presented for the status, role and professional development of teachers.
LESSONS FROM HISTORY

A few examples from the history of Irish education will serve to show that reform movements do not work as planned when teachers are inadequately trained, poorly resourced, have not been properly consulted and/or are not convinced of the merits of the proposed changes.

A system of Payment by Results, whereby teachers' salaries were supplemented on the basis of the achievement levels of their individual pupils, was introduced in Irish national schools in 1872. It led to exam-grinding and much mechanical rote learning in a narrow range of subjects. Its ill effects on education, coupled with the fact that it was out of line with educational thinking on pupil learning emanating from Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, Dewey and others, led to the abandonment of the system in 1899. In its wake, William Starkie, the Resident Commissioner for primary education, proposed (in 1900) the introduction of an innovative, child-centred and activity-oriented curriculum with a broad range of integrated subjects.

While some changes were made, the proposed reforms fell very far short of full implementation for a number of reasons. In 1900 half of the teachers had received no formal training. Having just emerged from an exam-ridden, rote-learning system under Payment by Results, they were expected to implement a child-centred curriculum without preparation, without any understanding of its underlying rationale, and in the absence of adequate INSET or the necessary resources (e.g. for science and other practical subjects). Furthermore, it was a top-down imposition by Starkie. The teachers had not been consulted or involved in the planning of the new programme and, as a result, did not welcome its introduction. In addition, the risk involved in such a critical change of content and methodology was a matter of serious concern for teachers who, at that time, did not enjoy fixity of tenure and were frequently fired at the whim of an inspector and/or local manager. The end result was implementation failure and a lapse of over 70 years before a similar programme was successfully introduced in the primary schools of the Irish Republic in 1971.

In the intervening decades repeated calls from primary teachers, through the INTO, for the introduction of a primary curriculum in line with modern thinking was ignored by the Government and the Department of Education. The Council for Education in the 1950s, with little or no teacher representation, gave its blessing to the existing content and structures of first and second-level education in the country. It was not until the late 1960s that reform of education took hold in conjunction with multiple changes in other aspects of Irish life. From the mid-1970s teacher and other voices began to be heard through management board and other structures (e.g. parent-teacher associations and other consultative bodies). Over the last two decades the planning of Irish education has involved consultations with all the education partners (especially teachers) and considerable progress has resulted (e.g. the New

The National Programme Conferences 1922 and 1925 provide a good example of the formulation of a policy which may have been right in theory but could not work in practice because of primary-teacher inability to implement the planned changes. In the first flush of freedom from its colonial master, the new Free State Government adopted the recommendation of the 1922 Conference (convened by the INTO) that infants’ classes be taught completely through Irish and that Irish be used extensively in other classes. At the instigation of the INTO, whose members were experiencing difficulties teaching through Irish, the 1925 Conference (convened by the Minister for Education) relented somewhat and permitted English to be used in infants’ classes up to 10.30 am. In 1932 Fianna Fáil came to power, took a hard line on the language issue, and withdrew the 1925 concession. In the midst of this debate, however, the policy proposers and policy makers did not take adequate cognisance of the fact that only 9% of 12,000 primary teachers in the early 1920s had the Bilingual Certificate and were qualified to teach through Irish. Another 23% had the Ordinary Certificate which was not regarded as an indicator of proficiency in Irish. While the foundation of the Preparatory Colleges from 1926 was a significant effort to rectify this shortcoming, the problem of teaching through Irish has persisted to the present day. This, and many other examples from both developed and developing countries, indicate that, if teachers are unable or unwilling to ‘deliver’, implementation will be seriously curtailed.

A final example, which indicates the futility of attempted policy implementation in the absence of teacher support, involved the introduction of the Primary Certificate Examination (PCE) in Irish primary schools (1929-1967). The examination was optional from 1929 to 1942 and about one quarter of pupils sat it. In 1942, at the instigation of DeValera and against strong INTO opposition, the PCE was made compulsory. In the 1941 Dáil debate on the issue, DeValera made it clear that he regarded the PCE as a necessary test, not only of pupils, but also of their teachers. The latter needed to be held accountable for pupil progress and “kept up to concert pitch” in their work. He viewed the examination as the best means of achieving these ends (Dáil Debates, May 27th. 1941, cols. 995-1119).

Madaus and Greaney (1985) examined the rates of promotion in primary schools in the years prior to (1935-42) and after (1943-1947) the PCE became compulsory for all pupils. They found that there was a significant decrease in promotion rates from 3rd to 4th and 5th to 6th grades from 1943-47. The authors opined that “retention was used by teachers to delay weaker students in lower classes long enough to reach the school leaving age [i.e.14] before they had to sit the examination” (p. 287). This, and many other examples from both developed and developing countries, indicate that the best laid plans of policymakers and ministries of education can be (and often have been) subverted by those closest to the ‘chalkface’.
The lessons of history would seem to indicate the futility of formulating policies without providing the wherewithal to facilitate their implementation by schools and teachers and that it is much wiser to have those who deliver education on a daily basis 'with you rather than against you' in matters educational. The case being made in this paper should not be construed as an argument for total teacher autonomy or a claim that teacher inputs are the sole determinants of implementation success. Multiple factors contribute in diverse ways to education success or failure. What is most likely to ensure success, according to Hargreaves (1994), is a collaborative approach where all voices are heard in the formulation of a vision for education's future, where no voice dominates, and where the authority of voices is not suppressed by the voice of authority. The relevant voices in education include policymakers, administrators, sponsoring Church bodies, Teaching Council, Schools' Inspectorate, teacher education institutions, parents, pupils and teachers. History suggests that the latter three have not been heard or heeded sufficiently in the past and that the absence of those voices has not been helpful to education.

**CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE NATURE OF TEACHING**

A professional perspective on the nature of teaching further highlights the centrality, breadth and depth of the teacher's role in the education process and is necessary to avoid the mistake that is sometimes made of treating teaching as a narrow technical occupation that can be mastered through apprenticeship, legislated for through teacher-proof curricula, and evaluated through pencil-and-paper tests.

Hargreaves (1994) claims that, to this day, policymakers in England and Wales tend to regard teachers as naughty children in need of strict guidelines while, in the United States, the tendency is to treat them like recovering alcoholics requiring strict programming through teacher-proof curricula. Such approaches show scant respect for the professionalism of teachers and their ability and duty to exercise discretionary judgement in their day-to-day classroom work. In England, for instance, there have been strong moves towards de-professionalising teaching. According to Goodson (1995), Maguire (1995) and Reynolds (1999), English Government policies have served to reconstruct the teacher as the doer not the thinker, the manager not the scholar, the technician not the intellectual. They have charged teacher educators with delivering competency driven, school-based, teacher training, thus running the risk of losing sight of the complexity of both teacher education and of the teaching/learning process.

The Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) in the United Kingdom is caustic in its comments on the above approach to teaching (Reid, 2001). It states:
The teacher of the late 1990s will be remembered as a well-trained and competent technician, delivering a National Curriculum to a set of standards established elsewhere, regularly inspected to ensure compliance, policed through a system of national pupil testing and through initiatives like the Literacy and Numeracy Hours, increasingly required to teach in certain ways. It is small wonder many people of initiative and creativity turn elsewhere in their search for a 'proper' profession — one that will fully call upon their talents and qualities.

We believe that we should re-cast the role of the teacher in a new mould. As well as supporting their pupils directly, teachers must come to be seen as 'learning professionals', activating, guiding and assisting others who have things to pass on those who wish to learn. In a learning society, teachers will take the lead in directing and supporting others' learning. As gatekeepers to this society, they will themselves act as prototypes for, and models of, the life-long learner, leading by example. We think such a vision will be much more attractive to men and women considering a career, or career change, than the more traditional opportunities becoming a teacher now offer them (p 37).

Why, it might be asked, has the perception of teaching been changing? When the knowledge base of any occupation changes, both practice and the training of practitioners in the area also change. Medicine was revolutionised with the advent of the experimental sciences and research based thereon; current engineering is heavily indebted to modern physics; the face of teaching has been changing since the advent of modern psychology, sociology, developments in educational research, new thinking in the philosophy of education and critical insights provided by the wisdom of practice (ie good teachers doing effective and innovative work in their own classrooms). The end result is that, in teaching as in other professions, practice can now be knowledge-based and theory-directed in a manner and to an extent that was not possible in previous times. However, the knowledge base of any profession does not supply recipes or readymade answers for specific cases but, rather, provides guidelines that point professionals in the right direction as they design 'best fit' solutions for the cases they encounter (Simon, 1969).
The following diagram (Figure 1) may help to explain this understanding of the role of the professional person – in this case the classroom teacher.

Figure 1. The Professional as ‘Go-Between’

In Figure 1 the knowledge base of the profession is represented in rows one and two (the top two rows) whereas the real world of practical problems is in row four. The difficulty lies in the fact that the knowledge in row one and pointers/guidelines in row two do not provide recipes or readymade answers for the problems in row four. There is need for a go-between to work out specific answers for specific situations and particular pupils. The professional person is that go-between. On the basis of the knowledge and expertise provided in rows one and two, s/he designs best-fit solutions for problems that present themselves in row four. This role requires what William James calls tact and ingenuity on the part of the professional person for foundation subjects, such as psychology, do not supply readymade answers or dictate tactics for the tackling of practical problems. Such expertise has to be painstakingly developed in training and in practice by each professional person. The old notion of professionalism as simply the application of theory to practice is now regarded as being much too simplistic and as not doing justice to the complexity of problems that professionals face. Several educationalists, along with James, stress this point and the difficulty involved in developing the requisite expertise.

Eisner (1984) stresses the need for the teacher to develop ‘Educational Connoisseurship’ – analogous, he says, to developing an ability to identify good wines. While such development can be facilitated by another person, it has to be constructed
by the individual student/teacher and cannot be transmitted to him/her in lectures. Furthermore, while the propositional language of theory can point towards good practice, it too is inadequate in face of particular problems without the tact and ingenuity of which James speaks and the connoisseurship to which Eisner refers. Of this Eisner says:

Theory cannot replicate the qualities of life as it is lived. And yet it is these qualities upon which subtle pedagogical decisions must be made..... The realities of the classroom...will always present more to the perceptive teacher than propositional language can ever hope to capture. The particularity of a set of conditions, the uniqueness of an individual child, the emotional tone of something said in love or anger, the sense of engagement when a class is attentive will always elude the language of propositions... [Such language] cannot capture nuance and in teaching nuance is everything. It is nuance that converts assertiveness into boorishness, diffidence into shyness, inquisitiveness to prying, dignity to aloofness... The teacher who cannot see such qualities in his or her classroom cannot know what needs to be known to function effectively. Theory and generalisations from educational research can provide a guide – but never a substitute – for the teacher's ability to read the meanings that are found in the qualities of classroom life (pp 51-52).

Van Manen (1995), in similar vein, refers to the need for 'pedagogical tact' on the part of the teacher and also stresses that this is much more complex than the simple application of theory to practice. In this regard he wrote:

Tact [is] a spontaneous bridge or link between theory and practice governed by insight while relying on feeling... The teacher teaches with the head and the heart and must feelingly know what is the appropriate thing to do in ever changing circumstances.

This understanding of teaching is radically different from the rationale which traditionally underpinned both research on and programmes of teacher education (Wideen et. al. 1998). The implicit theory underlying traditional teacher training, they state, is based on the view that learning to teach is a process of acquiring knowledge about teaching. The accepted wisdom was that such propositional knowledge (theory, methods and skills) is provided by the university/college of education, the schools provide the setting in which this knowledge is practised, and the student teacher attempts to put the knowledge into practice. Eighty-three research studies reviewed by Wideen and his colleagues lend little support to the effectiveness or appropriateness of models of teacher preparation which are based on this rationale.

