

**CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO
THE COMMON FUNDING FORMULA
FOR
THE LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS**

**SUBMITTED BY
THE IRISH NATIONAL TEACHERS' ORGANISATION
(INTO)**

November 2008

Introduction

INTO is the largest teaching union in Ireland. Currently we represent over 30,000 teachers in the Republic of Ireland and 6,500 teachers in Northern Ireland. INTO provides representation, advice and support on a broad range of educational, professional and employment related matters to professional teachers, Principals and vice Principals in all education sectors.

The Organisation at its annual Northern conference in March 2007, adopted a policy document, "*Funding of Schools – The Way Ahead. A Discussion Paper*", on the funding of schools. I have pleasure in attaching a copy of that document with this consultation and would ask that the contents of the report are considered as part of the responses to this consultation.

Response

INTO would wish to record our serious concerns in regard to the manner in which this consultation has been managed. We view that the decision to limit the consultation to schools and colleges and to exclude the recognised teaching unions is unacceptable to INTO. It is the view of INTO that by limiting the scope of the consultation the importance of engagement with the relevant stakeholders has been ultimately lost.

INTO are therefore submitting our response directly to the Department of Education and would ask that in taking forward any future consultations that teaching unions, and in particular INTO is not excluded or prevented from engaging meaningfully in that consultation.

Section 1 Age Related Pupil Unit (AWPU) Factor

INTO would wish to ensure that all schools are funded appropriately to enable them to manage their resources effectively. INTO believes that funding should be based on the need of the pupil and that the practice of altering funding depending on the age is not one that allows for innovation or change or reflects the needs of a modern school system. While the AWPU remains in place INTO believes that this should be maximised to 1.05 in the present year and that a clear timetable should be established to permit convergence between the primary and post primary AWPU's and remove the inequalities produced by the present funding system.

Section 2 Foundation Stage Factor

2.1

INTO believes that the proposal is again tinkering with the current system. We believe that the current system is inappropriate and creates inequalities between schools and within schools. We are uncertain as to the extent or value of such A Foundation Stage Factor. INTO believes that such monies should be delivered as a right to schools and that the practice of factorising elements of funding is no longer appropriate for moderns schooling and education.

2.2

In regard to the proposal to allocate a minimum lump sum of £12,000 to eligible primary schools we again wish to reserve of comments on this proposal. We are concerned that the proposal is not in sufficient detail as to the nature of the factors that are required to meet the eligibility criteria or to suggest the number of schools that may qualify for such funding. We believe that this drip feed approach clearly shows how inadequate the current system is and how necessary a radical reform of LMS is needed.

2.3

In respect of alternatives we would refer the matter to our enclosed policy paper and additional INTO papers referred to in that paper and in particular to the Devolved School Management model which operates in Scotland.

Section 3 Principals release time factor

3.1

INTO does not believe that the cost of Principals release time should be included as a factor in the Common Funding Formula. INTO takes the view that such monies should be ring fenced as the Principal release monies are designed to release Principals from teaching duties to undertake necessary administration to run the school. Without specific detail of the proposed factor we again would reserve our comments on this particular part of the question. We again express concerns that more and more factors are being introduced to LMS when the real issue is the inequality in funding between the primary and post primary sectors.

3.2

INTO reserves its comments on this element of the proposal. We again are unable to ascertain the scope of the proposed funding or the impact of the funding across the range of schools. We are also uncertain as to whether the application of one factor

may limit funding from another factor and therefore the overall effect of such changes may not be as highlighted in the proposal.

3.3

In respect of alternatives we would refer the matter to our enclosed policy paper and additional INTO papers referred to in that paper and in particular to the Devolved School Management model which operates in Scotland.

Section 2

INTO has publicly expressed our concerns in relation to the current funding arrangements for schools.

In our report of LMS, INTO concluded

Consequently LMS limits the ability of schools to:

- ◆ respond to innovation and change;
- ◆ prevents effective workforce planning in respect of leadership and teaching positions;
- ◆ promotes pay inequalities within and between teaching professionals in the primary and post primary sectors;
- ◆ may limit the scope of schools to respond to initiatives and legislation such as SENDO;
- ◆ does not reflect the issue of educational disadvantage and poverty effectively; and
- ◆ impacts on how the school responds to issues from its enrolment to exam success at all levels.

We are concerned that the focus of the current consultation is such as to seek to direct schools and colleges to a particular outcome and introduce additional factors to add to the overall complexity of the current funding arrangements. Therefore while responding to the consultation, INTO believes that the approach that needs to be taken is reform rather than propping up the present system. Such an approach is important if the school funding arrangements will be able to support an education system fit for the 21st century.

As a result of the examination of various educational funding systems INTO has proposed the following:

- LMS to be critically reviewed to develop a process where schools and Boards of Governors have autonomy to plan and deliver on plans;
- An end to the dip feed approach to funding initiatives in school with agreed funding clearly set out in a programme from the outset;
- Removal of all salaries from LMS with employees being paid centrally ;

- Principals and Boards of Governors to have autonomy within the individual school development plan to take forward plans to reflect the local community and societal needs of the school;
- Agreed procedures on school funding to be developed with the recognised teachers' unions;
- Development of an integrated education process where funding, professional development, employment, inspection and planning are managed in a partnership basis involving INTO and other recognised teacher unions; and
- Funding arrangements to be critically examined to address equality concerns and ensure coherence with strategies to ensure elimination of child poverty in Northern Ireland.

INTO is firmly of the view that educational funding is perhaps the biggest challenge that must be dealt with in the near future. It is for that reason that we are disappointed about the approach taken in respect of this present consultation. INTO has adopted a professional approach to the issue of educational funding as demonstrated by the range of papers published by the Organisation in respect of this matter.

We commend our comments in respect of this consultation and the attached INTO to the Department of Education.

Frank Bunting

Northern Secretary