



Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

DEIS Consultation Submission

Submission on behalf of the INTO

29 May 2015

Assessment of DEIS Programme

Template for Stakeholder Consultation

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Part A-ESRI Report '*Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS*'

Part B-Observations on DEIS - Current Provision

Part C-Suggestions for interventions to Combat Educational Disadvantage into Future

Written submissions may be in English or Irish.

It is intended to place the submissions on the internet.

Information in relation to this submission may be made available to any person who makes a request under the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003.

Submissions should be made by email (Microsoft Word or equivalent) entitled '*Organisation Name/Acronym-DEIS Consultation Submission*' by 5pm Friday 29th May 2015 at the following e-mail address: DEIS_consultation@education.gov.ie

Part A-ESRI Report ‘Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS’

Observations / Comments on ESRI Report ‘Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS’

(This section relates to Report Observations only)

INTRODUCTION

The INTO welcomes the Minister’s decision to carry out a review of DEIS, which is now ten years in operation. There is no doubt that the need to support the education of children from disadvantaged backgrounds to the greatest extent possible and in the most effective manner continues. The number of children in Ireland at risk of poverty or social exclusion increased between 2008 and 2011¹.

The DEIS review should be a holistic review focusing on the comprehensive nature of DEIS supports, the criteria for inclusion in DEIS, and how pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in schools not in DEIS can be supported. The INTO also reiterates its view that addressing educational disadvantage in schools has to be supported by wider social policies that address socio-economic disadvantage in society. Schools alone cannot combat disadvantage.

The INTO’s submission is informed by discussions held by its members in DEIS schools, at INTO branch meetings, and through a survey on DEIS to which 400 teachers responded.

ESRI REPORT

The report on ‘Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS’ provides a useful reference point for considering a review of DEIS. The report provides an analysis of published DEIS evaluations to date, considers national and international research on disadvantage, including the Growing Up in Ireland Study, and makes recommendations.

According to the ESRI report, the concentration of disadvantage has a negative impact on pupils’ progress in schools. The report also states that the social class mix of schools matter. It is not sufficient to aim to address the impact of a concentration of disadvantage and its multiplier effect. Disadvantage impacts on all pupils, not only on those in areas where disadvantage is concentrated. Nevertheless the cumulative effect of disadvantage in high areas of concentration needs more comprehensive support. The INTO believes that it is unfair to state that schemes to support disadvantaged pupils in schools prior to DEIS had no impact. Additional resources provided under the various schemes had a positive impact on pupils’ learning. DEIS has a more focussed approach to evaluation built in to it, and had a stronger focus on measuring particular outcomes than had been the case in previous schemes.

The ESRI report provided an overview of the findings of the various evaluation reports on DEIS carried out by the DES or by the ERC. These reports focussed on achievement in literacy, achievement in numeracy, attendance, retention, and planning. In addition the ERC considered the issue of class size. Evaluations to date have not focussed on well-being and children’s social and emotional development. A longitudinal study of a qualitative nature is required to capture fully the impact of DEIS support programmes over a period of time.

¹ AROPE indicator, EU 2020 Strategy

Part B-Observations on DEIS - Current Provision

Observations of Current Programme i.e. Experience of Implementation / Interventions / Outcomes
(This section relates to experience of DEIS programme observations only)

OBSERVATIONS ON DEIS – CURRENT PROVISION

In general, teachers in DEIS schools are of the view that the additional supports available to them under the DEIS support programme had a positive impact on their pupils' learning and on their well-being. In most cases the criteria for selecting schools to participate in DEIS reflected the socio-economic context of DEIS schools. The exclusion of some schools from DEIS led to some divisiveness, as DEIS schools were prioritised for support, even when other schools had a significant percentage of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Additional Funding

DEIS schools need the extra capitation funding made available under the DEIS programme. This funding has enabled schools to support children's participation in extra-curricular activities, such as visits to theatres and sport events, though in some cases the additional funding was used to meet general running costs. However, the additional capitation is not sufficient, particularly in the context that DEIS schools find it more difficult to fundraise in their local communities. The additional funding for books, while welcome, is also totally inadequate given the cost of books and resources. Many schools lost out on grants for a book rental scheme as they had partial schemes in place when the grant was introduced. Non-DEIS schools with pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds lost their additional SSP grant as part of the general cutbacks in education.

Access to Literacy and Numeracy Programmes

Teachers in DEIS schools are very positive about literacy and numeracy programmes such as Reading Recovery, Maths Recovery, First Steps that were made available under the DEIS support programme. The professional development for teachers that accompanied the introduction of the programmes was considered high quality. According to a majority of teachers DEIS has contributed to enhancing achievement in literacy and numeracy, but not in all cases.