The role of teacher education at the initial, induction and inservice stages is the facilitation of the professional person in learning to fulfil his/her 'go-between' role adequately and for each to construct his/her own version of that role. This description
of the role of the professional person highlights (i) the complexity of the teaching context and (ii) the critical importance of decision making in all professional areas, including teaching.

THE COMPLEXITY OF TEACHING

The professional person, unlike a technician or trades person, is cast in the role of 'practical artist', that is, one who departs from formulas, recipes and algorithms, who sizes up complicated situations, and who uses his/her professional knowledge, insight, intuition, and commonsense in formulating good judgments and taking appropriate action in uncertain situations. In the case of the doctor, according to Bok (1984), "considerations of many kinds are jumbled together to form a picture full of uncertainties, requiring the most delicate kinds of judgments and intuitions... Doctors are constantly forced to make educated guesses based on imperfect information" (p 37). The truth of this statement in the case of teaching becomes clear when pupils with special needs or specific learning difficulties are being dealt with. But even so-called 'normal' pupils have their own particular needs which are a constant challenge to teachers.

Glickman (1987) states that "uncertainty" is an unavoidable condition of professionalism but sees it as liberating the professional person from the tyranny of dogma and making him/her more, not less, professional. Shulman (1983, 1986) also views teaching in this light while Clarke (1988) claims that the research on teacher thinking has "documented the heretofore unappreciated ways in which the practice of teaching can be as complex and cognitively demanding as the practice of medicine, law, or architecture" (p 8). Shulman (1984) goes a step further than Clarke when he argues that the task environment of the classroom is even more complex than that faced by a doctor in a diagnostic examination. The teacher is confronted, not by a single patient, but with a classroom of 25-40 pupils. In that context, the class teacher operating with a single reading group is simultaneously performing a more complex set of tasks than most doctors would ever have to face in a lifetime of practice. In this situation the teacher is, at one and the same time, dealing with decoding, word-attack, and comprehension skills, while also attempting to motivate pupils toward a love of reading. Individual differences between pupils must be kept in mind and, in addition to monitoring the members of the immediate reading group, the remainder of the class must also be kept busy and under control. Shulman (1987) concludes: "The only time a physician [doctor] could possibly encounter a situation of comparable complexity would be in the emergency room of a hospital during or after a natural disaster" (p 376). In such complex and uncertain situations informed decision-making ability is
as critical in teaching as it is in any of the recognised professionals. Furthermore, the process or format of decision-making would tend to be similar since the contexts, which in good measure determine the process, share some critical common features (e.g. complexity, uncertainty and need for a professional 'go-between' to construct 'best-fit' solutions for individual cases).

**DECISION-MAKING IN TEACHING AND IN OTHER PROFESSIONS**

One way of explaining the nature of professional decision-making is to draw a distinction, as Gage (1985) does, between nomothetic and idiographic knowledge, the former being the kind of generalisation that emerges out of science or research and applies to all individuals (like a general theory), while idiographic knowledge applies to the understanding of one situation or one individual. The artistry of the professional person, says Gage, emerges precisely in the application of nomothetic knowledge to idiographic problems. Since no two bridges, patients or pupils are the same, the nomothetic knowledge is never, of itself, adequate to the situation. As Billington (1984) points out, the structural engineer cannot rely on nomothetic knowledge alone in building a bridge but utilises his/her artistry in applying that general knowledge to the peculiar problems of building a specific bridge, to carry specific loads in a specific geological and meteorological situation. Gage (1985) argues that it is precisely in their practical artistry that the engineer, the doctor, and the teacher are all alike. They differ only in the amount and strength of the nomothetic knowledge available to them. He continues:

*Although occupations vary in their state of technological development, there is a substantial amount of flying by the seat of the pants in all of them. [Consequently] it is as much an error to underestimate the technological competence of teachers as it is to overestimate that of physicians (p 84).*

*In no profession does the nomothetic knowledge adequately fit the individual case and professionals must compensate for this inadequacy by the use of their artistry—initiative, intuition, commonsense, and craftsmanship. This constitutes the very core of professionalism and is at the heart of teaching as it is of the other professions.*

A somewhat different approach to this issue is taken by Simon (1969). According to him the complexity of a professional area is such that the professional person is cast in the role of 'designer'. As the architect designs and decides on the 'best fit' solution for
a complex set of interwoven elements in a particular situation and for a particular client, so other professionals 'design' and decide on 'best fit' solutions for their individual clients in their peculiar sets of circumstances. In each professional area what is known and available is used but, because of what is not known due to the sheer complexity of each area, there is a premium on imagination and creativity on the part of each professional person. As the architect does not seek the perfect form so neither do other professionals seek the 'perfect fit'. Individual decisions and designs are called for in specific cases. Simon concludes:

"Everyone designs who devises courses of actions aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones...design, so construed, is the core of all professional training; it is the principal mark that distinguishes the professions from the sciences. Schools of engineering as well as schools of architecture, business, education, law, and medicine are all essentially concerned with the process of design" (pp 55-56).

Thies-Sprinthall and Sprinthall (1987) would agree with the foregoing sentiments and would see them as characteristic of teaching as well as of other professions. For them the "generic role of educational programs is to encourage the ability [of trainee teachers] to examine, interpret and act" (p 50). Similarly, Eisner (1983), while rejecting the aspiration of a prescriptive science of educational practice as hopeless, concludes: "The best we can hope for - and it is substantial - is to have better tools from science with which teachers can use their heads" (p 11).

