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INVITATION

The Editor invites teachers and educationists to contribute papers for publication in *Oideas*. Papers should be at least 1,500 words in length and should not exceed 5,000 words, and they should deal with aspects of education of current, practical, or historical interest.

Book reviews and shorter notices may be published also and publication will be subject to the approval of the Editorial Board.

Papers and reviews should be typed in black, in 1.5 spacing, and preferably should be transmitted to the Editor electronically. A short note on the writer's background should accompany every paper submitted and an abstract of the paper also should be provided.

Preferably, reference to authorities should be made in the text by use of the Harvard (or Authordate) system, but the British Standard (the Numeric system) also is acceptable.

Some examples:

- *Book*
  MacBeath, J. and McGlynn, A. (2004) *Self-evaluation: what's in it for schools?* London and New York, RoutledgeFalmer.

- *Book chapter in an edited volume*
  Gleeson, J. (2004) 'Cultural and Political Contexts of Irish Post-Primary Curriculum: influences, interests and issues', in Sugrue, C. (ed) *Curriculum and Ideology: Irish experiences, international perspectives*, Dublin, The Liffey Press Ltd.

- *Journal Article*
  Hayes, D. (1996) 'Aspiration, Perspiration and Reputation: idealism and self-preservation in small school primary headship', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, vol.26, no.2, pp.379-390.

- *Electronic source*
  Department of Education and Science, Ireland (2006) *A Guide to Whole School Evaluation in Primary Schools* [online], http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobservlet/insp_p_wse_intro.htm (accessed 26 October 2006).

AN GHAEILGE

Cuirfear fáilte ar leith roimh ailt i nGaeilge. Mura gcuirtear ar fáil dúinn iad ní féidir linn iad a fhoilsiú.

Aon tuairimí a nochtar sna hailt in *Oideas* is iad tuairimí na n-údar féin iad. Ní gá go leireoidís, ná go réiteoidís le, beartas na Roinne Oideachais agus Eolaíochta.

Opinions expressed in papers in *Oideas* are those of the authors. They need not necessarily express, or be in accord with, the policy of the Department of Education and Science.

Foilsítear *Oideas* faoi stiúradh Boird Eagarthóireachta.

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Nóta ón Eagarthóir

Bíonn múinteoirí, de bharr gur foghlaimeoirí de shíor iad, i gcónaí ar thóir idéanna nua, ag dul i gcomhairle go rialta le comhghleacaithe measúla, agus ag tomhas a gcuid ratha de réir caighdeán seachtracha. Is fios dóibh nach fada a mhaireann siad siúd nach foghlaimeoirí de shíor iad mar mhúinteoirí rathúla agus nach mór dóibh i ré athraithe gan staonadh a aithint gur rud luachmhar amach is amach é cleachtas machnamhach agus comhoibriú le comhlgheacaithe. Sa tslí seo cuireann siad chun cinn fís chomónta a shainíonn agus a shainmhíníonn luachanna a scoile. Tagann soiléire as seo agus as seo arís tagann gníomh praiticiúil agus air sin a bhraitheann sé cé acu bua nó teip atá i ndán dá gcuid iarrachtaí.Tá sé tuillte ag múinteoirí, agus go deimhin tá sé de cheart acu, go dtacófaí leo anseo agus aithníonn an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta go toilteanach chomh lárnach agus atá a n-obair agus a bhforbairt ghairmiúil. Cuirtear an aithint sin i bhfeidhm i bhfoilsiú *Oideas*, dá luafaí sampla amháin den tacaíocht a chuirtear ar fáil, agus san eagrán reatha is breá linn sraith páipéirí a chur i láthair gurb é a gcroílár cúraim láithreacha ceannairí scoile agus cleachtóirí seomra ranga. Is é atá mar ábhar lárnach ag an dtrí chinn tosaigh díobh ná ceannaireacht scoile agus na haincheisteanna atá roimh príomhoidí scoile; ina dhiaidh sin cuirimid i láthair bréagnú argóintí ar son deireadh a chur leis na honóracha sainordaitheacha sa Ghaeilge don Ardteistiméireacht i gcás fireannach atá ag iarraidh bheith ina múinteoirí bunscoile; ar ais linn ansin do théama na ranganna ilghrád; agus mar dheireadh machnaímíd ar phoitéinseal mór na scríbhneoireachta próisis.

Ina bpáipéar ar cheannaireacht scoile, cuireann an **Dr Mark Morgan** agus an **Dr Ciarán Sugrue** i láthair torthaí ar shuirbhé a chuireann béim ar thábhacht scileanna idirphearsanta agus inphearsanta, maraon le hinniúlacht i réiteach na bhfadhb. Is suimiúil mar a fhaigheann siad amach nach meastar go bhfuil dualgais riaracháin an phríomhoide chomh dúshlánach sin cé go meastar iad a bheith am-íditheach agus, ina theannta sin, is cosúil gurab í an príomhoide mná is mó a bhaineann sásamh as na dúshláin éagsúla a bhíonn roimpi gach lá. Maidir leis na nithe is mó a bhaineann daoine sásamh astu, ní chuirfidh na torthaí ionadh ar mhórán dínn, mar go dtéann daoine leis an múinteoireacht go bunúsach chun dul in éifeacht ar dhaoine eile. Ina leith seo, luann príomhoidí bunscoile agus iarbhunscoile araon taca a thabhairt agus a fháil seachas scrúduithe a aimsiú; agus is den tábhacht é gurb iad na príomhoidí a riarann ar phobail faoi mhíbhuntáiste is mó a bhaineann sásamh as an eachtra agus is lú a mbíonn fonn orthu éirí as.

Ag dul ar aghaidh dó níos fuide le téama na ceannaireachta, tagraíonn an **Dr Vincent McDonald** do chúis imní maidir le riachtanais róil chomhoibrithe an phríomhoide i sochaí eolasbhunaithe. Ag aibhsiú téama athfhilltigh an ró-ualaigh oibre dó, dearbhaíonn sé gur fadhb mhór é seo agus gur cúis mhór imní é i measc príomhoidí. Ar láimh amháin bítear ag súil go mbeidh siad "ina gcinnirí" ar an iliomad páirtithe leasmhara agus iad ag cur chun cinn forbairt agus cur i

bhfeidhm an churaclaim, agus ar an láimh eile bítear ag súil go nglacfaidh siad le hualach riaracháin atá ag dul i dtroime i gcónaí i saol casta oideachasúil atá ag athrú go gasta. Ach críochnaíonn sé go dóchasach, agus é ag cur ar ár súile dúinn an flúirse dea-thola atá mar bhun ag rún diongbháilte aghaidh a thabhairt ar na ceisteanna éagsúla.

Leas-Phríomhoide i mbunscoil i mBaile Átha Cliath is ea **Mary O'Hanlon** agus is maith a chuireann sé seo ar a cumas dearcadh ar leith an chleachtóra a chur i bhfeidhm ar théama na ceannaireachta. Ag aithint di go bhfuil eiseamláir nua ceannaireachta de dhíth i saol athraitheach, tráchtann sí ar an struchtúr bainistíochta laistigh den scoil agus an cumas atá ann creatlach a chur ar fáil chun an eiseamláir ceannaireachta comhoibrithí atá de dhíth a chruthú laistigh de scoileanna. Ag tarraingt di ar thaighde pearsanta, éilíonn sí cláir níos cuimsithí oiliúna ghairmiúil ag an leibhéal áitiúil agus ag an leibhéal náisiúnta araon chun struchtúir bainistíochta laistigh den scoil a thacú agus a fhorbairt agus chun aghaidh a thabhairt ar dheacrachtaí atá ag scoileanna aonair. Ina theannta sin, agus í ag rianú a dearcaidh ar an mbealach ar aghaidh, cuireann sí i láthair sraith tograithe a mbeidh suim ag lucht déanta polasaithe agus ag scoileanna aonair iontu.

Claonadh domhanda is ea baineannú na múinteoireachta bunscoile agus tá sé ina ábhar ag roinnt tuarascálacha ó áisíneachtaí idirnáisiúnta leis na blianta deireanacha. Is casta an scéal é agus i measc na nithe a fheictear go bhfuil tionchar acu air tá leibhéil tuarastail, gradam, stádas, deiseanna chun ardú céime agus aireachtáil chultúrtha ról an oide bhunscoile. Sa tír seo, amhail tír ar bith eile, táimid buartha faoin gceist le tamall agus le déanaí tá iarracht chórasach déanta an éagothroime a mhaolú. Cuireann **Oilibhéir Ó Braonáin** in iúl ina pháipéar go bhfuil dírithe a thuilleadh agus a thuilleadh ag an dioscúrsa poiblí agus acadúil maidir le ceist na rannpháirtíochta fireannaí sa mhúinteoireacht bhunscoile ar riachtanas na Gaeilge i gcomhair iontrála do oiliúint réamhsheirbhíse. San anailís aige, tarraingíonn sé ar staitisticí a fuarthas sa mbaile agus thar lear chun tacú lena argóint nach bhfuil aon nasc cúise idir riachtanas an ghráid C sa Ghaeilge don Ardteistiméireacht agus éagothroime inscne i ngairm na múinteoireachta bunscoile sa tír seo. Is cosúil go measfaidh móran léitheoirí gur faisnéiseach agus gur áititheach an t-ionchur seo uaidh.

Filleann príomhoide bunscoile, **Liam Turner**, ar thopaic a ardaíodh ar dtús again in *Oideas 51* i 2003. Ina pháipéar ar oiliúint réamhsheirbhíse agus in-seirbhíse do mhúineadh ilghrád in Éirinn cáineann sé ionchur institiúidí oideachais agus iad ag ullmhú múinteoirí a mbíonn níos mó ná grád amháin acu ina seomraí ranga amach ansin. Ag tarraingt dó ar thaighde pearsanta, éilíonn sé ullmhú gairmiúil feabhsaithe do mhúineadh sa timpeallacht ilghrád agus struchtúir d'fhorbairt ghairmiúil dóibh siúd a bhfuil ranganna ilghrád ina gcuid den saol laethúil acu.

Tá seacht mblianta déag caite ó d'fhoilsigh *Oideas* páipéar ó pheann iomráiteach Donald Graves as Ollscoil New Hampshire. Bhí an t-ionchur uaidh 'All Children Can Write' in *Oideas 35* ina fhoinse luachmhar inspioráide do an-chuid múinteoirí a ghlac misneach as an scéala uaidh go méadaítear ar an eolas trí scríbhneoireacht. Bliain i ndiaidh an pháipéir sin, in *Oideas 37*, tháinig 'Interactive

Writing: Giving Children a Voice' le Nigel Hall. Trí mhalartú téacsanna bríocha a bhfuil cuspóir leo thar thréimhse fada ama a chur chun cinn, chuir an Dr Hall i bhfeidhm an-chuid de léargais Graves i bpáipéar a cuireadh an-fháilte roimhe i measc mórán múinteoirí bunscoile. In ár bpáipéar deireanach leanann **Marie Gilmore** leis an traidisiún seo agus tugann sí faoi théama na scríbhneoireachta. Ag tarraingt di ar Graves agus ar dhaoine eile scrúdaíonn sí an tionscadal *Write-A-Book* a achoimríonn gluaiseacht na scríbhneoireachta próisis. Ag tagairt di dá taighde féin ar na fachtóirí a spreagann agus a ghríosaíonn scríbhneoirí óga, cuireann sí ar ár súile na torthaí sonraitheacha i dtéarmaí forbartha pearsanta, agus go háirithe an méadú sa féin-mheas, a thagann as cur i bhfeidhm na scríbhneoireachta próisis.

Editorial Comment

Teachers as perpetual learners are constantly reaching out for new ideas, regularly consulting with valued colleagues and measuring their success against external standards. They know that those who are not constantly learning do not long survive as successful teachers and that in an era of relentless change they must place a premium on reflective practice and collaboration with colleagues in promoting a shared vision that articulates and defines the values of their school. This promotes a clarity that in turn leads to practical action that determines the success or failure of their endeavours. Teachers deserve, indeed they are entitled, to be supported in this and the centrality of their work and professional development is readily recognised by the Department of Education and Science. This is given practical effect by *Oideas* and in the current issue we are happy to present a series of papers that have at their core the immediate concerns of school leaders and classroom practitioners. The first three centre on school leadership and the dilemmas confronting school principals; we next present a dismissal of the arguments for removing the mandatory honours Irish at Leaving Certificate for male primary teacher candidates; we then return to the theme of multi-grade classes; and, finally, we consider the rich potential of process writing.

In their paper on school leadership, **Dr Mark Morgan** and **Dr Ciarán Sugrue**, present survey findings that emphasise the importance of interpersonal and intra-personal skills, together with competence in problem solving. Interestingly, they find that although administrative duties are seen to be time-consuming they are not held to be particularly challenging and, further, it is the female principal who seems to derive the greater satisfaction from the various challenges that present each day. As for what principals find most rewarding, their findings will not surprise many of us given that people enter teaching fundamentally to make a difference. In this regard, both primary and post primary principals cite giving and receiving support as opposed to securing examination success; and, importantly, those principals who serve disadvantaged communities are the ones who find the experience the most satisfying and who are least inclined to want to leave.

Following the leadership theme further, **Dr Vincent McDonald**, raises a concern for the collaborative role requirements of the principal in a knowledge-based society. Highlighting the recurring theme of work overload, he argues that this is especially problematic and gives rise to serious concern for principals. On the one hand they are expected to 'give leadership' to a multiplicity of stakeholders while promoting curricular development and implementation, and on the other they are expected to discharge an increasingly onerous administrative function in a rapidly changing and complex educational theatre. But he ends on a hopeful note, pointing to an abundance of good will underpinning a determination to address the various issues.

Mary O'Hanlon is a deputy principal in a Dublin primary school and this positions her admirably to bring the unique perspective of the practitioner to bear upon the theme of leadership. Recognising that a new model of leadership is

needed for changing times, she deals with the in-school management structure and its potential to provide a framework to develop the necessary collaborative leadership model for schools in rapidly changing times. Drawing from personal research, she calls for more comprehensive programmes of professional training at both local and national level to support and develop in-school management structures and to address individual school difficulties. Further, in outlining her perspective on the way forward she presents a series of proposals that will be of interest to policy makers and individual schools.

The feminization of primary school teaching represents a global trend that is the subject of several reports by international agencies in recent years. The subject is a complex one and factors that are seen to bear upon the issue include the salary levels, prestige, status, promotion opportunities and cultural perceptions of the role of the primary school teacher. In this country no less than any other, we have been concerned about the issue and in recent times a systematic effort has been made to address the imbalance. In his paper **Oilibhéir Ó Braonáin** points out that public and academic discourse surrounding the issue of male participation in primary teaching has come to focus increasingly on the Irish language requirement for entry to pre-service training. In his analysis, he draws from statistics from home and abroad to support his argument that there is no causal link between the Gaeilge requirement and gender imbalance in the primary teaching profession in this country. It is likely that a great many readers will find his contribution to be illuminating and convincing.

Primary school principal, **Liam Turner**, returns to a topic first raised in *Oideas* in 2003, and in his paper on pre-service and in-service provision for multi-class teaching in Ireland he is critical of the contribution of education institutions until recently to the preparation of those teachers who find themselves with responsibility for more than one class in their classrooms. Drawing from personal research, he calls for an improved professional preparation for teaching in the multi-class environment and new structures for continuing professional development for those for whom multi-classes is an everyday reality.