Assistance with School Planning

The professional development available to teachers under the DEIS support programme was positively received in general. The strong focus on developing the skills of planning, target-setting and review enabled school staffs to engage in robust self-evaluation. However, there is sense among teachers that there is an overemphasis on paperwork. The need for documentation is a particular challenge for teaching principals. Teachers are of the view that setting targets with the objective of increasing achievement by percentages alone is not appropriate.

Reduced Class Size

The reduction in the staffing schedule in DEIS Band One was considered one of the most important supports for schools. Reduced PTR facilitated teachers in giving more focused individual attention to pupils. However, the retention of the legacy posts in some schools were essential in ensuring small class sizes. The PTR for DEIS Band One schools as per Circular 05/15 does not reflect the fact that many DEIS schools have legacy posts from previous disadvantage schemes that ensure smaller classes than that envisaged by the schedule. If the schedule were applied in all DEIS Band One schools class sizes would not be

sufficiently small. Reduced PTR does not apply to DEIS Band Two or rural DEIS schools and teachers in these schools are of the view that it should. It is considered wholly inappropriate to have classes of over 30 pupils in DEIS Band Two schools. A maximum class size should apply.

Home School Community Liaison

The HSCL scheme is a valuable resource in DEIS schools. HSCL teachers focus on developing relationship with parents with the objective of enhancing their involvement in their children's learning. According to teachers in schools with HSCL, attendance, a key indicator of success in school, has improved as a result of the work of the HSCL teachers. Pupils and their parents engage more with school when HSCL teachers build up relationships with the home. The outcomes of this type of work are not easily measured but it is work of great value. The abolition of coordinators in rural schools was regretted by rural DEIS schools as they no longer have the resources to build relationships with parents or to support pupil transition to post-primary. There is some concern about the increasing paperwork being introduced to HSCL, and the non-replacement of Educational Welfare Officers, which leads to additional expectations of HSCL teachers.

School Completion Programme

The School Completion Programme is a valuable resource in DEIS schools that have access to it and where it is well run and organised. In many cases SCP works well in an integrated manner with HSCL. SCP activities at primary level aim to engage children with education. Breakfast clubs and homework clubs are usually supported through the SCP programme. However, there are also concerns about how SCP operates in some areas where coordination and management of the service is poor. The cuts in the budget for SCP have had an impact on the services provided at local level and there is an increasing demand for paperwork creating additional workload for principal teachers.

Professional Development

In general, teachers appreciated the professional development available as part of the DEIS support programme and considered it of good quality. However, it is clear that teachers desire further professional development in relation to literacy and mathematics teaching and behaviour management. Professional development for teachers in DEIS schools should be sustained and not considered as short-term.

School Meals Programme

Teachers in DEIS welcome the provision of the school meals programme. However, not all DEIS schools had access to school meals and many schools do not have facilities to participate in breakfast clubs or hot meals. School meals are not always nutritious. There are children coming to school hungry in DEIS schools and some children look for additional food to take home (Callaghan et al. 2010; Downes & Maunsell 2007; Downes, Maunsell & Ivers 2006). In some cases, schools meals are not necessary, quality is poor and there is food waste. Where school meals are concerned there is a wide range of views and experiences and sensitivities around the role of the school and the responsibility of parents.

Other Issues

While teachers had positive experiences of the DEIS support programme in general, teachers noted the lack of certain types of supports. For example, teachers are not happy with the level of support available for children with social and emotional difficulties. Schools need much better access to educational psychological services, clinical psychological services, and

therapy services, such as speech and language and occupational therapy. In addition teachers are strongly of the view that counselling services should be available to pupils in DEIS schools, because many pupils experience trauma and difficulties in their home environments which impacts on their well-being and dispositions for learning. Many teachers are also of the view that the DEIS support programme does not adequately respond to the needs of children with English as an additional language and to the needs of Traveller children, particularly since the Traveller specific resources were withdrawn and the number of language support teachers significantly reduced.