In his review of multiple research studies of teacher behaviour, Berliner (1987) concluded that teachers make up to thirty non-trivial work-related decisions every hour and do this in an environment where 1,500 interactions can take place daily with different pupils on different issues. Teachers continually make decisions about what is to be taught, how it is to be taught, what approaches are to be implemented to cater for individual differences, what forms of assessment are to be used, and what rewards and sanctions are to operate. Strategies for classroom management and control have to be decided upon. Dozens of decisions are made daily about individual pupils. Such decisions are critically important to the pupils who are directly affected by them, and to their parents. If there is any doubt in this regard, one has simply to reflect on the impact of an unfair, unjust or wrong decision that a teacher made about oneself or simply observe the effects of even the most 'insignificant' teacher decisions on one's own children or younger siblings. Teachers, in fact, make more decisions about pupils than any of the other professionals who serve their needs. Consequently, it could be argued that teachers are the most important professionals in the lives of young people and have a very significant impact on them for good or ill. This places considerable responsibility on the shoulders of teachers.

It would appear then that, while teachers work within broad parameters laid down
by ministries of education, there are in reality large and critical areas of classroom life that are not amenable to outside control. They are subject to teacher decision, discretion and autonomy. The level of teacher competence/incompetence, training or lack of training, does not gainsay this 'fact of life'. Whether it is formally recognised or not, in reality teachers have considerable 'power' and exercise it constantly for good or ill.

It is in the context of ever expanding knowledge bases that the levels of service being demanded of all professionals has increased significantly in recent years. In the case of teaching, the parameters of professional responsibilities have been set out in the Education Act (1998) and the Education Welfare Act (2000). There is little doubt but that our awareness of the complexity of teaching and the burden of decision-making therein has been sharpened significantly and that the challenges facing teachers, and those whose task it is to prepare them for their classroom work, have increased greatly. While life for teachers is becoming much more complex, difficult and demanding, the profession can be justly proud of the role that it is now expected to play in the lives of pupils and their parents. These developments also highlight the need for ongoing professional development opportunities and adequate support services if teachers are to meet their professional obligations.

THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN THE DETERMINATION OF SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

In addition to their decision-making role, cogent evidence has also been emerging on the critical part teachers play in the determination of school effectiveness, i.e. the impact they have on student learning.

Research by Coleman, Jencks and others in the 1960s and early 1970s seemed to indicate that socio-economic status and home background factors, rather than teachers and schools, were the most important determinants of student achievement (Coleman et al 1966; Jencks et al 1972). While such conclusions did not go unchallenged, for a number of years teachers tended to be viewed as weak links in the teaching/learning process and were treated accordingly.

Subsequent research confirmed the critical role that teachers play in the learning process. The realisation dawned that teachers hold the key to educational change and effective school improvement, that progress can be made only by working with and through them rather than by attempting to work around them (Heyneman & Loxley, 1983; Lewin, 1993; Greaney, 1996). As a result, a simple but revolutionary principle began to take shape and guide policy making in this regard. It was that “effective school learning requires good teaching, and good teaching requires professionals who
exercise judgements in constructing the education of their students” (Porter & Brrophy, 1988, p 74). In their study of effective schools in developing countries Levin & Lockheed (1993) state:

Effective schools appear to require a high degree of school-level responsibility and authority... [For this reason] a principal emphasis is placed on empowering teachers, students, parents, and the community to take responsibility for making educational decisions and for the consequences of those decisions (pp 14-16).

On foot of such findings, the realisation began to dawn on administrators, planners and policymakers that failure to recognise the centrality of the role teachers play in the determination of school effectiveness, renewal and reform is short-sighted in the extreme. Recent research has served to strengthen conviction in this regard.

Darling-Hammond (1998) claims that over the past decade or so a much sturdier body of research on teaching, teacher development, school reforms and policy effects has emerged than was available heretofore. A good deal of research evidence in this regard is collated in a report entitled What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future by the National Commission on Teaching (1996). The Commission puts forward what it considers to be the single most important strategy for achieving its educational goals: a blueprint for recruiting, preparing, and supporting excellent teachers in all schools. The report identifies the following three premises as fundamental:

* What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn.
* Recruiting, preparing, and retaining good teachers is the central strategy for improving schools.
* School reform cannot succeed unless it focuses on creating the conditions in which teachers can teach, and teach well (p vi).

Hereunder, the research evidence cited to by the Commission in support of its conclusions is examined, along with other published research findings which lend credence to claims that the teacher's role is central to the determination of school effectiveness.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE**

A growing body of research now supports the belief that what teachers know and are able to do is one of the most significant determinants of what students learn. Ferguson (1991), in an analysis of 900 Texas school districts found that teacher expertise (measured by scores on a licensing examination, master's degree and teaching
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experience) accounted for about 40% of the measured variance in the reading and mathematics scores of students in grades 1-11 and outweighed any other single determining factor. Furthermore, he found that the differences in teachers' expertise were so great that, when he controlled for socio-economic status, the disparities in the achievement scores of black and white students were almost entirely accounted for by the differences in teachers' qualifications. School and class size was also contributory factors and, together with teacher knowledge/expertise, accounted for as much of the measured variance in achievement as did student and family background factors combined.

A later and smaller study by Ferguson and Ladd (1996) came up with similar findings while an earlier study of high and low-scoring schools in New York City found that teacher qualifications accounted for more than 90% of the variation in student achievement in mathematics and reading across all grade levels (Armoour-Thomas et al. 1989). Finally, Greenwald, Hedges and Laine (1996), in their review of the effect of school resources on student achievement, concluded that, from an achievement gains point of view, expenditure on teacher education swamped all other variables as the most productive investment for schools. On the basis of his data Ferguson (1991) had also concluded that greater increases in student achievement resulted from every additional dollar spent on more highly qualified teachers than on other school resources. On foot of such findings, there seems to be widespread agreement with the conclusion drawn by Sanders and Horn (1998) that individual teachers are the single largest factor that adds value to students learning.

THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER EDUCATION

If, as the research indicates, teacher knowledge and expertise are critical determinants of school effectiveness, then teacher education (PRESET and INSET) would seem to assume a position of considerable importance in the delivery of high-quality education. There is cogent research evidence to support the following claims on the contribution of teacher education to effective teaching/learning and to guide policy makers in the planning and support of initial and ongoing professional development (cf Burke, 2000):

- The most competent teachers are those who have a good mastery of the content knowledge to be taught and have also studied education (Greenberg, 1983; Erekson & Barr, 1985; Evertson, Howley & Zlotnik, 1985; Ashton & Crocker, 1987; National Commission, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1998).
- Teachers with greater training in teaching methodology are more effective than those with less (Guyton & Farokhi, 1987; Kennedy, 1991).
Teachers who have spent more time studying teaching are better teachers, especially when it comes to fostering higher-order thinking skills and catering for individual needs (National Convention, 1996; Darling Hammond, 1998).

Research does not provide an empirical justification for increasing requirements in academic subject areas in pre-service teacher education at the expense of reducing coursework in the professional areas (Veenman, 1984; Ashton & Crocker, 1987; Kennedy, 1997).

Research indicates that back-door and off-the-street entry of unqualified or poorly qualified personnel into teaching is unwise, that their teaching tends to be inadequate, and that their life-span in teaching tends to be short (Darling-Hammond, 1992; National Commission, 1996).

Graduates of extended teacher education programmes are more likely to enter teaching after graduation, to stay longer in the profession, and to be more highly rated by both school principals and colleagues (Andrew, 1990; Andrew & Schwab, 1995; National Commission, 1996).

The bulk of accumulated evidence shows that teacher induction of the traditional sink-or-swim type contributes to higher attrition rates and lower levels of teaching effectiveness. On the other hand, beginning teachers who are provided with continuous support by a skilled mentor are much less likely to leave the profession, are more likely to get beyond personal and class management concerns quickly, and come to focus on student learning sooner (National Commission, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Teachers experience much more powerful learning when INSET is related to their identified needs and directly connected to their work with students, is linked to subject matter and the concrete tasks of teaching, is organised around problem solving, is informed by research, and is sustained over time by regular contacts and inputs (Burke, 1995; National Commission, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1998). As against this, the research evidence suggests that INSET generally tends to be top-down, provider-driven and that the majority of teachers have little say in what or how they learn on the job (Blackburn & Moisan, 1987; US Department of Education, 1994; Eraut, 1994; Eurydice, 1995; Burke, 1995; National Commission, 1996).

It is evident that a great range of research studies supports the claim that initial and ongoing teacher education and development are critical determinants of effective teaching and that effective teaching in turn is a major contributor to successful learning. In addition, the research contradicts the commonly held myth that 'anyone can teach' or that 'teachers are born, not made'. Taking a cognitive developmental view of teachers as adult learners, Thies-Sprinthall and Sprinthall (1987) argue that teachers are neither born nor made. They are, rather, 'developed'. Much of teacher development occurs in their places of work. To these we now turn our attention.
IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS' WORKING CONDITIONS

An essential prerequisite of successful school reform is a working environment which is conducive to good teaching, co-operation among teachers and collaboration between teachers, students and parents (National Commission, 1996). The evidence indicates, however, that most schools are not organised in a manner that facilitates such interaction and, in fact, are frequently structured in ways which are inimical to such developments. There tends to be little time for co-operative work with teaching colleagues. Teachers are frequently isolated in their classrooms (Lortie, 1975) and, in second-level schools, are limited to short contact periods with students by tightly structured timetables. Where conditions exist that enable teachers to know students and parents better (e.g. small schools or small units in large schools), they result in higher achievement levels (Howley 1989; National Commission, 1996).

If the teacher's role is central and crucial then, to facilitate the fulfilment of that role, the targeting of resources at the teaching context, rather than at some targets well removed from the school/classroom, would appear to be of particular importance. The cogency of this claim is borne out by the work of Wang, Haertel and Walberg (1993). In their review of research on factors affecting school outcomes they conclude:

*Distal policies are likely to make a major difference in learning only when they affect proximal practices... The actions of students, teachers and parents matter most to student learning; policies at the program, school, district, state, and federal levels have limited effect compared to the day-to-day efforts of the people who are most involved in students' lives. Knowing that proximal variables have a greater impact on school learning than distal ones, educators, when formulating policies, should be mindful of where they can make the biggest difference in terms of the student, the classroom, and the home. (p 279)*

For this reason Kellaghan (1994) argues that "resources that are allocated to the actual teaching-learning situation are likely to be more beneficial in terms of students' achievements than resources that are allocated to activities that are remote from that situation" (p 16).

In light of the foregoing, it would appear that the prospects of education reform movements, projects or programmes depend heavily on the extent to which teacher needs have been identified and catered for and the proximity of the necessary resources to the day-to-day work of schools and teachers.
IMPLICATIONS

While many factors facilitate educational progress, renewal and reform, historical and research evidence, along with analysis of the concept 'profession', strongly suggests that success critically depends on the quality, commitment and professional expertise of classroom teachers. It is they who teach pupils, not ministries of education, schools' inspectors, researchers or teacher trainers. It is they who make the many within-class decisions each day that impact critically on the lives and future prospects of their pupils and, ultimately, on the welfare of their countries (Berliner, 1987; Levin & Lockheed, 1993; Burke, 1996, 1997).