Eighteen years have passed since *Oideas* published a paper from the pen of the acclaimed Donald Graves of the University of New Hampshire. His contribution 'All Children Can Write' in *Oideas 35* became a valuable source and inspiration to a great many teachers who took to heart his message that knowledge is increased through the writing process. This paper was followed in the following year, in *Oideas 37*, by Nigel Hall's 'Interactive Writing: Giving Children a Voice' which in promoting the exchange of meaningful and purposeful texts across an extended period of time gave practical expression to many of Graves' insights. In our final paper, **Marie Gilmore** follows on in this tradition and addresses the theme of writing. Drawing from Graves and others, she examines the *Write-A-Book* project that epitomizes the process writing movement. Drawing from her own research on the factors that inspire and motive young writers, she points to the impressive returns in terms of personal development, and in particular the growth of self-esteem, that accrue from the implementation of the process writing approach.

Mark Morgan and Ciaran Sugrue

THE SEVEN CHALLENGES AND FOUR REWARDS OF BEING A SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: RESULTS OF A NATIONAL SURVEY

Mark Morgan is Head of the Education Department in St. Patrick's College. His research has focused largely on educational disadvantage and prevention of substance misuse. Currently, he is involved, in conjunction with colleagues in CERC (Colleges of Education Research Consortium on a study of teachers' job satisfaction. Ciaran Sugrue is Director of Post-graduate studies in Education at St. Patrick's College. He is Editor of 'Irish Educational Studies' and author of several books, most recently 'Passionate Principalship: Learning from Life History of School Leaders'. (Routledge/Falmer). The authors have recently completed the evaluation of the MISNEACH programme devised by the 'Leadership Development for Schools' team. This paper was prepared in collaboration with the 'Leadership Development for Schools' Team.

ABSTRACT: This national survey of administrative principals of primary and post-primary schools profiles the demands of a principal's role and the main sources of his/her job satisfaction. The findings show that the most challenging features of a principal's job centre on interpersonal and intra-personal skills and require problem-solving/creativity, particularly in relation to policy development and implementation. With regard to job satisfaction, giving and receiving support is by far the most salient feature. When comparisons are made between principals in different kinds of schools (primary vs. post-primary, designated disadvantaged vs. others), only modest differences emerge. Female principals rate themselves as better able to deal with the most difficult challenges in the job and at the same time derive more satisfaction from their work. Just over one-fifth of the sample said that they sometimes think about leaving the job. This group differ from the others in that they have served a relatively longer time than the contented principals, have less energy and enthusiasm, and find their work less rewarding. Implications for some aspects of policy and professional support are identified in conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most consistent findings of school leadership literature for more than two decades is that the role played by principals is critically important (Leithwood *et al*. 1999, 1996; MacBeath, 1998; Starratt, 2004). Significantly, as pressures for school reform have gathered pace and intensity, for some, at least, the possibility of becoming a principal has become less attractive (see Hargreaves *et al.* 2003). While some have argued that 'teacher leadership[1]' (Harris, 2005) or 'distributed leadership[2]' (Spillane, 2006) has become a necessity rather than an option to address this 'crisis' of the growing complexity of school leadership, others have called for a reconceptualisation of the role. In an Irish context, these pressures and international 'social movements' have been impacting on the realities of principals' lives and work.

CONTEXT OF PRESENT STUDY

How can we describe the job of being an administrative principal in a primary or post-primary school? What kinds of rewards sustain and motivate Principals? These are some of the questions posed in the present paper which arises from an evaluation of 'MISNEACH' - a programme designed specifically for newly appointed Principals by the Leadership Development for Schools team (LDS) (Morgan and Sugrue, 2005). In order to do this effectively, there was a need to create a profile of some relevant features of Principals' work including the difficulties, pressures and rewards of the job. This resulted in our sending a survey questionnaire to a national sample of administrative Principals (primary and post-primary) in May 2004. The Principals engaged seriously with the exercise of completing the questionnaire and the response rate of 76% is quite remarkable.

To situate our findings, we first refer to a number of relevant features of the policy and research context of the work. A significant part of the legislative context is the Education Act (1998) which sets out in general terms the main duties of the Principal. What is remarkable about this list is the range of activities involved; the increasing demands on Principals reflect the related issues of the changes in Irish society and the changes in the role that schools are required to fulfil. Not

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[1] Teacher leadership in existing literature is not very tightly defined. It seeks to draw attention to the leadership roles played by teachers in the daily routines of schools, and to move beyond notions of the 'super' principal (Copland, 2001) or the 'superwoman' principal (Reynolds, 2002) to a sense of shared leadership, which also sees all teachers, and not merely members of middle-management, as actual and potential leaders.

[2] Spillane (2006) (and colleagues) is frequently cited as the leading international expert on distributed leadership. While the concept is not new, and there are various models of what it looks like from a practice perspective, Spillane's view is that it is premised on concept of 'distributed cognition' - that learning in organisations is shared. Accordingly, leadership is 'distributed' in variety of ways within organisations, or as he prefers to say 'stretched over' the school community. However, this notion has potential also to stretch the meaning of leadership beyond meaningfulness!

only are there more 'subjects' on the curriculum but the kinds of social problems that school are expected to address have multiplied.

The report of the working group on the Role of the Primary School Principal (DES, 1999) dealt with a number of issues relating to the developing role of the Principal. The recommendations made are illustrative of the issues encountered by Principals and focus particularly on the role of school middle-management, Boards of Management and administrative supports. That report gave particular attention to professional development of Principals and the need for structured and easily accessible programmes for in-career development (p. 103).

The international literature on Principalship provides an interesting backdrop for the issues that are of concern in the Irish context. Sugrue (2005) reviews evidence of the 'relentless press, frequently fuelled by the school-effectiveness literature (which) has unleashed a set of policies that have pummelled teachers and principals' (p.12). He also makes the point that the advances in the conceptualisations of leadership emanating from the academic community (instructional, transformational, distributed, participative etc.) may actually add to the confusion rather than providing appropriate guidelines and signposts. As the role has become more onerous, diffuse and complex, and the 'myth of the super principal' (Copland, 2001) or the 'superwoman' principal (Reynolds, 2002) increasingly appears unsustainable, the issue of school leadership has risen higher on the political, policy and research agenda internationally.

A final part of the motivation and context of the research is to provide Principals with a descriptive model so that they can 'map' their own situation onto the profile that emerges and compare themselves with the prevailing picture. With this in mind, the actual instrument and the scoring procedures are described so that individual Principals can see how they view the challenges and rewards of their work in comparison with the national averages. We conclude with some implications, particularly regarding principals' professional development.

There is one important limitation to the present study viz., that it is confined to administrative Principals. We recognise the significance of the teaching Principals both in terms of importance of their role and also their number (IPPN 2005, Mulryan-Kyne, 2005). However, the problem is that the issues confronting teaching and administrative Principals are so different in important respects, that it did not seem appropriate to include both groups in an initial effort to conceptualise the role. Beyond this important limitation, the study includes all the main sectors: primary and post-primary schools, boys', girls' and mixed schools, and those schools designated as serving disadvantaged communities and those not having that designation.

SURVEY OF ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPALS

Questionnaire
There were three broad sections in the questionnaire. The first was concerned with background factors including number of years as Principal, experience of teaching, other positions prior to appointment as Principal and leadership/ qualifications/training. Section B was concerned with the challenges of the

Principal's work. The basic idea was to cover the main dimensions including interaction/communication, administration, management, leadership, evaluation, and policy development/analysis. In total thirty-five specific features were derived from these categories (four to seven for each domain). For each item the respondents were asked to say how challenging they found each feature of the role. The options were 'Very challenging', 'Challenging', 'Somewhat challenging' and 'Not challenging'. The items used in the analysis are shown in Appendix 1.

Section C was concerned with features of job satisfaction, including intrinsic aspects, the opportunities to affirm others and the recognition/support given to the Principal. For each of these eighteen items, the respondents were asked to say how rewarding they found the feature in question (ranging from 'very rewarding' to 'not rewarding').

A total of 800 questionnaires were despatched to administrative Principals of Primary and Post-primary schools in late May 2004. This figure constituted one third of the post primary Principals in the country and one-quarter of the Primary Principals. The high response rate (76%) ensured that those responding were representative of Irish schools.

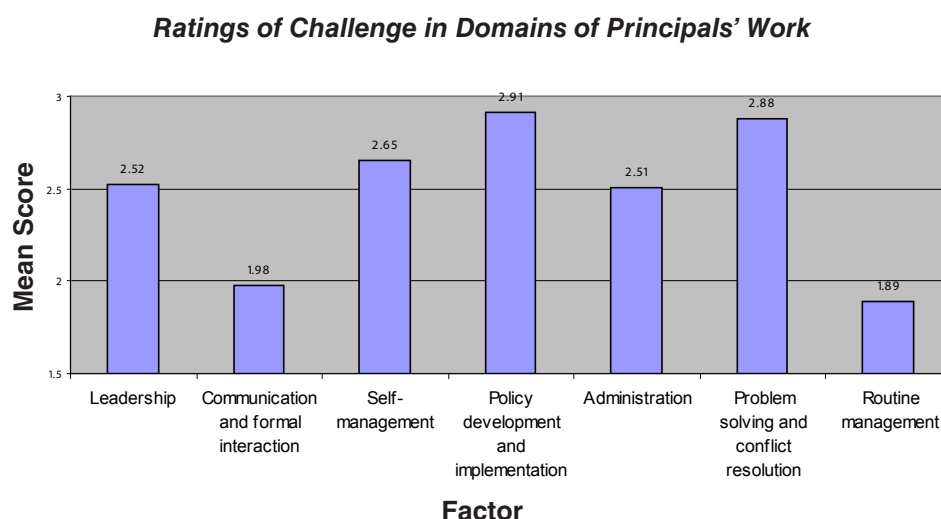**Challenges and Domains of Principalship**

As noted above, thirty-five features of a Principal's work were listed and the respondents indicated the level of challenge of each one. To identify the core dimensions or constructs underlying these features, the statistical technique of *Factor Analysis* was utilised. This shows how certain features 'hang together' so that a relatively small number of underlying factors can account for the features in question. Two other aspects of the technique are worth mentioning. The first is that the *meaning* of the clustering of items is critical in identifying underlying dimensions; the final selection of factors is based on the extent to which the statistical solution makes sense in terms of what is known about Principals' work in the extant literature. Secondly, the technique inevitably results in some items being dropped from the analysis because they do not correlate with relevant others.

The formal properties of the statistical 'solution' are shown in Appendix 1, i.e. the individual items and the correlations with the underlying factor. Three to five items emerged for each of the seven. Table 1 presents the most relevant information from the perspective of the present paper, viz., the mean score of each factor, that is, the extent to which the Principals found this area to be challenging (high mean score indicates greater challenge). A summary of this information is shown in bar-graph form in Figure 1.

As can be seen from Table 1/Figure 1, *Policy development and implementation* (mean 2.91) is perceived as the most challenging feature of a Principal's job while '*Routine management'* (1.89) is the least challenging. Two other domains of responsibility are perceived to be particularly challenging, viz. *problem solving/ conflict resolution* and *self-management*. Two domains of work are perceived as moderately challenging (*leadership and administration*) and two areas as not especially challenging (*routine management* and *communication/formal interaction*).

The most challenging areas have two features in common with each other: They require interpersonal and intra-personal skills and the requirement of a high level of problem-solving and creativity, whether in the interpersonal area or in relation to policy development and implementation. Conversely, the areas of low challenge in a Principal's work are more prescribed and formal and make rather less demands on problem-solving capacities. While these latter tasks may be time-consuming, they were less challenging since the 'solutions' merely involved doing the job ('liaising with other agencies' 'chairing meetings').

Figure 1.

Ratings of Challenge in Domains of Principals' Work

Table 1. *Ratings of challenge in domains of Principals' work*

Factor	Mean Score*	Sample item	Percent found challenging
A. Leadership	2.52	'Creating a climate for innovation'	18.6% Very challenging 75.6% Somewhat challenging 5.8% Not challenging
B. Communication and formal interaction	1.98	'Planning and chairing meetings'	10.2% Very challenging 67.7% Somewhat challenging 22.2% Not challenging
C. Self-management	2.65	'Avoiding stress'	41.9% Very challenging 49.0% Somewhat challenging 9.0% Not challenging
D. Policy development and implementation	2.91	'Working out implications of national policy'	32.6% Very challenging 65.3% Somewhat challenging 2.1% Not challenging

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Table 1. *Ratings of challenge in domains of Principals' work (continued)*

Factor	Mean Score*	Sample item	Percent found challenging	
E. Administration	**2.51**	'Keeping school records'	14.8%	Very challenging
			65.9%	Somewhat challenging
			19.3%	Not challenging
F. Problem solving and Conflict resolution	**2.88**	'Balancing needs of conflicting groups'	23.4 %	Very challenging
			72.0%	Somewhat challenging
			4.6%	Not challenging
G. Routine management	**1.89**	'Liasing with other agencies' (church, community)	3.2%	Very challenging
			50.1%	Somewhat challenging
			46.7%	Not challenging

* *Higher score indicates higher level of challenge.*

Since *Policy Development/implementation* was identified as the greatest single challenge in their work, it is worth asking what factors contribute to the difficulties that are experienced and indeed how these might be ameliorated. Some indications of why this is the case are found in the part of the questionnaire asking the respondents to say what measures would assist them in their work. More than three-quarters of the Principals said that 'having expert advice in one place or office' would be 'very helpful' and almost no one disagreed. They also thought that 'having a clearer specification regarding the responsibilities of post-holders 'would assist their work greatly'. It is reasonable to conclude that these particular measures might be especially helpful in relation to policy development/ implementation. It is also worth noting that, from a policy perspective, Regional Education Boards (REBs, structures that were espoused policy in the Government White Paper, *Charting Our Education Future* (Ireland, 1995) have not been implemented by subsequent Governments, and this leaves principals working in isolation and without systemic support. While there may be support available from the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) and the National Association of Principals and Deputies (NAPD), anecdotal evidence suggests that the recent proliferation of new agencies and advisory bodies has resulted in fragmentation and incoherence.

Type of School and Gender

For the most part, the differences between primary and post-primary Principals were minimal. Of the seven dimensions of the Principalship only on one was there a statistically significant difference viz. leadership; $F_{(2, 601)} = 6.12$, $p<.001$. What emerged here is that Post-primary Principals found the leadership dimension of their role significantly more challenging than did Primary Principals.

However, the differences associated with gender of Principal are striking. As indicated in Table 2, males rated each dimension of their work consistently more challenging than did female Principals. In the case of two domains, this difference emerges as statistically significant (leadership and policy development).

Table 2. *Comparison of male and female Principals on measures of challenge*

Domain	Males	Females	Difference
Leadership	2.59	2.46	p<.01
Communication/ formal interaction	2.02	1.95	n.s
Self-management	2.69	2.60	n.s
Policy development/ implementation	2.95	2.84	p<.05
Administration	2.55	2.47	n.s.
Conflict resolution	2.90	2.87	n.s.
Routine management	1.90	1.88	n.s

* *Higher score indicates higher perceived challenge*

Table 3 displays the mean challenge for Principals of disadvantaged and other schools. What emerges here is that for five of the domains, the Principals of disadvantaged schools experienced a higher level of challenge and for three of these, the differences were statistically significant. However, it should also be noted that where a sizable difference might reasonably be expected (self-management, which includes coping with stress), no significant difference emerged. Nevertheless, from a policy perspective, more differentiated approaches to resource allocation and professional support seems appropriate with those facing the greatest challenges being provided with more adequate services. Otherwise, their leadership may not be sustainable.