Outcomes

Achievement in literacy and numeracy in DEIS schools has improved since the DEIS support programme was introduced. The retention of current supports is essential to ensure that progress is maintained. Teachers are also of the view that pupil well-being has been enhanced, particularly in DEIS Band One schools, where the PTR is low. Nevertheless, teachers identified a clear need to enhance the supports available to schools to support pupils' social and emotional development. Very few schools have access to a support teacher (originally teacher counsellors). Evaluations of DEIS to date have not focussed on pupils' social and emotional development. For many children, their behaviour, arising from unmet social and emotional needs, is the greatest barrier to their learning. A longitudinal study is required in order to understand the impact of supports over time. Education is a long-term endeavour. It is about developing the potential of all our pupils as citizens. The full impact of a sustained DEIS support programme will not be realised in the short-term.

Part C- Suggestions for Future interventions to Combat Educational Disadvantage

Suggestions for future identification of schools

and/or

Suggestions for interventions that might be included in any future 'DEIS' programme

(This section relates to suggestions for future Model of DEIS only)

SUGGESTIONS for FUTURE INTERVENTIONS to COMBAT EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

The following suggestions are made on the basis of the principle that DEIS supports should be sustained, that there should be no cut to existing supports and that additional funding should be available for any expansion of DEIS.

Criteria for Inclusion in DEIS

Supports should be available to schools on a sliding scale. There are children from disadvantaged backgrounds in almost all schools. Consideration should be given to having additional DEIS Bands. Schools with significant numbers of pupils with English as an additional language should be considered educationally disadvantaged, as they require specific support for language teaching. The criteria for inclusion in DEIS should be clear and transparent. A school's profile should include socio-economic factors such as housing, employment, home language, drugs and alcohol misuse or addiction, direct provision, numbers of Traveller pupils, number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, number of pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, and achievement / educational progress.

Schools should be able to apply to be included in DEIS or to move bands within DEIS every three years. Excluding schools from any additional support available to DEIS schools can be divisive and discriminatory given that school profiles change over time. Not being in DEIS can leave schools whose profiles change significantly at a disadvantage. There needs to be periodic reviews of schools' DEIS status to ensure that schools are receiving appropriate resources according their educational and social profile. There are schools whose profiles have changed considerably since DEIS was introduced. There are communities in Ireland where there has been an influx of immigrant families many of whose main breadwinners may no longer be meaningfully employed (e.g. Ennis, Tralee, Gort, Ballyjamesduff).

Funding

Capitation grants and book grants should be increased. The additional funding is spent on vital school resources and in providing extra-curricular experiences for pupils, particularly in the areas of sports and culture. In some cases, however, the additional funding is used to cover running costs. DEIS schools do not have access to additional funding from their communities. Primary schools are underfunded, in general, and schools rely on fundraising. The State should provide DEIS schools with higher grants to compensate for the lack of local financial support. Additional funding should be available to non-DEIS schools where there are pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Teaching Staff

The pupil teacher ratio (PTR) in DEIS Band One schools should be reduced to 15:1 in infant classes to second classes, as it was in *Breaking the Cycle*. There is plenty of evidence to

suggest that small class sizes for young children make a difference, particularly for disadvantaged children and in the early years². The PTR in senior classes in DEIS Band One schools should be 20:1 as it was in Breaking the Cycle.

The PTR should be reduced in DEIS Band Two schools. The current Band One ratio of 20:1 in infants to second class and 24:1 from 3rd to 6th class would be more appropriate to DEIS Band Two schools, where there is currently no reduction in PTR. There are many classes in DEIS Band Two schools that have over 30 pupils, which is totally unacceptable for disadvantaged schools. Disadvantaged rural schools have no adjustment in PTR, an issue which should also be considered in reviewing the staffing needs of DEIS schools.

All DEIS schools should have additional learning support teachers to support the implementation of learning support programmes such as Reading Recovery, which are very effective. The number of additional teachers available under the General Allocation model is not sufficient for DEIS schools. DEIS schools should receive additional learning support / resource teachers under any new model introduced to allocate additional teaching resources to schools to support children with special educational needs.

DEIS schools should not lose teaching staff based on improvements in test scores. Test scores are but one element of assessing learning outcomes for children. Achieving higher test scores does not diminish the need for additional teaching support in DEIS schools given the complexity of children's social, emotional and learning needs.

Literacy and Numeracy Support

Support for literacy and numeracy programmes such as Reading Recovery, Maths Recovery, First Steps, Ready Steady Go Maths, Mata sa Rang should continue. Alternative approaches to literacy and numeracy that are considered successful should also be supported, for example 'Write to Read'. Access to successful literacy and numeracy programmes should be available to all schools.