A number of critical implications would seem to follow from the foregoing. There is need for:

- A clear and explicit recognition at all levels within education systems of the centrality of the teacher's role in the development and delivery of high quality education to students;
- A public relations exercise to inform public opinion of the professional nature of teaching and to challenge high calibre candidates (male and female) to enter the profession;
- Increased investment to create quality teacher education (PRESET and INSET). In some countries (e.g. USA), more time, energy and money is often spent on developing measures to police and prevent poor teaching than on ensuring the recruitment, proper preparation, and ongoing professional development of high calibre teachers (National Commission, 1996). Quality teacher preparation is expensive. "Tomorrow's teachers," says the Commission, "cannot be prepared 'on the cheap' or we will get, tragically, what we pay for" (p 71).
- Consideration of research evidence which indicates that the graduates of extended teacher education programmes, while more expensive to produce, may be more cost effective in the long term since a higher proportion of them tend to enter teaching, stay in the profession longer, and are more highly rated than the products of shorter programmes (Andrew & Schwab, 1995).
- A change in school structures from 19th century bureaucracies to 21st century learning organisations that promote innovation and empower teachers to take greater control of and responsibility for what goes on in their schools. What David Kearns, Chief Executive of ZEROX Corporation said of American education is probably true of many of the world's education systems and is certainly a point on which each can examine its collective conscience:

> Myopic management is still the norm in American education today, just as it was in American business... Our entire way of thinking needs to be replaced. Today's high-tech firm is... de-centralised, relying on the know-how and professionalism of
workers close to the problem. It is innovative in the deployment of personnel, no longer relying on limiting job classifications. It spends heavily on employee education and training. It invests heavily in research (Kearns, 1988, p 569).

CONCLUSION

Effective action to remediate the ills of education will be likely to follow if and when there is a strong conviction on the part of those who plan, resource and administer education systems of the indispensable role that teachers play in determining the quality and ensuring the delivery of education. The evidence presented cogently supports the claim that the determinants of quality in education have to do primarily (but not solely) with the calibre of the teachers who provide it. The central concern of this paper has been to investigate the research evidence in this regard, to establish the level of support for this contention, and to identify some of the implications of the findings for educational renewal and reform.

The National Commission on Teaching (1996) maintains that policymakers are just beginning to grasp what parents have always known: that teaching is the most important element of successful learning. It states: "A caring, competent, and qualified teacher for every child is the most important ingredient in education reform and... the most frequently overlooked" (p 3). Recognition of the importance of their role is an urgent necessity since "societies that do not succeed in education have little chance of success in a global economy" (p 3).

Reform movements frequently ignore the centrality of the teacher's role and seem unaware of the lessons of both research and history which bear out the truth of this assertion. While new curricula, instructional and test materials and other resources are important factors in educational renewal and reform, they are of little avail if teachers cannot use them productively. In this connection, Pullan and Miles (1992) warn that the symbols of reform (new legislation, task forces, commissions, reports, and grand plans) are sometimes confused with the substance of reform which, if they are to be implemented successfully, require considerable painstaking work at ground level on the part of schools and teachers. "While we cannot have successful reform without symbols," they state, "we can easily have symbols without effective reform" (p 747). Education agendas are often awash with the symbols of reform but frequently fail to make adequate contact with and provision for the teachers on whom, ultimately, the success or failure of the reforms will greatly depend. Policies can improve schools only if school-based personnel have the knowledge, skills and support services they need to understand and implement the policies. In this regard Shulman says:
The teacher must remain the key... Debates over educational policy are moot, if the primary agents of instructions are incapable of performing their functions. No microcomputer will replace them, no television system will clone and distribute them, no scripted lessons will direct and control them, no voucher system will bypass them (in National Commission, 1996, p 5).

No top-down mandate can replace the insights, skills and decision-making abilities which teachers need to manage complex classroom situations and cater for the needs of individual pupils. In brief, school effectiveness, renewal and reform cannot be 'teacher-proofed'. They are critically and fundamentally 'teacher-dependent' for there is no way to create good schools without good teachers. Has reform failure, then, been the fault of teachers? The National Commission (1996) and its chairperson, Darling-Hammond (1998), are adamant that this is not the case. The latter states:

The problems, such as they are [in US education] are not the fault of teachers but of a system which has long failed to support the work of teachers. ... The profession has suffered from decades of neglect" (pp 6, 11).

This surely provides a salutary warning to all who oversee, work with, or are responsible for the teaching profession. If we ignore it, we do so at our peril and, possibly, at considerable cost to our respective countries.
Rapporteurs’ Reports

Delegates at the Consultative Conference on Education were allocated to discussion groups and given questions to consider, discuss and debate. Each group was facilitated by a member of the INTO Education or Equality Committee and rapporteurs recorded the discussion. As each group commenced with a different question, not all questions were discussed in every group. The following is a collated report of the views expressed in each group in relation to each of the questions (outlined in bold) posed for discussion.

Q1. “There is not enough opportunity and not enough encouragement for teachers to work together, learn from each other and improve their expertise as a community” (Fullan, M. and Hargreaves, A. What’s worth Fighting for in Your School 1991:1). How can such opportunities and encouragement be provided in Irish primary schools? How can schools become centres for learning for both teachers and pupils?

The discussion centred on the importance of staff meetings and planning opportunities for teachers.

The group agreed that regular staff meetings are essential to help teachers work together as a community. The number of staff meetings per year ranged from 3 to 10. One teacher from a small school did not have formal staff meetings and break-time was often used to discuss school issues. The teachers from small schools expressed the need to have one non-pupil contact day per term in order that the school could plan the curriculum. Teachers in small schools would like to cluster with similar size schools to discuss common issues.

The consensus was that there is a need to deal with the ad hoc nature of staff meetings and that guidelines should be issued from the DES in relation to the provision of time for meetings.

In relation to planning, it was agreed that planning days to date had been a great success. However, a planning structure for the long term is essential if proper progress is to be made. It was stated that teachers are professionals and need regular time to plan professionally. A broad discussion followed as to when this planning should take place and what time should be used for planning purposes. Individual teachers described school planning patterns in various countries. Other teachers gave an
outline of staff meetings for planning within their individual schools. The consensus of the group was that planning must be done within the working day. With regard to this and especially the need to hold regular staff meetings for planning purposes, it was pointed out that the board of management is the body in charge of each school and as such should come to an agreed arrangement with the principal teacher and staff about school planning time.