Table 3. *Comparison of Principals of disadvantaged and other schools on measures of challenge*

Domain	Disadvantaged Schools	Other Schools	Difference
Leadership	2.52	2.53	n.s
Communication/ formal interaction	2.01	1.98	n.s
Self-management	2.71	2.63	n.s
Policy development/ Implementation	2.99	2.85	p<.05
Administration	2.70	2.43	p. <001
Conflict resolution	2.86	2.89	n.s
Routine management	2.03	1.84	p<.001

* *Higher score indicates higher perceived challenge*

Rewards and job satisfaction of being a principal

In constructing the items for this section, a number of sources were drawn on including literature on work motivation and recent studies of job satisfaction (O'Connell, *et al*. 2004). The final list of items rated by the Principals (very rewarding to not rewarding) included the giving and receiving of support, the intrinsic nature of the work, opportunity for leadership, and affirmation and recognition.

As in the cases of the challenges of being a Principal, a factor analysis was carried out using the same criteria and a four-factor solution emerged as most appropriate. The first factor (see Table 4) which involves '*giving and receiving support'* is not only the strongest (in a statistical sense) but also has a substantially higher mean score indicating that Principals found this to be the most important of the four sources of reward. It involves not merely being aware and getting the support of staff but also giving support to colleagues and students. It is interesting that being supported and giving support are so closely related and are together such an important source of satisfaction.

The second most important source of satisfaction is the *intrinsic nature of the job* of Principal, and the variety and challenge of the job. The opportunity to *give leadership and direction* is the third most important source of satisfaction. As can be seen from the example in Table 4, the rewards here involve knowing

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that you can bring the school and staff in a worthwhile direction, something that presumably is a major motivator in becoming a Principal. Finally, the fourth source of job satisfaction is focused around approval and affirmation (other Principals, 'people in general' and Inspectors).

Table 4: *Sources of job satisfaction in Principal's lives*

Factor	Mean Score*	Sample item	Percent found Rewarding*
A. Receiving and Giving support	**3.50**	'Being supportive of staff'	Very rewarding 53.2%* Rewarding 36.8% Not rewarding 2.3%
B. Leadership rewards	**3.02**	'Opportunity to give direction and leadership'	Very rewarding: 30.5%* Rewarding 53.6% Not rewarding 1.4%
C. Intrinsic rewards of work	**3.06**	'The variety of work in my job'	Very rewarding 35.6%* Rewarding 43.3% Not rewarding 5.1%
D. Recognition and Affirmation	**2.96**	'The recognition of other Principals'	Very rewarding 22.9%* Rewarding 43.1% Not rewarding 6.5%

* *Because there was a 'don't know' category, these percentages do not add to 100%*

Figure 2.

Sources of Job Satisfaction in Principals' Lives
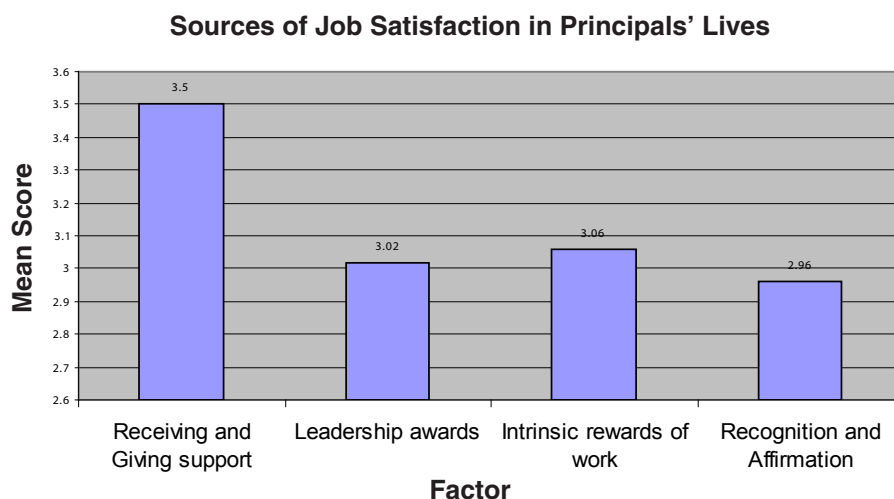
A comparison of male and female Principals with regard to the sources of job satisfaction is shown in Table 5. This indicates that on all four sources of job satisfaction, female principals reported getting more rewards. On two of these, the differences were statistically significant. There were no differences between primary and post-primary Principals with regard to job satisfaction.

Table 5. *Comparison of Male and Female Principals on Sources of Job Satisfaction**

	Males	*Females*	*Difference*
Received and giving support	3.46	3.54	n.s
Leadership rewards	3.02	3.04	n.s
Intrinsic rewards of work	2.99	3.15	p<.05
Recognition and affirmation	2.89	3.04	p<.01

* Higher scores indicates greater satisfaction from the source in question

When comparison is made between the sources of job satisfaction for Principals of disadvantaged schools and those in other schools, it emerges that the pattern is almost identical except with regard to 'receiving and giving support'. Significantly, Principals in disadvantaged schools perceived this as a more important source of job satisfaction than was the case in other schools. It is worth noting that the items measuring this dimension (see Appendix 1) focus on the support of colleagues on the staff and giving support to students – interactions which emerge as significantly more rewarding for Principals in disadvantaged schools. It is probably the case also that more time, effort and energy are devoted to these elements of the role in disadvantaged contexts to the possible detriment of other aspects of the principalship. Consequently, from a continuing personal development perspective, this may also point to the necessity for different kinds of support that is school context and career stage sensitive.

The discontented principal
When the respondents were asked if they had ever thought of leaving their position as Principal, just over 21% said that they 'think about leaving frequently' or that they had 'decided to leave'. Without further information, it is not appropriate to place great emphasis on this particular figure. For example, we do not know what a comparable statistic might be for other occupations. Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to identify this group as relatively discontented, at least compared to their colleagues.   It is interesting to know how this group differs from others in terms of their background, years of service, type of school and more importantly,

in terms of their perception of both the challenges of school Principalship and the rewards of the position.

In terms of background factors, the differences are minimal and where they exist are largely not statistically significant (Table 6). Slightly more women than men indicated they were thinking of leaving but this difference was not significant (20% vs. 23%). Somewhat more primary than post-primary teachers expressed the desire to leave (23% vs. 17%) but again this difference was not statistically significant. While relatively *fewer* Principals in disadvantaged schools indicated the desire to leave their position, this difference (6%), while approaching significance, did not actually reach the required level.

One background factor that did emerge as significant was the number of years service. Those Principals who frequently thought about leaving had on average two years longer service as Principals than those who did not (11.3 yrs. vs. 9.2 yrs.), p<.05. Overall, background characteristics were not a major feature in influencing thinking about quitting.

The major differences between the group considering leaving and the other were around their ratings of themselves (energy, enthusiasm and readiness to apply again) and also in the rewards/sources of satisfaction. On all four sources of job satisfaction, the discontented group indicated that they found each one to be less rewarding than the other Principals. It is also worth noting that in most areas of challenge in Principals' work, there were no differences between the two groups of Principals. The exceptions were in self-management, conflict resolution and policy development. With regard to theses latter domains, the discontented Principals saw these areas as a significantly greater challenge to them.

In summary, it would seem that as expected the discontented group differs in a number of respects, the main factor being how rewarding they find their work. In other words, they can still manage most of the challenges that come their way, but the 'buzz' of motivation and energy deriving from the nature of the work and the support of colleagues does not happen for them in the same way. However, our sense of the data, and taking into account our evaluation of the MISNEACH programme, is that there is often a thin line between being satisfied and dissatisfied, with sustaining a positive climate and being critical to the 'ecology' of satisfaction. What is not evident from these data is the extent to which the balance of school ecology is damaged by internal strife, or by turbulence in the personal lives of principals, or elements of both. This is a potentially fruitful avenue for further research, while there is an increasing volume of literature that points to the importance of the 'self', the person in the professional (Day and Sachs, 2004).

Table 6. *Comparison of discontented and other Principals*

	'Discontent' group	*'Content' group*	*Significance*
Attributes*			
Energy and enthusiasm	2.76	3.18	p<.01
Readiness to apply again	2.21	2.85	p. <.01
Level of Challenge in Domains of work**			
Leadership	2.50	2.60	ns
Communication/formal interaction	2.10	1.96	ns
Self-management	3.04	2.53	p<.01
Policy development/ Implementation	3.01	2.87	p<.05
Administration	2.56	2.50	ns
Conflict resolution	3.03	2.85	p<.05
Routine management	1.98	1.88	ns
Sources of Job satisfaction**			
Received and giving support	3.37	3.53	p<.01
Leadership rewards	2.89	3.08	p<.05
Intrinsic rewards of work	2.82	3.13	p<.01
Recognition and affirmation	2.85	3.01	p<.05

* Higher scores indicates higher energy/satisfaction
** Higher score indicates higher perceived level of challenge
*** Higher score indicates higher job satisfaction from that source

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Other studies have focused specifically on challenges/stresses and sources of job satisfaction of Principals. In a study of 145 Principals of primary schools, Mahon (1993) examined sources of job dissatisfaction (roughly equivalent to 'challenges' in the present study) and found a pattern that was not greatly different from the present findings. In particular, the sources of job satisfaction

are remarkably similar to those emerging in the present study. Relationships with teachers emerged as a major source as did the leadership role and success of the school.

In the international literature, the themes in the studies of everyday experiences of Principals are the demands of multi-tasking, diversification of the role, and the never-ending nature of the work. A UK study of 2,638 head-teachers by Cooper and Kelly (1993) found that in addition to work overload, handling relationships with staff emerged consistently as the strongest predictor of stress and job dissatisfaction. Similarly, a qualitative study of head teachers in the UK, found that they saw their role as '…involving them in a wide range of issues and topics, which they often dealt with in rapid order, and they had become accustomed to switching from one thing to another….they also understood that the work was never ending… and .. exhausting' (Southwork, Pocklington and Weindling, 1998, p. 105).

Conclusions
A number of conclusions emerge from this study. Firstly, in terms of the questions posed at the beginning, we can now identify some strands of a Principal's work that make the job demanding. One of these strands is around policy development and especially the working out of the implications of national policy for their school. Another strand that presents challenges is inter-personal skills and conflict resolution, as well as aspects of self-management. On the other hand, more formal features of being a Principal, including routine administration and formal interaction with relevant agencies, are perceived as not especially challenging (but may be time-consuming). It is also noteworthy how small the differences are between types of schools. Being an administrative principal does not seem to change across these categories of schools. However, as indicated above, there may be considerable variation in the amount of time devoted to interpersonal dimensions of the role that are influenced significantly by social context. Further study of this 'dimension' of the role in differing contexts seems highly appropriate.

Secondly, sources of job satisfaction were important to the Principals, ranging from the intrinsic features of their work like challenge and variety to the affirmation of other Principals and parents. The source that was identified as most important was the giving and receiving of support from colleagues on the staff, together with supporting students. In other words, the collegial community of the school provided the foundation for the rewards that were regarded as most important. It is significant that this is the feature that emerged as strongest rather than a cognitive outcome like examination results.

Thirdly, the gender differences are remarkably consistent, if not at times very large. Female principals rated themselves as better able to deal with the challenges in the various domains than did their male counterparts. Moreover, compared to their male counterparts, they derived relatively more satisfaction from some sources of job satisfaction, especially with regard to affirmation of colleagues and the intrinsic features of the work. It is particularly interesting that

these findings are consistent with Coleman's research in the UK showing that the majority of female head-teachers used a collaborative and people-oriented style of management (Coleman, 2000). This difference between male and female Principals might well account for the differences in job satisfaction found here.

Fourthly, the differences in the experiences of Principals in disadvantaged vs other schools are not substantial and in some cases opposite of what might be expected. Principals of disadvantaged schools found that some domains were relatively more challenging but these had to do with administration and management rather than the interpersonal issues or indeed in relation to leadership. It may be that these Principals are relatively more frustrated with routine aspects of being a principal when they see relatively more important priorities. For example, they may be required to complete more administrative chores as a consequence of being designated disadvantaged. What is especially interesting is that the sources of job satisfaction were as strong in disadvantaged schools and significantly more so in relation to 'giving and receiving support from staff and students'. A recent study found that the job satisfaction of beginning teachers was similar in disadvantaged and other schools (Morgan and O'Leary, 2004). However, beyond the evidence of this particular survey, it may also be the case that principals of disadvantaged schools have a commitment to equity and social justice, thus fortified by a (pre-) disposition towards 'making a difference' in the lives of their students that contributes also to their own job satisfaction'; their 'passionate purpose' may sustain them in difficult circumstances (Sugrue, 2005), and is certainly an area worthy of further study.

Finally, it is worth considering a number of policy matters arising from this survey. While we have been able to identify key sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the work of principals, sources that are broadly consistent with evidence generated elsewhere, it may be time to consider principal 'profiles' as a means of providing greater 'match' between those being appointed and what schools and their respective context may actually require. Perhaps the homogeneity evident in the evidence presented here is a function of a lack of this kind of differentiation in the Irish context, where appointing the 'safe pair of hands' has been an established orthodoxy (Sugrue, 2003.)

Another aspect of policy to which the study gives rise is the absence of regional structures and the consequent isolation of individual principals. While the Leadership Development for Schools initiative may alleviate this to some extent, interpretation of policy at the regional and local level is not part of its brief in the sense that it is not a substitute for or a surrogate regional authority. Consequently, it may be very timely to revisit this important structural issue if principals are not to continue to be condemned to spending inordinate amounts of time making sense of new policies in isolation from colleagues.

Despite the tendency towards homogenisation in the role, we consider it to be unwise to pursue a 'one fit for all' in relation to principals' professional learning. While there is need for more evidence regarding the longer term professional needs of principals, it is necessary to look towards teacher leadership and distributed leadership as well as more democratic approaches to decision-making, if we are

to create schools appropriate for the 21st century (York-Barr and Duke, 2004). This is likely to require more sustained as well as more differentiated approaches to CPD.

It is important also to register some concerns about the findings. For example, how are we to interpret the finding that there were few differences between schools in how Principals perceived their role? Does it suggest that there is an unhealthy degree of conformity and compliance with existing policies and dominant practices? In a US context, Cuban (2003) suggests that, in recent times, the relentless pursuit of raising test scores as part of a policy of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), a diversity of 'good schools' is rapidly disappearing. We concur with his conclusion that this outcome is regrettable. Perhaps it is time for a policy on school diversity that would include deliberate fostering of different kinds of 'good schools' rather than schools competing to be the same. This too requires additional attention, for if Ireland is to continue to be competitive in the 'global economy', diversity, creativity and imagination rather than orthodoxy and conformity need to be fostered deliberately.

It is important also to recognise the importance of teaching principals, their role and its challenges, while we are open to the charge of neglecting them in this particular study! Obviously the nature of a teaching Principal's work is significantly different. Furthermore, the kind of demands and stresses are somewhat different for teaching Principals and the enhancement of the organisation and management of such schools will be different from larger schools (IPPN, 2005). These differences require appropriate policy responses.

Appendix 1: *Domains of Challenge for Principals*

A: Leadership domain

	Factor loading
1. Motivating staff	.69
2. Getting agreement on important matters	
3. Ensuring a good climate for discussion in your school .	.72
4. Establishing priorities for children's learning	.71
5. Creating a climate for innovation	.75

B: Communication and formal interaction

Interacting with parents	.57
Interacting with Inspectors	.64

Interacting with 'problem' pupils	.52
Planning/chairing meetings	.56
Liaising with other agencies (e.g. church, community)	.55
C: Self management	
Keeping yourself motivated	.69
Avoiding stress	.56
Deciding what is important for me to achieve	.69
Working out what my job means to me	.77
D: Policy development and implementation	
Evaluating the success of school plans for students' Learning	.58
Working out the implications of national policies for the school	.69
Implementing school policies (homework, bullying, discipline)	.54
Ensuing that the school caters for children with special needs	.53
E: Administration	
Keeping school records	.77
Completing forms/returns for DES and other bodies	.81
Dealing with financial matters	.67
F: Problem solving and conflict resolution	
Mediating in disagreements between colleagues	.65
Deciding between priorities in your role	.43
Balancing needs of conflicting groups	.70

G: Routine management

Organising school maintenance	.60
Interacting with people in school for a short time (work experience TP students)	.33
Liaising with other agencies (e.g. church, community)	.42

Note: To compare your own score against the national figures presented here, rate how challenging is each of the activities with the following scores:

Not challenging = 1
Somewhat challenging = 2
Challenging = 3
Very challenging = 4

Then calculate the mean score for domain. You can then compare your scores against those in Table 1/Figure 1. This will allow to say what features you find relatively more challenging/less challenging than your peers.