Home School Community Liaison

The HSCL scheme should continue as a core support in DEIS schools. Responsibility for the vision and direction of HSCL should return to the Department of Education & Skills, so that its educational focus is not be lost. The work of HSCL is primarily qualitative and therefore difficult to quantify. Teachers value the support of the HSCL teacher in building relationships between parents and teachers focused on their children's education. HSCL teachers acknowledge the need for clear objectives and accountability for their work as HSCL teachers, however, their work is very much process-focussed and should not require excessive paperwork.

School Completion Programme

We note that a review of SCP is currently taking place. The activities organised by SCP are valuable to children, but there are a variety of practices around organisation, coordination and administration, that need to be addressed as part of the review. Responsibility for the School Completion Programme should return to the Department of Education and Skills. The SCP budget has been significantly cut since responsibility for the programme transferred to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs / TUSLA. SCP should be integrated with the work of HSCL and the educational welfare service at local level, without creating additional

² See Blatchford, 2003

workload for principal teachers.

Multi-Disciplinary Support

Support services for children with social and emotional difficulties are not available for the majority of children requiring such services. Waiting lists for CAMHS are unacceptable, often more than two years. Children do not have access to counselling. Some schools spend the DEIS grant on accessing counselling support for pupils. A new structure is required to provide multi-disciplinary services to children, including mental health support, psychiatric support, counselling and therapy services such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. All schools should have access to multi-disciplinary support services, with priority given to DEIS schools initially. The mental health of pupils is seriously under-supported at present. Children in disadvantaged areas are less likely to be brought to appointments outside school. Therefore, services should be available in schools. As a start, support from the National Behaviour Support Service should be extended to primary schools.

Supports for Teachers

The proposal in the original DEIS programme to provide sabbaticals to teachers in DEIS schools never materialised. Initial discussions had taken place with the DES, but no progress was made. Teaching in DEIS schools is very demanding. Teaching children with serious social and emotional difficulties in addition to learning difficulties requires significant physical and emotional energy from teachers. The proposal to offer sabbaticals to teachers aimed to provide teachers with opportunities to enrich their own knowledge and experience through engaging in a variety of education-related activities. Teachers' own mental health and well-being needs to be supported, through appropriate professional development, opportunities for sabbatical leave and access to supervision and counselling.

Professional development for teachers in DEIS schools should be sustained. Engaging in professional development as part of being a teacher during school time should be considered the norm. Additional opportunities for professional development should supplement school-based or school-focussed professional development which is part of the DEIS support programme. Teachers would welcome continued support in teaching literacy and numeracy, in supporting pupil well-being and in managing challenging behaviour. Professional development should also be available for principal teachers to meet their specific needs as leaders of learning in disadvantaged schools.

Traveller Pupils

About half the pupil Traveller population attend DEIS schools. Traveller pupils in non-DEIS schools do not receive additional support since the Traveller specific supports, such as resource teachers for Travellers and the Visiting Teacher Service, were abolished. Attendance is still a challenge among Traveller pupils. The number of Travellers in a school should be reflected in a school's profile when determining the level of resources provided to schools to support pupils with additional needs.

School Meals

There are children coming to school hungry. Hunger among children is a wider societal issue, but manifests itself in schools. Children's learning is compromised when they are hungry.

The root of the problem should be addressed through social policy and a national strategy to prevent hunger in schools, but schools need access to meals to support children who arrive at school hungry. Funding for breakfast clubs should continue to be available where required.

Providing hot meals of high quality should be an integral part of the support programme for DEIS Band One schools.

Administrative Support

The point at which administrative principals and administrative deputy principals are appointed should be reduced. Consideration should be given to appointing an administrative principal in DEIS schools at an earlier point, perhaps, at a similar point as applies in special schools. All schools should have highly qualified administrative staff to support the principal with administrative responsibilities.

Research and Evaluation

Future evaluation of DEIS should include a focus on pupil well-being, pupils' social and emotional development and on pupils' dispositions in relation to learning and school. The DES should commission longitudinal research, to include academic achievement, but also the social and emotional dimensions of learning. A longitudinal research evaluation should enable the Department to assess the longer term benefits of supporting disadvantaged children in schools, and how support in schools interfaces with support for families in communities through social policies.

CONCLUSION

The INTO looks forward to participating in further discussions regarding the future of DEIS. The INTO also recommends that the consultative process be broadened by inviting views and suggestions from teachers, parents, support services, colleges of education and other relevant people. DEIS schools have a wealth of experience to share regarding the success of the current DEIS support programme and what may be lacking in current supports. There are also schools that have children from disadvantaged backgrounds and receive no additional support for these pupils. All views should be taken into account in reviewing the current DEIS support programme and in designing the DEIS follow-on support programme.