There are so many challenges for teachers in relation to the amount of changes in the system that it was felt that teachers need opportunities to improve their self-esteem. There are many opportunities for teachers to work on professional development but not on personal development. Assertiveness courses which could help teachers deal with parents would be particularly helpful to newly qualified teachers. Induction courses for young teachers should be provided on a nation-wide basis. Some members of the group felt that this should be provided by the Colleges of Education but others felt that teachers need to do these courses within the framework of the classroom otherwise it could be seen as merely more theory.

Many classroom teachers don’t fully realise the work of the principal teacher and vice-versa. Traditionally teachers haven’t been encouraged to work together, but it is vital for support and affirmation. Classroom teachers must be involved with resource teachers and the principal teacher when the psychologist is visiting or assessments are being arranged. Communication between staff is very important in order to ensure that children’s experiences of the curriculum are co-ordinated.

It was noted that attendance at INTO branch meetings was low which was considered a pity as there was a great opportunity at such meetings to talk at grass root level.

Q2. Leadership is about doing the right things. Management is about doing things right. How can principals ensure that their educational leadership role is not eroded as they strive to implement increased administrative and managerial duties? Given the increased demand being made on principals’ administrative and managerial roles, what are the implications for the traditional relationship between principals and teachers of ‘primum inter pares’?

There was a general consensus that the principal teacher now has a very stressful role as, ultimately, the final decision in any matter rests with the principal teacher. The view of the group was that principal teachers need to be multi-skilled and that training is crucial. Such management training needs to be education-specific as many of the business models do not suit an educational setting.

The style of leadership can have huge implications for the effective running and the atmosphere of the school. In turn, good staff relations are vital for effective leadership.
It is essential to have time to consult as people then feel empowered. Leadership is not a one-person operation: whole staff approaches and a culture of co-operation are very important. There is a middle management team in most schools and it was suggested that training be provided for the post-holders. A discussion on the duties of post-holders ensued and there was agreement that the ad hoc nature of the duties can be problematic and guidelines should be issued to schools which would allow for the clear definition of duties.

The group felt that time constraints mean that principal teachers are frustrated in their attempts to fulfil their roles as leaders and that a great deal of their time was taken up with non-educational duties. Areas of concern included: dealing with untrained staff; lack of a structure for the communication of information; strategies for coping with constant interruptions; strategies for conflict resolution.

Some of the group felt that interruptions such as the intercom and notes from the office can be very disruptive for the class teacher. One teacher suggested that a post box outside each classroom is an effective way of minimising disruptions and this has worked in her school. Other suggestions were a 'cubbyhole' for each teacher in the staff room or a whiteboard in the staff room where staff can leave reminder notes for each other. An administrative principal in the group said that the administrative work can suffer from the interruptions of the school day and this necessitates work after school hours. It was suggested that it might be an idea to have all intercom announcements made at a particular time of the day and that all communication with the office should be confined to a specific hour to cut down on disruption.

All agreed that the administration days for principal teachers have been wonderful but that more were needed. There was consensus that a supply panel which would provide a full-time substitute for principals' release days would greatly assist principal teachers in providing educational leadership.

Situations differ for teaching and administrative principals. The group felt that there were more supports available for the administrative principal who usually has a secretary and caretaker. The teaching principal has to do all the administrative work with very little support. There can be tension between the efficient administration of the school and the work in the classroom.

All the principal teachers in the group stated that the extra allowance they received was not enough for the amount of work required. However, they also stated that remuneration was not their top priority – what is really needed is support.
Q3. The changing fabric of society and the breakdown in discipline, law and order as we know it, is producing a child which challenges teaching professionals each and every day. What coping strategies are required to mitigate the effects of such behaviour in the classroom and in the school setting? What are the implications for teacher/pupil relationships, teaching methodologies and teachers’ educational beliefs?

The group agreed that changes in society had impacted greatly on the classroom and the job of the teacher. It was felt that teachers needed better coping strategies, better listening skills and also conflict resolution skills.

Homework was an area that created great discussion. With the increase in the number of single parent families and parents working outside the home who may not return to home until late in the evening, it was felt many parents did not want to spend the contact hours with their child doing homework. It was agreed that it was very important for schools to have a homework policy. One teacher said that having had an input from the home school liaison teacher into their discussions on a homework policy, the staff were shocked to hear of some of the conditions under which the children were attempting to do homework. The school now provides a 'homework club' for pupils. Another member of the group said she did not realise how much homework she had been giving her pupils until she had children of her own. The group felt that maybe it is time teachers looked at the nature and amount of homework which is given to pupils and attempt to evaluate its effectiveness.

It was noted that peer pressure was becoming apparent in schools much earlier now. Children in the junior classes seem to suffer from peer pressure when traditionally this was not seen until the senior classes in the primary school.

Some of the group felt that teachers are expected to solve problems which society has created – e.g. drug abuse, child abuse. Support from the psychological service is important. Effective codes of behaviour must be in place. Parents must be on board. Cultural differences mean it can be difficult sometimes to achieve consensus. Having an agreement form at the bottom of the code can help. The amount of time spent in discipline erodes teaching time. The benefits for schools who have introduced ‘discipline for learning’ were noted. Circle time and other formal strategies should be introduced from day one. These strategies need to be piloted then introduced nationwide if positive.