Appendix 2: *Sources of Job Satisfaction*

A. Receiving and giving support

The support of your colleagues in school	.65
Being supportive of staff	.78
Being supportive of students	.62

B. Leadership rewards

The opportunity to give direction and leadership	.72
The satisfaction of solving interpersonal problems	.61
The realisation that you have made a difference to the school	.40

C. Intrinsic rewards of the job

The variety of work in my job	.75

The opportunity to do a different kind of work	.79
The challenge in the job	.58

D. Recognition and affirmation

Affirmation of Inspectors	.73
People recognise position of Principal is important	.54
Recognition of other Principals	.64

Note: To compare your own score against the national figures presented here, rate how rewarding you find each feature of your job as a Principal:

Not very rewarding = 1
Hard to say = 2
Rewarding = 3
Very rewarding = 4

Then calculate the mean score for domain. You can then compare your scores against those in Table 4/Figure 2. This will allow to say what features you find relatively more rewarding/less rewarding than your peers.

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Vincent McDonald

LEADERSHIP ISSUES FOR PRINCIPAL TEACHERS

Vincent McDonald trained as a primary teacher in St. Patrick's, Drumcondra and served for some years as a principal before being appointed to the Inspectorate in 1971. He studied management at the Irish Management Institute and was awarded an MSc in Organisation Behaviour from TCD in 1985. After retirement he completed a PhD at the Michael Smurfit School of Business in UCD. He has written extensively on management and leadership and was recently commended for a paper on the environmental antecedents of leadership behaviour at the American Academy of Management, Philadelphia. His current research interests include emotional intelligence, motivation to lead and management of change.

ABSTRACT: A knowledge-based society requires a much more open and flexible approach to education than that experienced up to the recent past. The passing of the Education Act (1998) marked a threshold in the system and underlined school leadership as a key dimension of school life. In this, collaborative leadership is seen as the important operational paradigm. Concern is expressed, however, for the role requirements of principal teachers in this milieu, especially in regard to role diffusion and ambiguity. The source of some of these issues is traced here with attention to the implications for change which arise in both leadership behaviour and organisational structuring.

THE SETTING

School leadership is identified by commentators (Coolahan, 2005; D'Arcy, 2005) as a key dimension of school life as society re-interprets the role of the school in meeting the transition from an industrial model to one that is suited to the needs of an emerging knowledge-based society in the twenty-first century. Hitherto, schools might have been aptly regarded as functioning within a closed system where rigidity in control and in curriculum content and delivery were the norm. By and large, homogeneity was a given in what schools might be expected to produce. This latter prescription, however inappropriate, was particularly acute especially

at second level where the over-riding objective had become the achievement of entry to third level by way of a crude points system. It is generally conceded that in turn this has led in too many cases to a constriction on what could be taught and learned, and to an over-emphasis on what could be readily measured.

Traditionally, the demands of leadership in schools has been sharply focused on administration and on routine management and planning. In many primary schools this has been required side by side with teaching duties in the classroom. The dominant characteristic has been bureaucratic with an emphasis on control over creativity and in many instances for procedure over performance. School organisation and structure conformed to a craft model of a 'master and assistant' relationship and to a structural arrangement that was hierarchical in character and geared to stability and control. If there was a prescription at work it was for the co-operative discharge of duties and responsibilities within a tightly regulated system.

The enactment of the Education Act, 1998 (Ireland, 1998) marked the appearance of a landmark document on the Irish education scene. For the first time the principles and processes of the first and second level systems of education were set down and this codification gave formal and statutory authority to what had previously been, in large part, ad hoc arrangements. Of particular interest for the purposes of this paper are the sections relating to boards of management and to principal teachers. The Act declares:

> *it shall be the duty of the board **to manage** the school on behalf of the patron and for the benefit of the students and their parents and to provide or cause to be provided an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that board has responsibility.*
>
> Part IV. Section 15 (1).

In relation to the Principal, the Act states that the Principal shall:

(a) *"be responsible for the day to day management of the school, including guidance and direction of the teachers and other staff of the school, and be accountable to the board for **that management"***

(b) "*provide **leadership** to the teachers and other staff and the students of the school"*

> Part V. Section 23.

In what can be interpreted as something of an elaboration of these functions the Act envisages that the Principal "s*hall **consult** with the teachers and other staff of the school".*

Two strands of the principal's responsibilities are clearly marked out: on the one hand there is the responsibility of managing and on the other there is that of leading.

THE BACKGROUND

From the inception of the National System in 1831 it was established that schools should have a manager. But at no time was it envisaged that that manager should also be the principal teacher. Hierarchy and station were strong values in Victorian Britain and Ireland, so that not only were principals not formally equipped to perform a management function but they were not at any time expected to do so.

More than a hundred years were to elapse before the so-called management functions were entrusted to a board of management. From that time (1975) onwards the notion of an individual manager of a school faded from the vocabulary of school governance. However, it could not be said that the sole manager or even the board 'managed' the school in any true sense, for the burden of the management duties never amounted to anything more than the discharge of routine administrative responsibilities that as a rule were not of a very taxing nature.

Even before the appearance of the Education Act many of these administrative functions were carried out by the principal teacher in an informal and on-going manner. Thus, tacit acknowledgement was given to the principal's competence and trustworthiness to manage administrative duties such that in many cases he came to be relied almost totally to discharge them. But a final say in decision-making could always be demanded by the individual manager, who was invariably a cleric, and latterly by a board of management. But in any event principals would be members of the management body by virtue of their role.

MANAGING SCHOOLS

Arguably, the term management was misapplied insofar as it related to the board of management or to an individual school manager. The literature of management maintains that management action lies in setting goals, in making action plans, in laying down schedules and in allocating resources. It is concerned with establishing and maintaining structures and with monitoring and rewarding performance. This might to some extent be considered a mundane role but it is a necessary one. However, it is not one that is carried out by a board of management. Managing in this sense is best reflected in the concept of transaction where in the first place commitment is not so much to the organisation as to the rules and cultural values that are set down for it. For subordinates the concern is to have set out for them the contingencies of reward exchange along with active management by exception (Bass and Avolio, 1999) both of which are meant to be related to an agreed outcome performance. The satisfaction for managers is primarily in achieving efficiency and control that will underpin stability and predictability. In this, they are typically seen as hard-working and fair-minded; and by being impersonal in laying out plans, schedules and performance expectations they

too can conform to organisational rules and regulations and expect subordinates to do the same. In setting goals, the transactional manager will articulate targets and provide constructive performance feedback.

Existing values and routines will always tend to be emphasised with a drive for efficiency relying on rule-based operating practices. It is not intended that precedent will ever be violated or superseded in this milieu. Structures are typically mechanistic (Burns and Stalker, 1966) and are highly controlled. They are standardised and embedded in formal relationships which reinforce current practice. Transactional style is evidenced (Bass, 1985) in helping subordinates to clarify goals, using policies and procedures as guidelines, giving credit for a job well done and in working alone to accomplish organisational and personal tasks.

ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP

It is useful to recall that the terms transactional and transformational leadership had previously been coined by Burns (1978) to highlight distinctions between patterns of organisational behaviour and that these terms bear a close correspondence to management and leadership respectively. They substantiate the argument that managing and leading are conceptually distinct and require specific behaviour responses which are characteristic of their different roles. Kotter (1990) differentiated between leadership and management in terms of their core processes: management must aim at achieving stability and order while leadership is concerned to create change and development where otherwise there might be rigidity and inertia. Although it may be contended that both management and leadership are necessary for organisational success, strong incompatibilities between the two support the view that they remain conceptually separate at least at the personal level.

Some scholars have taken the view that leadership is a component of management. In setting out taxonomy of ten managerial roles Mintzberg (1973) saw leadership as only one of ten interpersonal roles that arise directly from a manager's authority. But this perspective is somewhat at odds with Zaleznik's (1977) proposition that managers and leaders are different types of people in terms of their motivation, their personal history and their thought and behaviour patterns. Where managers are essentially problem solvers whose main goal is to establish and maintain stability, the leaders are visionary influencers who inspire others to drive forward organisational change and development.

For leaders, allegiance is often given to achievement of personal goals in the first place with the organisation's objectives relegated to a secondary consideration. Even more emphatically, Bennis and Nanus (1985) propose that managers and leaders differ qualitatively in their perspectives and in their willingness to implement change. Managers are functionally motivated to ensure efficiency through well-planned routines while the broader perspective of the

leader enables him/her to adopt a strategic outlook geared to the organisation's future state based on a prescript for change that confronts some degree of risk-taking.

INTERCHANGEABILITY

The question of the interchangeability between management and leadership styles is a long-standing one and remains largely unresolved. Fresh efforts to find an integrative model flourished in the 1990s, (Hunt 1996; Chemers 1997; Yukl 1998). The view that effective leaders must be adaptive and flexible in their behaviour as conditions in the environment change gave the impetus to this work, but Yukl was prudent enough to observe that over time optimal patterns of change behaviour would be unlikely even as conditions in the environment change. Although Burns (1978) could see transformation and transaction as representing opposite ends of a continuum of behaviour encompassing a bi-polarity, it was not contended that this polarity would accommodate an interchange of responses as the context for action changed. However, Quinn's (1988) competing values framework which argued that executives must develop 'behavioural complexity' in their efforts to play competing roles simultaneously, found support in Tushman and O'Reilly's (1996) notion of ambidextrousness as a basis for multi-tasking.

Nevertheless, differences in values, preferences and disposition may well circumscribe a leaders' or a manager's capacity to be adaptive in the choice of the behavioural responses which can be made. Writing in the middle ages, Machiavelli observed philosophically,

> *(that) two men succeed equally well with different methods….to the extent that their methods are, or are not, suited to the nature of the times. Thus, it happens that if a man behaves with patience and circumspection and the time and circumstances are such that this method is called for, he will prosper; but if time and circumstance change he will be ruined because he does not change his policy. Nor do we find any man shrewd enough to know how to adopt his policy in this way; either because he cannot do otherwise than is in his character, or because having always prospered by proceeding one way he cannot persuade himself to change. Thus a man who is circumspect when circumstances demand impetuousness is unequal to the task and so comes to grief.*

> The Prince (in translation)

This fundamental problem of changing behaviour to meet the circumstances was at the heart of Fiedler's (1967) contingency behaviour model which suggests that it is more realistic to attempt to change the demands of the situation than the

style of response that can be made. The clear implication here is that where the situation cannot be changed then a new leader must be found. Be that as it may, other empirical work cited by Vera and Crossan, (2004) report a high correlation between the two behaviour modes so that apparently both sets of behaviour can exist in the same individual, but in different amounts and in different intensities.

Clearly this becomes a psychological issue as to the disposition of an individual and his/her readiness to invoke either behaviour set. Building on Quinn's model of leadership roles, Dennison, Hooijberg and Quinn (1995) have conjectured that a leader/manager who is highly proficient in some elements of his portfolio of capabilities might well be deficient in others. In that case more likely, the critical issue in the use of transformational or transactional behaviour sets, or a combination of them, will be a function of the capacity of the enactors and the level of intensity that can be invoked in applying them in varying environmental conditions.

THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Whereas in the nineteenth century, and for a good part of the twentieth, schools prepared pupils for a fixed station in life, the expectation now is that students in adult life will change occupations at least two or three times. In the past, knowledge and intelligence were regarded as fixed. Nowadays knowledge is constantly changing and expanding. It is also accepted that there is more than one type of intelligence. Where formal schooling was for a fixed period, in the twenty-first century education is lifelong learning will be much more personalised and will be geared to individual needs.

Coolahan (2005) points out that the learning society model takes a much more inclusive approach with an emphasis on student fluidity and multidimensional intelligence. Here the school is seen as a learning community for both pupil and teacher, and the teacher is viewed as learner under a collaborative leadership. It is aimed at giving more autonomy and invites creativity with a repertoire of pedagogic styles. A knowledge-based society requires a much more open and flexible approach than hitherto and demands collaboration as a key operational paradigm. However, although the notion of collaboration has been known and practiced in some schools since the 1970s the performance of collaborative leadership in schools has never been much in evidence. Collaboration, if it arose at all, was more a matter of aspiration than of practice. Teamwork, shared learning, shared responsibility and the teacher as co-learner were not seen as the primary imperatives.

The thrust of this paper is to raise a concern for the collaborative role requirements of the principal teacher in a knowledge-based society. In relation to teachers' work concerns in general, a recurring theme relates to the issue of work overload. This is especially problematical for principal teachers and gives rise for many of them to serious role diffusion and ambiguity. On the one hand

they are expected to discharge an administrative function which is increasingly burdensome and they are at the same time required to 'give leadership' in dealing with a variety of stakeholders as well as in curriculum development, curriculum planning and implementation. For the teaching principal there is the core responsibility to teach, often in a multi-grade setting.

Moreover, the perception is widespread that all of this must be attempted without adequate resources. It is contended here that the role requirements of a principal often impose conflicting demands and that principal teachers, even when well settled in post, are poorly equipped to deploy the management and leadership skills that a rapidly changing operating environment demands. Further, since management and leadership are conceptually distinct there must always be an imperative to attempt alignment of responses to the contextual conditions in order to achieve effective performance. This, it is argued, can rarely be the case in practice.

It must come as no great surprise then, to learn from the Evaluation of the *Misneach Programme* (2005) that the single biggest source of frustration and anxiety among principals is role diffusion where responsibilities are constantly being extended and where there is a general climate of uncertainty.

THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

It is well documented throughout the management literature that environments impact significantly in the way structures are developed and in the way decision-making in organisations is conducted. And this is true for schools as much as it is for business organisations. Although environments vary widely, all organisations experience a measure of turbulence that ranges from complete stability to complete uncertainty. Turbulence in the operating environment has been defined (Cameron, Kim and Whetten, 1987) as change that is discontinuous, rapid and non-trivial. Thus, it is change that is surprising, dynamic and important.

Over the past nine years there has been significant contextual turbulence and change in the environments of schools coterminous with the passing of the Education Act (1998), the introduction and implementation of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999), the passing of the Education Welfare Act, 2000 (Ireland, 2000), as well as sustained economic growth. Schools too, have seen the introduction of a management structure over this time. While many of the changes arising from these sources could, in broad measure be anticipated, many of the specific practical implications could not. Objectively, one element of the rising turbulence level may be captured in the plethora of regulatory directives that have issued in the period 2000 -2005 and which, it may be noted, reached a high point in 2004.

Table 1 : *Number of Regulatory DES Circulars issued to schools*

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
23	25	43	43	73	42

All environments consist of numerous variables some of which at any one time may range from a condition of stability to one of turbulence. In closed systems there is typically little room for executive choice but increasingly schools can be regarded as open systems with a range of dependencies that demand creative choice and innovative decision making. Organisationally, there is now ample talent within school staffs so that a wide spectrum of expertise and competence is available to deal with a range of school matters. Thus, appropriate responses can be attempted for the many contingencies that emerge from increasing turbulence.

COMPLEXITY

If there is widespread anxiety in relation to the role of the principal this is reflective of one of the variables (viz. Complexity) in particular, that constitute turbulence in the operating environment. Organisation theorists (Dill 1958, Duncan 1972, Hatch 2003) identify the factors and dimensions of the internal and external environment in terms of (a) roles, procedures, authority, expertise and technology and (b) customers, suppliers, competitors, regulators, special interest groups and partners. A recent survey by the author (unpublished, 2005) of perceived environmental turbulence was conducted with a convenience sample of experienced principal teachers and educationists (n=21) using these constructs as the variables of interest. Semantic validity was established following Krippendorf's (1980) proposal that it exists when persons familiar with the language and texts examine lists of words (or other units) placed in the same category, and agree that these words have similar meanings and connotations. A panel of expert opinion confirmed this to be the case in that survey.

By way of illustration, attention is drawn here to two factors of the Complexity variable which, it is postulated, demonstrate the origin of much of the role diffusion facing principal teachers. The factors chosen are: Roles and Regulators. Using a five-point Likert type scale respondents reported a steady increase in perceived environmental turbulence over a five-year span such that the perceived changes would not be thought of as mere aberration.
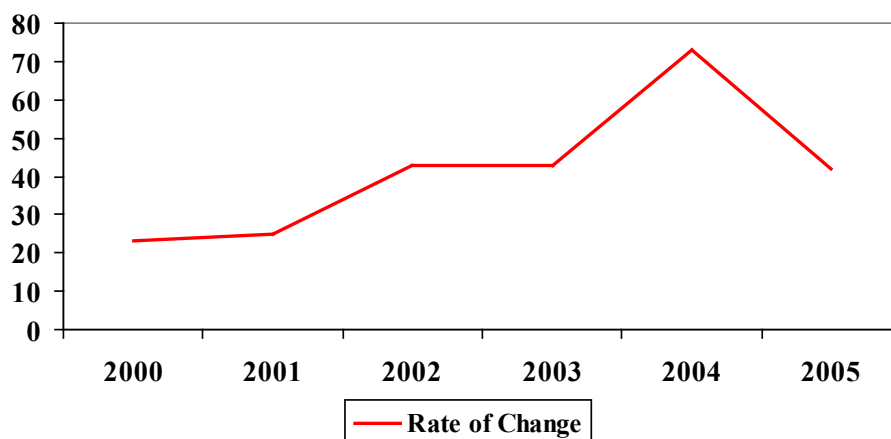
The year 2004 would seem to have been the highest point of perceived environmental turbulence and this finding corresponds convincingly with movement in the objective environment with regard to Roles and Regulations in the same period (Figs.1 and 2).

34

Fig. 1 *Perceived Environmental Turbulence (Roles)*
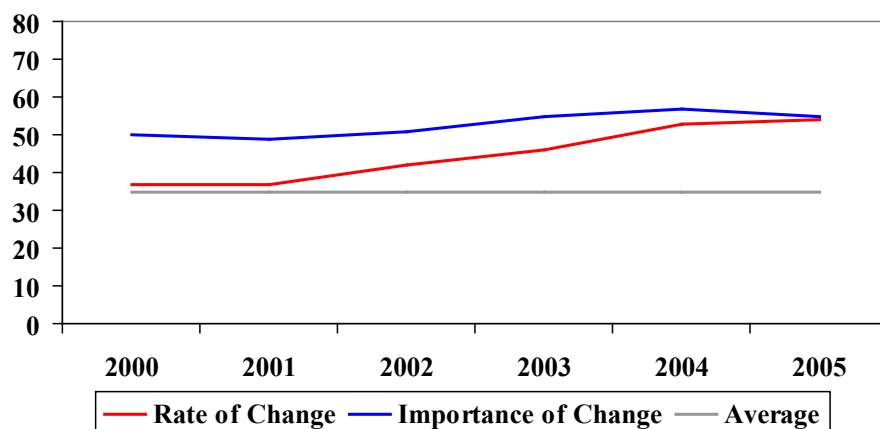
Fig. 2. *Objective Change (Regulations)*

ATTITUDES AND ASPIRATIONS

It seems somewhat paradoxical that principal teachers could still report very high energy and enthusiasm for the job (*Evaluation of the Misneach Programme*, 2005) in view of the perceived overload of the work and the falling interest in the position of principal (D'Arcy, 2005). Most likely this reflects a state of mind of the incumbents more than of the demands of the job. It has been noted elsewhere

(Donaldson and Lorsch, 1983) that executives vary widely in their drive to perform even though they are in general portrayed as being highly motivated to achieve strong levels of performance. Aspirations for goal achievement are invariably not uniform. Occasionally the disposition to enhance their school's performance may place a demand on the individual principal that contradicts the objective difficulty of the job. The effect in this case is to prompt higher levels of performance than might otherwise be expected. Thus, the demands presented by environmental conditions may be selectively ignored or denied. In this way it may be seen that individuals partially determine their own working conditions such that in striving to achieve job performance at a high level other contextual forces can be treated as of little or of only moderate importance. This may also occur where targets are set unrealistically low.

Aspiring to achieve may also have its source in specific personality factors where need achievement is the locus of control (Mitten and Droge, 1986). Aging and tenure effects are also recorded as causative factors in job performance where those who are early in their careers as principal teachers may have more to prove (to themselves, in the first instance) and place themselves under some pressure to demonstrate their capacity as well as to establish reputation (Hambrick and Fukutomi, 1991). Conversely, with long experience in the post and with less incentive to demonstrate success, there may well be a tendency among more experienced principals to satisfy and make do, rather than confront awkward issues. Organisationally, relatively underdeveloped managerial cultures and resistant or lethargic workforces as well as primitive practices and procedures (Mintzberg, 1973) may work to confound the discharge of the principal's function.

THE FUTURE

Sustaining established principals or appointing new ones is now accepted as problematical. There is considerable anecdotal evidence that many principals endure overbearing levels of anxiety and stress.

Equally, it may be contended that the impact of perceived environmental turbulence as a contingency of varying intensity suggests that life-long tenure in the post is potentially unsatisfactory and may well be unsustainable. Figures from the DES for principal and teacher retirements on grounds other than compulsory age grounds are on the increase and range as follows:

Table 2 *Early Retirements (principals and teachers)*

	2001	2002	2003	2004
By Age	78	82	77	99
Other	338	446	320	665

The number of principals is not identified in these statistics, but it may be inferred that the numbers of principals retiring on grounds other than compulsory age is in proportion to the overall retirement numbers and this, as is shown pointedly for 2004, has almost doubled since 2001. More alarming perhaps is a report from the IPPN Conference (Cork 2005) showing that the level of interest in the post of principal has fallen dramatically.

Table 3 *Applicants for principalship posts*

Year	No. of Applicants	No. of Vacancies	Ratio A:V
1996	921	170	5.5 : 1
1998	1,027	226	4.5 : 1
2000	799	204	3.9 : 1
2002	542	154	3.5 : 1
2004	710	245	2.9 : 1

Source: IPPN.

Recent hearsay evidence on the candidacy of aspiring principals leaves no room for complacency either. When one recalls that the Education Act calls for the principal to be both leader and manager and that other agencies (e.g. School Matters: the report of the DES task force on student behaviour in second level schools, 2006) underline this imperative, it is clear that there is a need to address this issue more effectively at the personal level. Moreover, the contingencies of the operating environment of schools are only partially articulated or understood. Structural re-alignment must also be attempted so that an echelon of expertise can be defined and responsibilities assigned appropriately wherever the various competencies reside. This echelon of expertise would reside not only in the areas of administration but also in the areas of planning, budgeting, human relations, curriculum development, monitoring of performance and provision of feedback, and communication with stakeholders in society generally. From this perspective, the idea of appointing an individual principal becomes redundant.

Current indications are that the role of principal, as it now stands, can be discharged only with great difficulty but some initiatives are afoot to arrest this. The work of the Leadership Development for Schools Team (2005) and in the *Misneach* programme of induction for first–time principals are examples of current initiatives in this regard. Structural rigidity however, is less easily resolved. One solution, it is postulated, might lie in the re-design of the concept of headship to accommodate the establishment of a leadership echelon or collective, where the

principal could be in post for a fixed contractual period functioning as a 'primus inter pares'. The option to return to mainstream teaching duties as a matter of course should also be made available.

It is unlikely that smaller schools would create a leadership echelon on their own because they 'lack the breadth and range of expertise' (McGrogan, 1996) that is found in larger ones and arising from this the notion of structural clustering emerges as an organisational solution. This is not conceptually a new idea for there are many instances of its use in other countries and in projects in this country e.g. The Schools Integration Project (DES, 2000); Shared Secretarial Services (DES, Circular18/05); Curricular Planning between Schools: School Development Planning Initiative, (DES, 2004).

CONCLUSION

In summary, although many problems are identified, it cannot be doubted that there is abundant good-will by all the partners to resolve them. This paper has attempted to draw some parameters for further inquiry by identifying and specifying the major issues at both the personal and organisational levels and proposing some major implications for the behaviour of school leaders and for the structure of the organisations which they head. It is clear that further research and debate will have a valuable contribution to make to this issue.

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Mary O'Hanlon

LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE IN-SCHOOL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

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ABSTRACT: Those working in and around schools are aware that education and school are changing. The expectation is that the breadth and pace of that change will increase and that the demands on principals, teachers and educators will require different mind-sets and new skills. The role of the principal has changed significantly in the past thirty years from that of head teacher to leader of the school. With the issuing of Circular 6/97, Implementation of the revised In-School Management Structures in Primary Schools, the DoE (1997) recognised that a new model of leadership was needed for changing times. The In-School Management Structure provides a framework to develop collaborative leadership among the principal, the deputy principal and the post holders of the school. This paper presents the findings of a study of the in-school management structure in forty-six large primary schools with administrative principals in the Fingal area. Fingal is a local authority administrative division in North Dublin. The writer states that further research is needed and argues that particular regard must be had for the perspectives of non-post holders on the leadership of their schools and for the reality of the in-school management structure in small rural schools who have teaching principals.

INTRODUCTION

Those working in and around schools are aware that education and schools are changing quickly. The expectation is that the breadth and pace of that change will increase and that the demands on principals, teachers and educators will require different mind-sets and new skills. If they are to be effective in an environment of curriculum, technological, economic and social change schools will need to

be transformed into innovative and flexible organisations. Effective leadership and commitment will be needed from the leaders of primary schools to lead and manage change successfully. It is against this background of change that *The White Paper: Charting Our Education Future* (DoE, 1995 i.e. Department of Education, 1995), sets out a structure for comprehensive change and development of leadership and management roles in primary schools. The new structure seeks to give an empowering sense of shared leadership in primary schools to the principal, deputy principal and post holders.

In 1997 a change was made in the internal management of primary schools with the issuing of *Circular 6/97* (DoE, 1997). This circular aims to provide a shared approach to the leadership and management of primary schools through a revised in-school management structure, consistent with the proposals contained in *The White Paper, Charting Our Education Future.* This paper presents the main findings of a study which investigated the workings of the in-school management structure in large schools in the Fingal area of North County Dublin in 2000.

CHANGE

Prior to the introduction of the in-school management structure the responsibility for the running of the school was devolved to the principal (McDonagh, 1998). Herron (1994, p. 254) maintains that the earlier leadership structure arose: 'incrementally over time without a clear set of objectives'. Although posts of responsibilities were established in 1968 and payment of the allowance was contingent on the performance of specific duties, McDonagh (1998) maintains that there was an ad hoc system of delegation of duties. The duties that were delegated prior to *Circular 6/97* (DoE, 1997) in the vast majority of cases were administrative rather than obligations that involved a leadership element (Stack, 1994). With the issuing of the new in-school management policy in *Circular 6/97* (DoE, 1997) a team approach to leadership is advocated where the duties and responsibilities of deputy principals and post holders are redefined and include responsibility for instructional, curricular, staff and academic leadership of the school.

In 1997, the then Department of Education considered that the old model of leadership in the primary school no longer served the changing leadership functions of schools. It needed to be replaced by a structure based on a shared concept of leadership and teamwork. A new leadership organisation called the *In-school Management Structure* was instituted and details were outlined in *Circular 6/97* (DoE, 1997). The *In-school Management structure* comprises: the principal, the deputy principal, assistant principal (formerly grade A post) and special duties teacher (formerly grade B post).

The Report on the National Education Convention (Coolahan, 1994, p. 52) recognized the need to share the leadership when it noted that: 'Devising senior teacher posts which assign responsibility and accountability to teachers for the academic and pastoral programmes in the school would reduce considerably the

workload of the principal'. With the introduction of this policy document deputy principals and post holders could no longer view their leadership responsibility as classroom focused only: henceforth they would need to become leaders of a team who share the responsibility with the principal for the effective leadership of the school. In *Circular 6/97,* the Department of Education) state that the revised in-school management structures are designed to:

- match the responsibilities of posts more closely to the central tasks of the school
- 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.

<div align="right">(DoE,1997, p.1)</div>

It is clear that a more co-operative style of school leadership is being advocated here. Principals may not wish to share their role and deputy principals and post holders may not be willing to provide leadership to the staff but, as Sergiovanni asserts, 'if we want better schools we are going to have to manage and lead differently' (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. x). The type of leadership required is one of sharing power and responsibility by the principal where the emphasis is not on power *over*, but on power *with* the in-school management team. This 'facilitative' leadership exercises power through others (Conley and Goldman, 1994).

The articulation of different voices may create initial conflict, but this should be confronted and worked through. It is part of the collaborative process. Collaboration takes time and energy, which are perhaps the scarcest school resources.

The new in-school management structure challenges the traditional leadership role and advocates a collaborative team approach to leadership in the primary school. Dimmock (1996, p. 137) argues that: 'Restructuring in some systems also requires the formation of new decision-making structures at school level'. There is a need to appraise assumptions of leadership in the context of today's changing educational climate. Murphy (1992) maintains that the principal has to develop the skills to work collaboratively with others. As Fullan and Hargreaves (1992, p. 121) advise: 'The head has to be willing to share control, show vulnerability, and look for ways to involve the reticent or the opposed'. A team approach to leadership could help counter the feeling of isolation that some principals may experience while leading singly, as is clear from Herron's study (Herron, 1991). At times, a powerful cultural ethos may prevent school principals from seeking support when they need it, as some principals may feel that self-reliance is the hallmark of good leadership. But, all the key players (the principal, the deputy principal and the post holders) should be involved in guiding the leadership change and the goal of the in-school management structure should be to develop a community of leaders. To quote Fullan and Hargreaves, 'Collaboration should mean creating the vision together, not complying with the head's' (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992, p. 120).

THE SCHOOLS IN THE STUDY

The writer investigated how the new in-school management structure is being implemented in primary schools in the Fingal area and how the new structures have impacted on the dynamics of school leadership. The *Fingal Area* is a local authority administrative division in North Dublin and comprises the areas of Blanchardstown, Castleknock, Clonsilla, Mulhuddart, Balbriggan, Donabate, Malahide, Portmarnock, Sutton, Howth, Baldoyle, Swords, Skerries, Lusk and Rush.

This research concentrated on schools with 'administrative principals' (these were principals who were released from full time teaching responsibility in schools with eight or more classroom teachers).

The White Paper *Charting Our Education Future* (DoE, 1995, p. 154) accepts the complexity of large schools when they state:

> In a small school, while the principal's leadership may be sufficient to influence the whole school, in larger schools, the ability of the principal to delegate effectively to vice-principals and post holders and to promote a strong sense of collegiality among other teacher's is crucial to the school's success

While accepting that there is room for a shared approach to leadership in smaller schools, this researcher maintains that larger primary schools can no longer be effective and successful without a team approach to leadership.

There are a total of forty-six schools with administrative principals in the Fingal area. The study examined what changes if any these schools were making to ensure that the new structure was successful, and if the arrangement has led to a collaborative approach to leadership.