Teachers in disadvantaged areas have experienced difficult situations such as parents not talking to children, not listening or not reading to them. Child care classes are needed for some parents. Other parents have literacy difficulties. Many disadvantaged parents can’t afford play schools or can be intimidated by pre-schools. In mother and toddler groups good leaders can gently filter to parents the idea that they are the real educators of their children. There is a huge need to educate parents for parenting.
It was felt that teachers are expected to be counsellors but are not being given the opportunity to train for this aspect of their role. However, others felt that instead of teachers taking on counselling, perhaps a Schools Counselling Service would be a better idea. The issue of remuneration for completing courses was then discussed – should teachers be paid for doing counselling courses and do them in school time? Some felt that it was not realistic to expect to be paid for every course done. Others argued that if a teacher took the trouble to be trained this should be recognised. It was noted that the learning support course gets little recognition.

In relation to litigation, a suggestion was made that each teacher should receive a copy of Dympna Glendenning’s book, *Education and the Law*. Other suggestions in relation to legal issues were – to keep records of all incidents and to be circumspect in what was put in writing. Good strategies were important, e.g. ‘Discipline for Learning’. Assemblies and reward systems were seen to be effective. It was felt that there should be support from the inspectorate when a situation became intolerable. Some suggested coping strategies for teachers were discussed – keeping calm; praising twice before checking on 3rd; some forms of bad behaviour were best ignored. De-stressing sessions after school were also suggested. The Education Centres were also noted as a source of support, as was the INTO Life Skills course.

Q 4. "The demand on schools to provide a wide range of both academic and social experiences characterises educational policy in many countries" (Tuohy, D. The Inner World of Teaching 1999:112). How can this policy of continuously adding to the curriculum be sustained in the light of the time constraints of the actual school day? What role, if any, would team or specialist teaching play in the implementation of such broad curricula? In what ways would school planning enable schools to address the challenges presented by such demands?

While there was much enthusiasm for the idea of the specialist teacher or team teaching, some members of the group argued that the range of subjects now taught at primary level was too broad.

It was noted that a significant percentage of the population was illiterate. Schools need to turn out confident children proficient in literacy and numeracy, and it was argued that the curriculum was being added to constantly and teachers were under severe time pressure.

In relation to team teaching, some delegates in the group already swap classes, e.g. music and art, depending on their own personal interests and abilities. However, just pooling ideas can also work. A good art and crafts teacher can share ideas with a person less confident in this area, instead of swapping classes. In larger schools there is a pool of talent to draw from and this is good for the children. In multi-classes, it was
felt that the basic teaching is challenging enough never mind all the extras. In small
schools, clustering might be the answer to a 'talent pool'.

Some schools have specialist teachers coming in but some questioned whether the
role of the class teacher would be eroded by having private classes during school time.
In one teacher's school specialist teachers came to teach ballet, Irish dancing, music
and singing. This led to the argument that schools could be overloaded with specialist
teachers and there could be an erosion of teaching time. Schools also felt under
pressure to do what neighbouring schools were doing. The subject was raised of the
relationship between the class teacher and the child possibly being affected by the
introduction of additional specialist teachers.

The point was made that every teacher was already trained to do what they have to
do. There was a view that specialists should not be necessary, but the issue of teacher
confidence was raised. It may be more effective to have a specialist coming in, but
finance was an issue. It was stated that primary education should be free.

Q5. According to research, parents are crucial allies of teachers in relation to
the education of their children and the most effective schools are those where
parents and teachers come to share common goals and values. Does this hold true
in the case of Irish primary schools? What are the current organisational and
professional challenges facing schools and teachers regarding parental
involvement in the work of the school and home-school communication
processes?

There was overwhelming agreement on the importance of meeting parents and on
the need for maintaining good relations with individual parents and with the National
Parents' Council. There was agreement that pupils benefit from effective parental
involvement. It was felt that small schools had more opportunities for effective
parental involvement than larger schools.

A certain amount of dissatisfaction was expressed with aspects of parental
involvement through formal structures. It was felt that many parents were
uncomfortable with formal structures and that parents often favoured informal
contact with teachers. It was thought that some parents were afraid of schools and a
fear barrier shouldn't exist, especially regarding children with learning difficulties
where it was considered essential that parents be involved.

The Education Act was putting more pressure on teachers to form good parent
relations. Parents are primary educators of their children and, as such, there is much
work they could do especially in the oral language area. Health boards need to focus
on the pre-school child particularly regarding educating parents on the importance of
early learning. Some help is available, e.g. homework helpers are going to houses if
families have difficulties and there are now also many homework clubs set up. It was noted that the parental involvement guidelines which were published in *IntToch* were very helpful.

It was felt that parents needed information about school especially on new subjects and especially on SPHE. Perhaps if parents were informed about the school curriculum and extra curricular activities, both content and implementation, they might be encouraged to become involved in some way in their child's school.

A good parents' council is vital for a school. Suggestions to make the parents' meetings more interesting included bringing in speakers on topics of interest e.g. bullying. If parents meet regularly, it may be easier for them to feel comfortable about getting involved in the school. In one school, having a group of parents available to help out with nature walks on sunny days has been very successful. The parents seemed to appreciate the work of the teacher when they saw how difficult it was.

There was a consensus that teachers need to be remunerated for facilitating effective parental involvement.

The challenge is to have balance between parents' rights and the teachers' professionalism, not losing sight of the bottom line – that good relationships between school and home are essential for the effective school.

**Q6.** Much educational change has been actively sought by the INTO. However, there is a view that INTO members are suffering from information overload. On the other hand many teachers remain unaware of impending major initiatives in education. How best can essential information be disseminated to teachers and how best can teachers be facilitated to engage with the process of change? What new structures, systems or processes would you suggest to help the organization direct the nature and pace of change for the teaching profession?

There was agreement that the role of the CEC needed to be examined so that members of the CEC would have time to visit individual schools and that personal contact should not be replaced.

It was felt that principal teachers should remain within the INTO and that the INTO had achieved a great deal for principal teachers.

There was an acknowledgement that schools face an increasing burden of conveying essential information to outside bodies. It was felt that the INTO would assist schools greatly if it developed and made available to schools a template for conveying essential information.
Change in Primary Education
References