The study had three aims:
- to investigate the reality of the in-school management structure as it was in large schools in the Fingal area at the time;
- to establish if the new structure has changed the dynamics of leadership in the primary school and led to a collaborative approach to leadership;
- to examine what changes, if any, were needed to ensure the success of the in-school management structure.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A complete sample of all schools with administrative principals in the Fingal area was chosen for the purpose of this research. Utilising a quantitative research design 138 questionnaires were distributed to the forty-six large schools with administrative principals in Fingal in May 2000.Three questionnaires were sent to each of the 46 schools. The principal, deputy principal and a post holder in each school were requested to complete the questionnaires.

The eight-page questionnaire, comprising sixty questions, emanated from an analysis of a selected literature review, three semi-structured interviews with a principal, deputy principal and a post-holder, the contents of *Circular 6/97*, (DoE, 1997) and the researcher's own experience. The inquiry analysed the views of principals, deputy principals and post holders on the leadership and management of their schools.

Ninety-four questionnaires were returned out of the 138 sent out. This represented a return rate of 68%. The principals returned twenty-nine questionnaires, the deputy principals forty and the post holders twenty-five. Given that the researcher teaches in Fingal and that the survey relates to the leadership of schools in the area, it was decided that the questionnaires would be anonymous to ensure that particular schools could not be identified. The data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed both by hand and using Microsoft Excel.

Sixty per cent of the respondents were from schools with an enrolment of between 200 and 400 pupils; twenty per cent were from schools with 400 to 600 pupils. Seven per cent of teachers represented schools in the 600 to 800 categories. Thirteen per cent of the respondents represented the largest schools that have 800 or more pupils.

Figure 1. *Percentage of principals, deputy principals and post holders who returned questionnaires*
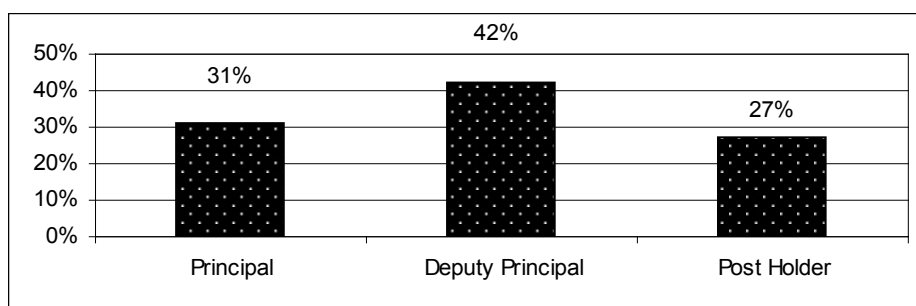

All teachers in the survey had more than ten years teaching experience.Thirty-one per cent of the respondents were principals. The deputy principals, who were the largest group of respondents to the questionnaire, constituted forty-two per cent while post holders represented twenty-seven per cent of the respondents. Given that forty deputy principals from forty-six schools returned the questionnaire, the minimum number of schools represented is forty. A total of twenty-nine principals and twenty-five post holders are represented. As stated above, there is no way of identifying the schools as the questionnaires were completely anonymous and in fact more than forty schools may be represented.

The issues arising from the data that have a bearing on the future development of the in-school management structure are presented under the following headings: Teamwork, Communications and Professional Development.

TEAMWORK

Current research stresses the need for schools to change the culture of leadership from one dominated by concepts of power and authority to one characterised by collaboration, collegiality and teamwork (DES i.e. Department of Education and Science, 1999; Leithwood *et al*, 1999; Warren and O'Connor, 2000).

Figure 2. *Do members of the in-school management structure know what is expected of them?*
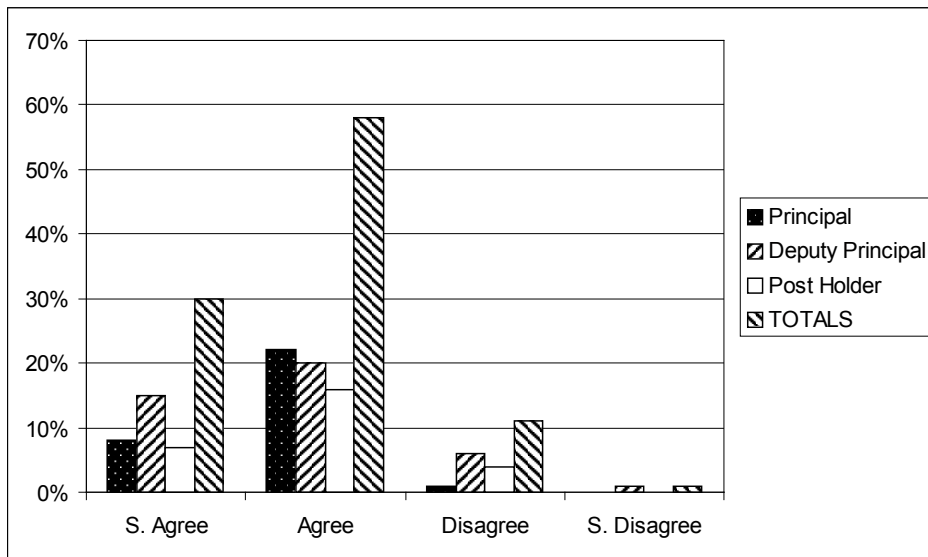
It is apparent from the above data that a high percentage of the in-school management team understands what is expected of them. A total of 88% of respondents indicated that they are clear on their role in the school. Eleven per cent of respondents indicated that members of the structure are unclear about what is expected of them, and 1% strongly disagreed that teachers from the management team understand what is expected of them. Given that lack of role definition may hinder teacher leadership, Leithwood (1999) has suggested that principals clarify leadership duties and responsibilities with the teacher.

Figure 3. *Are duties and responsibilities are clearly defined?*
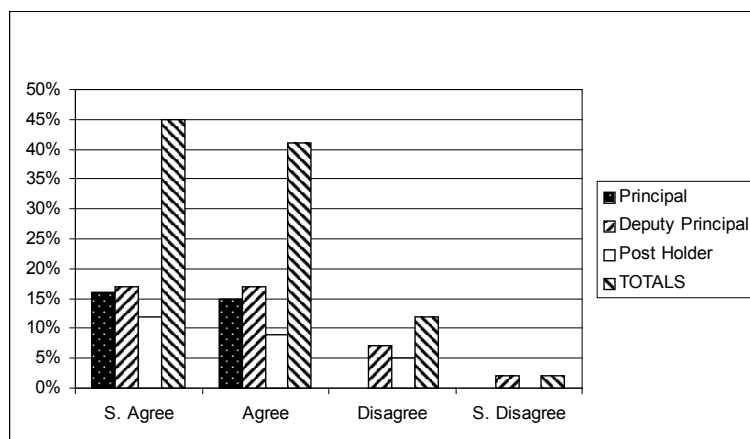
A total of eighty-six per cent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that duties and responsibilities are clearly defined while fourteen per cent are unclear of their position in relation to lucidity of responsibilities. *Circular 6/97* (DoE, 1997, p. 5) states: ' from the overall menu of duties, the principal, in consultation with the staff, should agree a schedule of post of responsibility duties'. Accordingly, individual schools should work out together a level of explicitness of duties and roles for members of the in-school management teams, as role clarity is the basis for effective performance.

Sergiovanni (1998, p. 41) maintains that effective schools have a shared approach to leadership when '(they) reflect together, learn together and inquire together as they care together to construct a reality that helps them navigate through a complex world'. The in-school management team provides a structure where overloaded principals can share the management and leadership of the school.

Figure 4. *Do post holders work together to solve problems?*
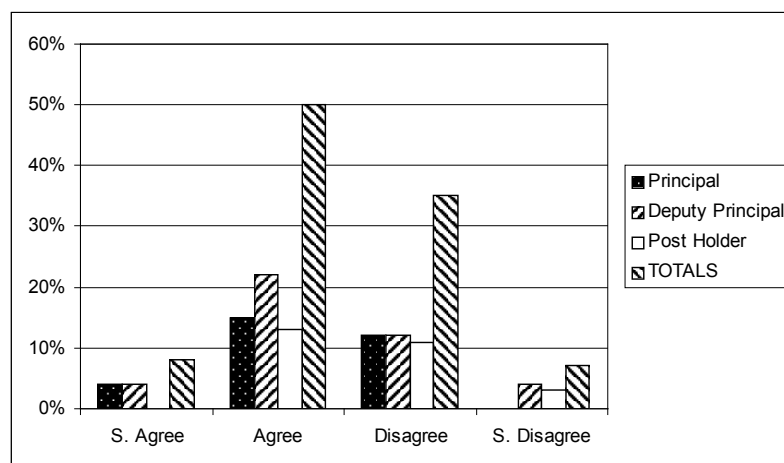
Although more that 50% of respondents agreed that members of the team work together to solve problems, it is of concern that forty-two per cent did not agree. This lack of a collaborative approach to problem solving is in keeping with the findings of McDonagh (1998) that the deputy principals and post holders see their responsibilities as classroom based whereas they see the principal to be responsible for the problems of the whole school The data may indicate a lack of trust in each other on the part of team members, but with further training over time this may improve as teachers learn to overcome isolation and become team players.

Figure 5. *When a member of the team is absent does another team member performs his/her duties?*
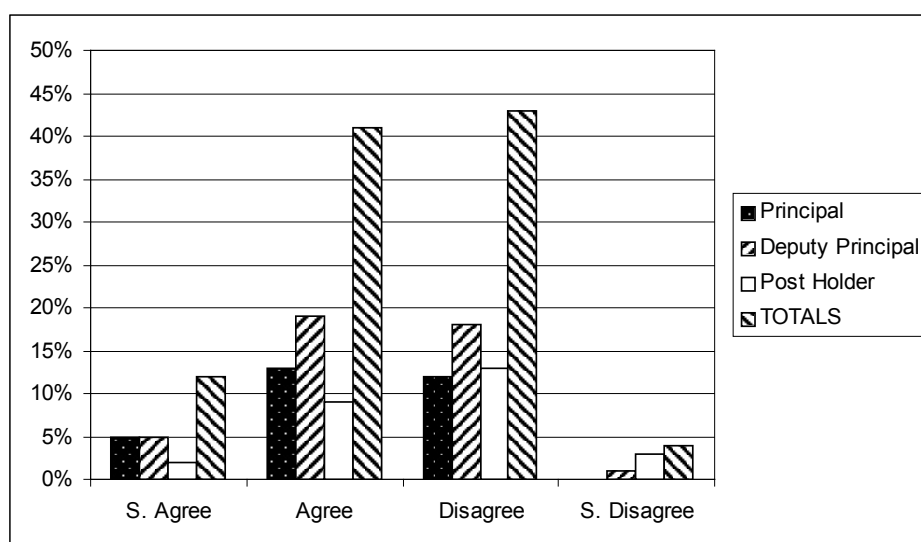
The findings also highlighted a difficulty in respect of who should perform the duties of absent post-holders. A total of forty-seven per cent either disagree or strongly disagree that another member of the team performs the duties when somebody was absent. This difficulty needs to be resolved by the in-school management acting as a team and taking collaborative responsibility for the tasks of the absent team member. As the literature demonstrates, teamwork is vital in building effective schools during times of change (Dimmock, 1996; Leithwood *et al*, 1999; MacBeath *et al*, 1996).

Figure 6. *Are leadership roles shared?*
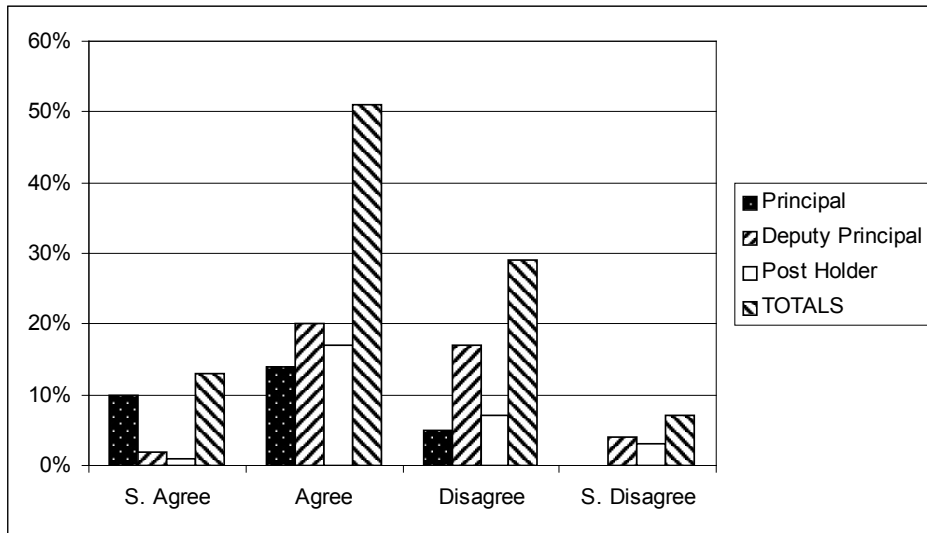
This figure shows that thirty-six per cent disagreed that leadership roles are shared. This may signal that the leadership of some schools in the Fingal area is still based on the traditional notion of the principal as the leader. A cultural shift is required by the principals, deputy principals and post holders in order to change to a collaborative approach to leadership. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) maintain that schools should adopt a collaborative approach to leadership. Research indicates that the principal needs to be part of a leadership team: 'Leadership is a shared and collaborative activity' (Macbeath *et al*, 1996, p. 243). This collaborative process of leadership will take time and the same question in a few years time may produce a higher percentage of respondents indicating that a sharing of leadership roles is taking place.

Table 1 *To what extent do teachers from the in-school management team take responsibility for instructional leadership?*

	Great Extent	**Some Extent**	**No Extent**	**Don't Know**
Principal	1%	22%	7%	0%
Deputy Principal	1%	27%	12%	3%
Post Holder	0%	16%	9%	2%
Totals	2%	65%	28%	5%

Sixty-seven per cent of respondents indicated that members take responsibility for instructional leadership. These findings are in-keeping with the intentions of the policy change as described in *Circular 6/97* (DoE, 1997), where it outlines that the structure is intended to provide opportunities for teachers to assume responsibility for the instructional leadership of the school.

Twenty-eight per cent of respondents reported that the role of instructional leader is not shared with the management team. The skills of all the team are needed especially during times of change to create communities of instructional leaders and hence these schools should examine why this is the situation and work towards a shared approach to instructional leadership.

Table 2 *To what extent do teachers from the in-school management team take responsibility for the management of staff?*

	Great Extent	Some Extent	No Extent	Don't Know
Principal	2%	14%	14%	0%
Deputy Principal	3%	16%	23%	0%
Post Holder	0%	4%	21%	3%
Totals	5%	34%	58%	3%

Fifty-eight per cent of respondents stated that the members of the in-school management team have no responsibility for the management of the staff. This is in contrast to the policy objectives of Circular 6/97 (DoE, 1997) where it declares that the revised management structure is intended to provide teachers with the opportunity to manage staff. A training programme would make a substantial contribution to addressing this issue.

COMMUNICATION

Although the DES (1999, p. 67) maintains that: 'the work of an organisation is only as good as its communication', yet the findings in this study shows that fifty-two per cent of respondents are not informed regularly of what is happening in their schools.

Figure 7. *Am I informed of what is happening in the school?*
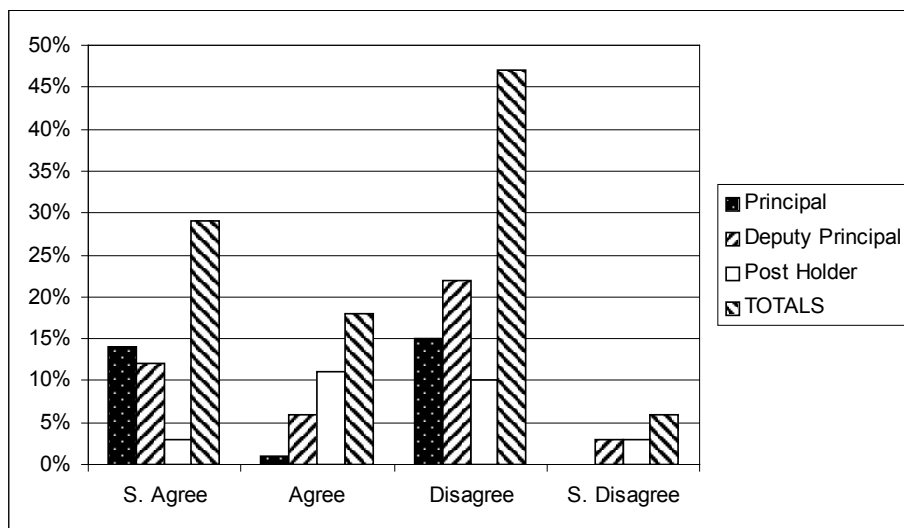
The DES (1999b, p. 46) maintains that: 'regular meetings of the in-school management team are an important tool of management in the school'. Opinions expressed by the respondents and collated in this research demonstrate that it is essential to create time for the in-school management team to meet, so that they can maximise the skills of the leadership team, review the team's progress and communicate on a regular basis. These meetings will help 'give the group a feeling of identity and unity, and make people feel they are one of the team' (Jay, 1999, p. 57). Seventy-six per cent of respondents confirmed that regular post holders' meetings are not held and clearly schools need to address the topic of meetings for consultation, debate and decision-making.

Figure 8. *Is conflict acknowledged and constructively handled?*
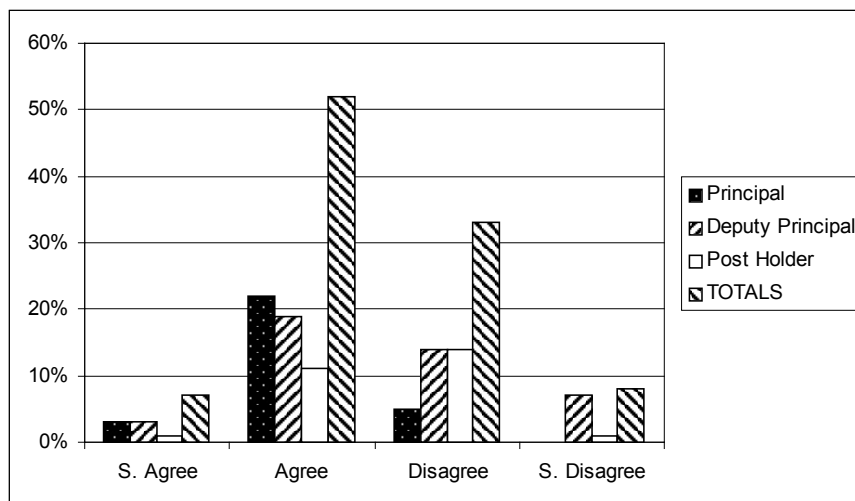
The above figure illustrates that fifty-nine per cent of the respondents strongly agree or agree that conflict is acknowledged and constructively handled and forty-one per cent disagree or strongly disagree. It is interesting to note that principals' disagreement represents only five per cent, while deputy principals and post holders account for thirty-six per cent of those that either disagree or strongly disagree. This may mean that principals are unaware of the extent of conflict in the school, or it could indicate that principals are not in touch with what is going on at staff level.

Forty-one per cent of respondents acknowledged that conflict was not constructively handled. This may suggest that members of the team are unclear of their role on the in-school management team. It could also point to the concept that conflict is a developmental stage of the in-school management structure and, with time, relationships within the team can be worked out. This can be addressed by clarifying roles and responsibilities and meeting regularly as a team an atmosphere of trust and honest discussion could be developed (Warren and O' Connor, 2000).

**Figure 9.** *Does the in-school management team reviews its progress?*
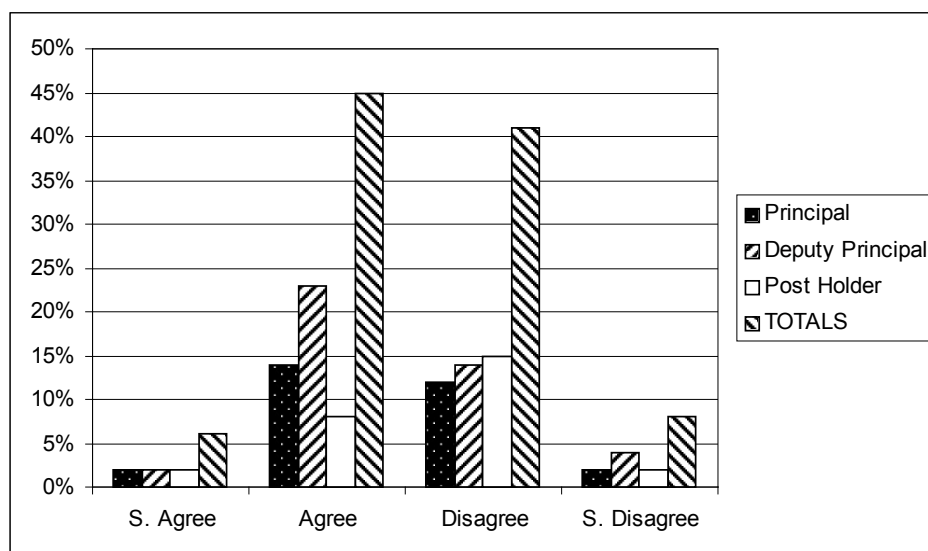
Forty-nine per cent of the respondents indicated that a review of the progress of the management team is not taking place. *Circular 6/97* (DoE, 1997) made provision for the reviewing of duties yet only fifty-one per cent of schools reported that a review takes place. Reviewing the progress of the management team would help schools build on successful practice and help to change what does not work. Meetings should take place with the in-school management teams on a regular basis to facilitate regular reviews and this would help with the process of collaborative leadership.

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The data shows that over half of the respondents work together as a team to solve problems. Forty-two per cent of respondents indicated that they are not using a team approach to problem solving. This may testify to the need for meetings of the management team to ensure a shared approach to leadership. Regular meetings and clarity of roles may help clear up the difficulty of who performs a post holder's duties in his/her absence. Training in conflict resolution and conflict management is needed for this team approach to the leadership that is advocated with the introduction of the in-school management structure. To build successful in-school management teams all the talents of the players needs to be used. With the school being led by a team of leaders, this synergy of people working and leading together and dealing constructively with conflict will empower and make for more effective schools.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In their zeal for restructuring, the DES has neglected the crucial role played by the participants of the in-school management structure. Assuming that teachers are interchangeable parts whose knowledge and abilities do not matter, DES introduced a revised leadership and management structure without the prior provision of professional development. Coolahan (1994, p. 53) identified the need for professional development prior to re-organising the management structure in schools and stated that there has been: 'a haphazard preparation of teachers for management positions in schools'. Restructuring reform requires that principals, deputy principals and post holders learn new roles as they collaborate and lead as a team of leaders. Once again the need for the provision of substantial in-service training for both principals and other post holders is underlined for the maximum benefits to be derived from the revised management structure.

Figure 10. *Were you provided with training on appointment to your new management position?*
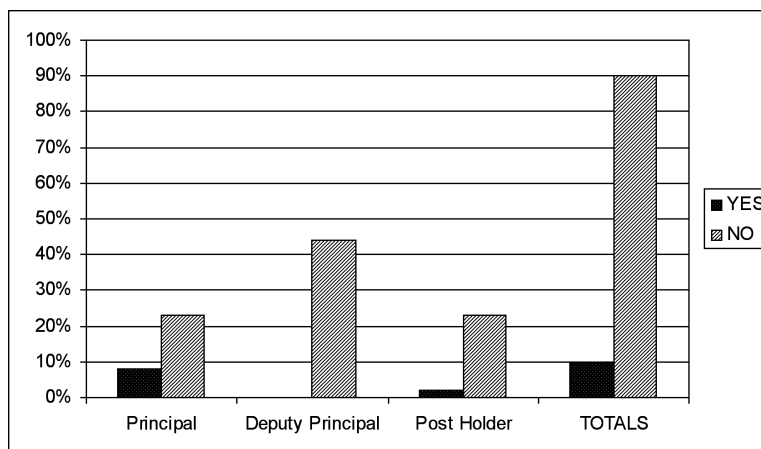
Ninety per cent of the in-school management respondents reported that they were not provided with training. Eight per cent of principals were provided with training but no deputy principals received training. Prior to implementing the new in-school management structure *The White Paper: Charting Our Education Future* (DoE, 1995, p.126) recommended that training be provided for teachers: 'related to the long-term development of the teaching profession'. It is disappointing that all the members of the in-school management team did not receive training prior to the introduction of the revised structure. The demands of new responsibilities and duties upon those who lead Irish primary schools through the in-school management structure necessitates that school leaders develop and learn a variety of new skills. Ninety per cent of respondents state that professional development would be of benefit to them in their leadership and management roles and professional development should be provided to help answer these needs. Professional training should take place at both national and local level to support and develop the in-school management structures and address individual schools' difficulties.

The study shows that the following areas of professional development need attention:

- professional development to foster a team approach to leadership;
- professional development to help with communications in the school ;
- training in interpersonal skills and conflict resolution to equip the team with the human resource management skills required to deal effectively with the many interpersonal problems that may arise.

CONCLUSION

This research suggests that the in-school management structure as outlined in *Circular 6/97* (DoE, 1997) has changed the leadership dynamics in the schools surveyed. It has done so to the extent that the school leaders are carrying out their duties and sharing the leadership responsibilities, but a collaborative team approach to leadership is not evidenced in the findings. Individuals are performing their responsibilities in isolation without reviewing or meeting with other team members and the issue of communication in schools needs to be addressed. The results of this study could be summarised in the distinction, which Day (1999, p. 186) makes between collaboration and co-operation. The former: 'involves joint decision-making, requires time, careful negotiation, trust and effective communication', while the latter includes: 'role boundaries and power relationships'.

THE WAY FORWARD

In order to develop leadership through the in-school management structure, this researcher recommends that:

- DES establish a forum on professional development that focuses on identifying the time, resources and opportunities needed to develop the leadership of the primary school. The forum should bring together a broad-based group of practitioners, policymakers, college professors and researchers who would identify the needs of primary school leaders.
- professional development courses be provided for all the in-school management leaders, in collaborative leadership, teamwork and communications, organised and funded by the Department of Education and Science in conjunction with the colleges of education
- incentives be provided to leadership teams to avail of professional development and further study. Leaders should be given time to pursue postgraduate leadership courses and their fees refunded on completion of recognised courses;
- initial teacher training should include a module on communication, as a preparation for the difficulties they may experience in the course of their work;
- consideration should be given by each school to the convening of routine in-school management meetings;
- teachers in leadership positions in their schools should be given responsibility for the management of staff;
- leaders in the school should put in place a communication system that ensures the adequate dissemination of information;
- deputy principals in large schools should have limited class teaching responsibilities in order to facilitate their involvement in the leadership of primary schools;
- conflict resolution policies should be drawn up by all schools.

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Oilibhéir Ó Braonáin

'A MHIC, NÁ MEABHRAIGH ÉIGSE': GENDER BALANCE, PRIMARY TEACHING AND THE IRISH QUESTION

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ABSTRACT: The past four decades have witnessed a consistent decrease in the percentage of primary school teachers in Ireland who are male. The republic is not unique in this regard. The feminisation of the Irish primary school teaching profession is representative of a global trend which has been remarked upon in the commissioned reports of several governments and international agencies in recent years. By common consent, the reasons behind lowering rates of male participation in the primary teaching profession are complex. The factors most often cited include salary, prestige, status, promotion opportunities as well as cultural perceptions of the role of the primary school teacher. These factors in particular have been identified as exercising a significant bearing on rates of male entry to the profession internationally. In Ireland, public and academic discourse surrounding the issue of male participation in primary teaching have come to focus increasingly on the Irish language requirement for entry to preservice training. Since the foundation of the state candidates for primary school teaching courses have been required to demonstrate a minimum level of competence in the Irish language. The current benchmark requirement is a minimum grade C in honours level Leaving Certificate Irish, or an acceptable equivalent. The purpose of this paper is to refute the hypothesis that this requirement represents a barrier to male participation in primary school teaching. While acknowledging the pressing nature of gender imbalance in this domain, it disputes the claim that the honours level grade C requirement can be cited as a valid, meaningful, scientifically tenable variable in any objective consideration of male participation in primary teaching, or that there is a causal link between the Gaeilge requirement and gender imbalance in the primary teaching profession. This paper rejects as spurious the contention that the abolition of the Gaeilge requirement would lead

ipso facto to an increase in male primary teacher numbers, and in fact cautions that it could lead to the reverse.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender imbalance in the Irish primary school teaching profession is, indisputably, one of great concern, topicality and relevance to all stakeholders in the education system. By engaging pre-emptively with this controversial subject before the feminisation of the primary teaching profession becomes an accomplished and irreversible fact, teachers, parents, professional representative bodies and education planners can more effectively describe the margins of the debate surrounding the problem and take the lead in pioneering appropriate solutions.

Public discourse on what has been described as "the demise of the male primary teacher"[1] has led to a serious scrutiny of the honours Irish Leaving Certificate requirement. In many cases this has led to calls for its repeal or amendment. In its 2004 discussion document *Gender Imbalance in Primary Teaching*, the Irish National Teachers' Organization (INTO) claims that the Gaeilge requirement 'disproportionately impacts on male applicants' and that it 'serves in part as a gender-biased filter'[2]. It further suggests that the requirement filters out a number of male candidates each year between the application for primary teaching and the allocation of primary teaching places stages.

In a December 2006 interview with INTO general secretary John Carr on the 'steady decline in numbers' of male primary school teachers the *Irish Examiner* noted :

> The union believes the many reasons for the falling numbers include..... the Irish language requirement for teacher training which is more favourable to women as they do better in the subject[3].

In the political arena Ireland's second largest political party, Fine Gael, has adopted an especially robust attitude in advocating the abolition of this requirement.   In September 2004 the party's education spokesperson, Ms Olwyn Enright, urged the Minister for Education to:

> ...look at disincentives to males entering teaching that are specific to Ireland. The Minister should also examine whether it is reasonable to expect a higher Leaving Certificate grade in Irish than in other subjects as a basic requirement for admission to teacher-training courses.[4]

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1   Irish National Teachers' Organization (2004) *Gender Imbalance in Primary Teaching – A Discussion Document.*

2   *Ibid*.p.8

3   *The Irish Examiner* (2006) ' Union to tackle lack of male teachers', 29 December.

4   Enright (28 September 2004) *Gender Gap is being ignored by Government,* Fine Gael National Press Office, press release.

In March 2005 the party's leader, Mr Enda Kenny, called for a 'review of Irish language teaching' and suggested that this should consider

> If, given the growing gender gap in teaching at primary level, the focus of Irish in teacher-training colleges is contributing to the decline in males entering teaching[5].

In April 2005, Fine Gael's education spokesperson once again linked the issues of male primary school teacher figures and the Gaeilge requirement in the following terms in Dáil Éireann:

> Three out of every ten Leaving Certificate students attempted the honours Irish paper in 2003 and only 30% of this number were young men. Does the minister believe there is an impact on primary teaching in light of these statistics? Requiring an honours qualification lessens the number that can go into this field unlike the situation with English and Mathematics. Has the Minister (for Education and Science) considered proposals being mooted in terms of changing the mandatory nature of the subject after Leaving Certificate Level?[6]

By November 2005, Ms Enright was urging that 'requirements in Irish (for primary teaching) should be lowered to those in English and Maths'[7]. In January 2006 the party's education spokesperson revisited the issue once again with renewed vigour:

> As it stands, admission guidelines for courses in education in teacher training colleges state that candidates must have achieved at least grade C in Higher Level Irish at Leaving Certificate....... These guidelines (sic) mean that, for the vast majority of our young male school leavers, a career in teaching is simply not an option..... I believe that we must bring entry requirements for Irish into line with English and Mathematics. ...Otherwise we will continue to tell thousands of young men that they are just not good enough to become teachers because of their difficulties with one subject on the school curriculum[8].

The Department of Education and Science (DES) *Report of the Primary Education Committee: Males into Primary Teaching* (2005) cites the (unpublished) study of E. Drew, which claims that:

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5 *Review of Irish Language Teaching is essential-Kenny*. Fine Gael National Press Office Press Release, 16 March 2005. The release was authored by Mr. Enda Kenny.

6 Díospóireachtaí Parlaiminte. Dáil Debate. Vol. 601 No.2 , 26 April 2005, Ms. Olwyn Enright TD to the Minister for Education, Ms. Mary Hanafin, TD.

7 *The Irish Examiner* (2005) 'Honours Grade Irish' 'barrier to male teachers', '24 November'.

8 *Hanafin's PR exercise doesn't remove barriers for males entering teaching – Enright*. Fine Gael National Press Office Press Release, 24 January 2006.

career prospects outside teaching; salary level/earning potential; slow career progress; fear of false sexual abuse claims; (sic) and compulsory Irish / SCG are the five most important negative factors that may have discouraged or strongly discouraged them (male students) from primary teaching as a career[9].

Among the recommendations of the *Report of the Primary Education Committee* are:

that further research is required and should be conducted on the following issues:

- to establish the extent to which the higher level Gaeilge requirement impacts on a student's decision to apply to the Colleges of Education.
- in light of the Bologna Agreement, to investigate the number of people who are not eligible to enter primary teaching because they do not have the Gaeilge requirement.[10]

In relation to the issue of gender balance in primary teaching, the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, wrote in January 2007 that 'The honours Irish requirement does appear to be a barrier as fewer boys take Irish at honours Leaving Cert level than girls'[11].

This paper seeks to offer a diverging opinion and contends that calls for such a change are based upon specious reasoning and premised upon a misinterpretation of the available statistical data. It holds that the removal of this requirement would represent a myopic, short-term solution to a vexed and complex issue and that its abolition would prove detrimental in the long term to the high quality and internationally acknowledged professionalism of primary teaching practitioners in Ireland[12].

This paper purports to outline why the linking of the Irish language requirement with the question of gender imbalance in the primary teaching profession is both academically untenable and disingenuous. It further seeks to raise some broader points in relation to the issues both (a) of gender imbalance amongst primary school teachers and (b) of the Irish language requirement for admittance to the various colleges of education recognised by the State.

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9 Drew, E. (2005) Facing *Extinction: The Self-Fulfilling Prophesy of Men in the Primary Teaching Profession,* (unpublished, p.39).

10 *Report of the Primary Education Committee,* p.4

11 Hanafin, Mary, TD (2007), *World of Work: Hey mate, want to be a primary teacher? Loadzajobs.ie*

12 OECD, 1991.

GENDER IMBALANCE AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

The relative percentage of males working as primary schoolteachers in Ireland has decreased significantly from 32% in 1970 to 17.09% in 2005 (see Figure 3). However, it is essential that these figures and this decline be viewed in their broader international context. Viewed independently their implications become skewed and their relevance obscured. Indeed an informed consideration of the international data regarding male participation in primary level teaching is both an instructive exercise and a useful point from which to begin. The most cursory analysis of this data leads inexorably towards the conclusion. that the problem of gender imbalance in primary level teaching is a universal one, affecting countries across the globe, both developed and developing.

The increasing feminisation of the teaching profession internationally is itself a more complex and subtle phenomenon than a first glance at the statistical tables might allow. On the one hand it manifests itself in an increased percentage of women as primary teaching practitioners and a corresponding decline in the number of male primary teaching practitioners over a particular time period in a given region. On the other hand it can express itself through an increase over time in the overall number of primary teachers in a given region, with the number of new female teachers increasing as the profession expands but with the numbers of male teachers remaining static. Indeed this is precisely what has happened in Ireland (see Figures 4 and 5 below).

It has been argued that these inversely proportionate changes in teacher gender ratios could be interlinked on the basis that the increasing feminisation of the profession can have 'negative implications for the status of teachers' and because in some regions 'the overall levels of teachers' salaries are kept below the levels which would prevail if teaching were a male profession'[13]. In other words, a self-fulfilling prophesy sometimes develops whereby the more feminised the profession becomes the less likely that males will join it. The less males participate in the profession the greater its perceived loss of prestige, leading in turn, in some areas, to a gradual deterioration in pay and conditions of service.

A report published by the *International Labour Organization* in 2000 states that 'by 1995 just over half the 19 (OECD) countries for which (data) was available had a primary teaching force that was predominantly female, over 70%'.

In a 2004 report, the *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe* offers the following figures for male participation in primary school teaching in 2000:

> France 22%, Germany 18%, Israel 16%, Hungary 14%, Austria 11%, Bulgaria 9%, Italy 5%, Latvia 3%, the Czech Republic 6%, Lithuania 1.8%, Russia 1%[14].

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13 UNESCO World Education Report (1998), pp.42-43.

14 The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe http://www.unece.org/stats/trends2005/education.htm. Statistics supplied by the UNECE are relevant for the year 2000.

According to a report commissioned by the Scottish Assembly in 2003, just 7% of primary teachers in Scotland at that time were men[15]. The corresponding figures for England and Wales in 2005 were 14.4%[16] and 16%[17] respectively. Indeed, according to the British Government :

> Between 1985 and 1998 the number of full-time female primary school teachers in England and Wales increased by 13 per cent, from 134 thousand to 151 thousand, while the number of male teachers declined by 21 per cent. In 1998, females represented 83 per cent of all full-time primary school teachers compared with 78 per cent in 1985. [18]

In Canada just 22% of fulltime teachers are male, the figure for Quebec is 15%. In the U.S.A. a mere 9% of elementary school teachers were male in 2003. According to the US *National Education Association*, this represents a forty-year low and a considerable decrease from an all-time high in 1981 of just 18%[19]. In New Zealand men currently make up only 20% of the primary teaching workforce[20]. In Australia the proportion of male primary school teachers has declined from 25.8% to 20.9% in just eleven years. This has provoked such serious public disquiet and political concern that the Federal Government recently amended the 1984 *Sex Discrimination Act* to enable it provide one million dollars in teacher scholarships for men to become primary teachers[21]. It is in this context that Ireland's 2005 figure of just over 17% can be best evaluated and appreciated (See Figure 1).

15 Teachers in Scotland (2003), A *Scottish National Statistics Publication* for the Scottish Executive.
16 B.B.C. News, 22 April 2002.
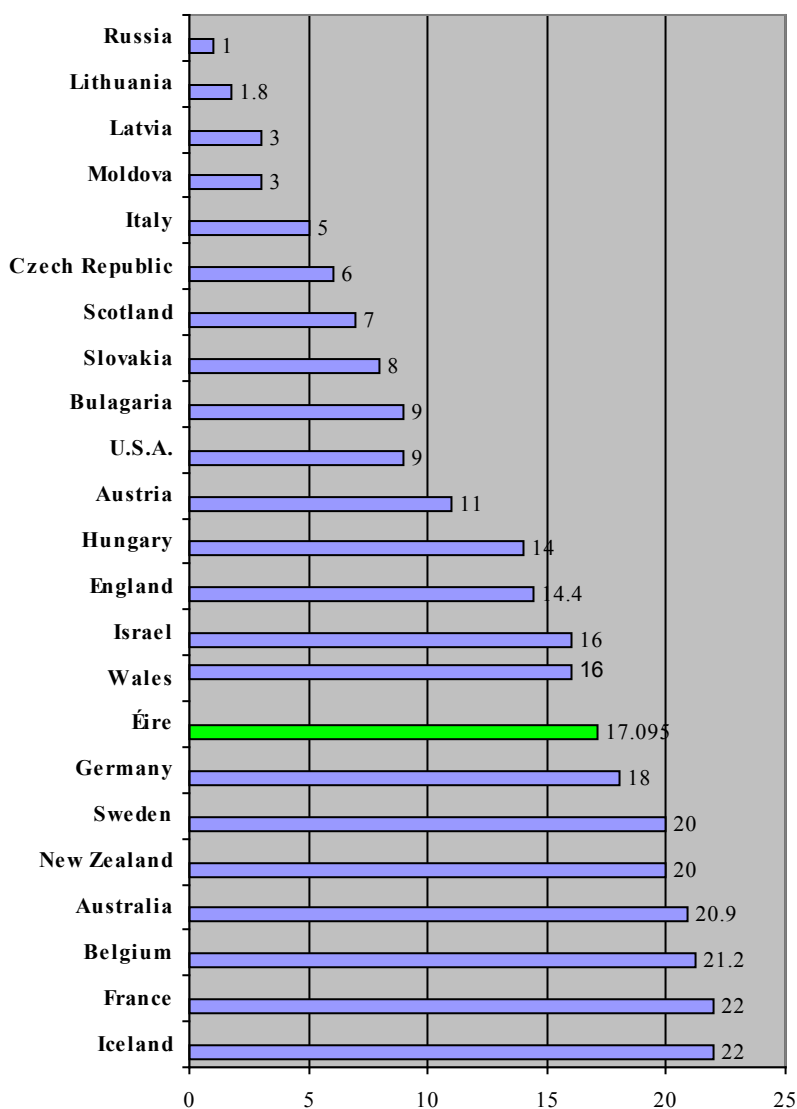17 B.B.C. News, 5 May 2005.
18 http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/
19 The National Education Association (USA) *Male Teacher Fact Sheet 2003* (http://www.nea.org/teachershortage/03malefactsheet)
20 Teach New Zealand: Teacher Education: http://www.teachnz.govt.nz/training/providers/men.html
21 Media Release by Dr Brendan Nelson, Australian Government Minister for Education Science and Training, 3 May 2004.

**Figure 1:** *The respective percentages of male primary school teachers distributed by country[22].*

Country	Percentage
Russia	1
Lithuania	1.8
Latvia	3
Moldova	3
Italy	5
Czech Republic	6
Scotland	7
Slovakia	8
Bulagaria	9
U.S.A.	9
Austria	11
Hungary	14
England	14.4
Israel	16
Wales	16
Éire	17.095
Germany	18
Sweden	20
New Zealand	20
Australia	20.9
Belgium	21.2
France	22
Iceland	22

It should be noted that the national statistics cited above form part of a broader global trend which, when considered collectively, indicate a marked increase in the percentage of teachers who are female in all areas of the world. According to the 1998 UNESCO World Education Report, 'As regards sex: the percentage of teachers who are female varies considerably among the different regions of the world, *but is rising in all regions'* (my emphasis).

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22 These figures are based on the sources outlined on pp. 6-7. See also the *Sé Sí, Gender in Irish Education* Report, p.138 and Table D7.2 'Gender Distribution of Teachers (2002)', *Education at a Glance*, 2004, OECD.

Figure 2: *Number by (millions) of teachers in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, by sex and region, 1980 and 1995.[23]*
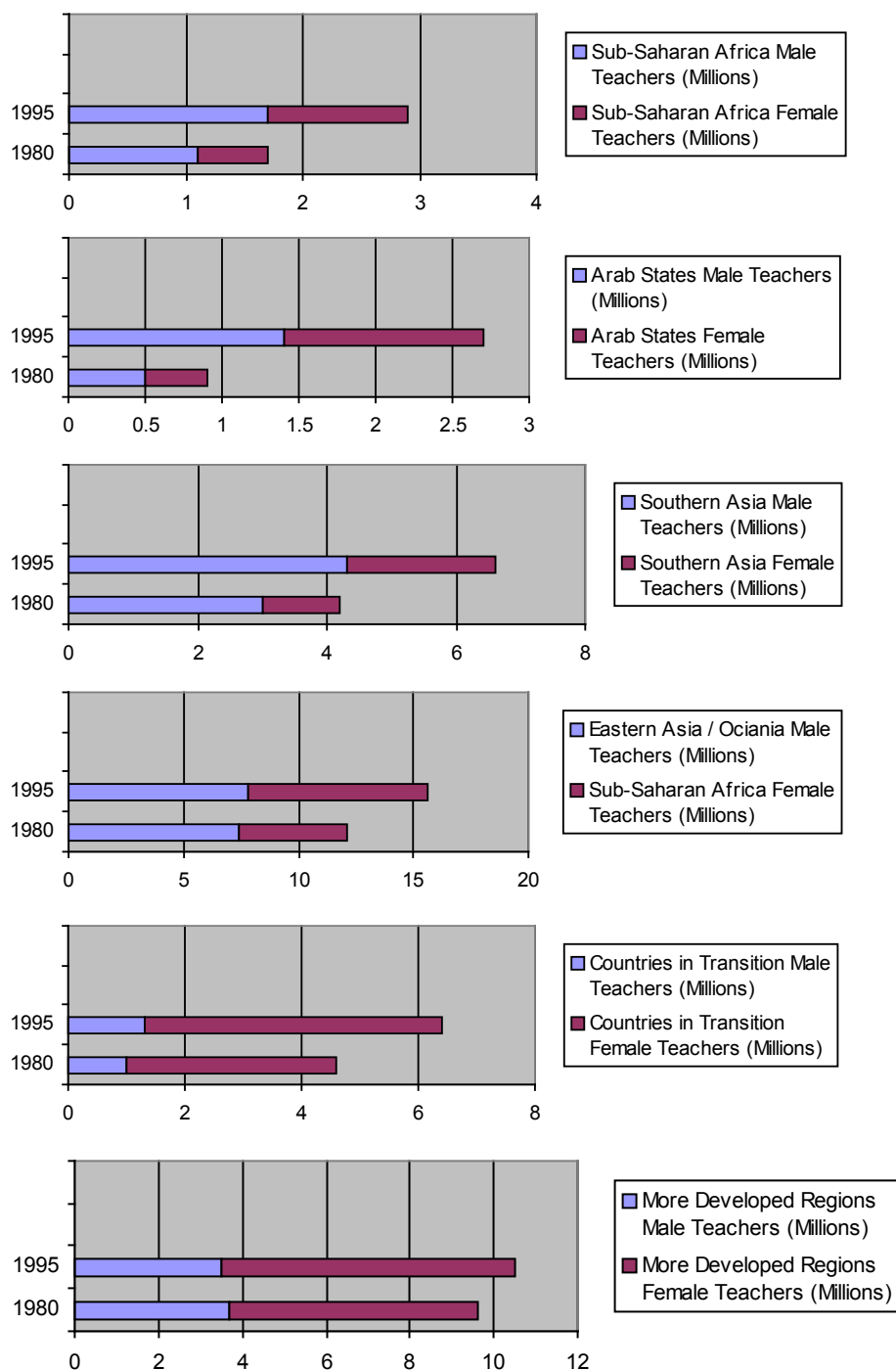

23 UNESCO World Education Report 1998, pp. 42-43.

Clearly the issue of low male participation in primary education is a global one and does not affect Ireland alone. At the risk of stating the absurdly obvious, in none of the above-mentioned countries is admittance to preservice training predicated upon achieving a minimum standard in an Irish language examination!

PROPORTIONS VERSUS NUMBERS

Figure 3 *Male teachers as a percentage of the primary school teaching profession from 1970 – 2005.*
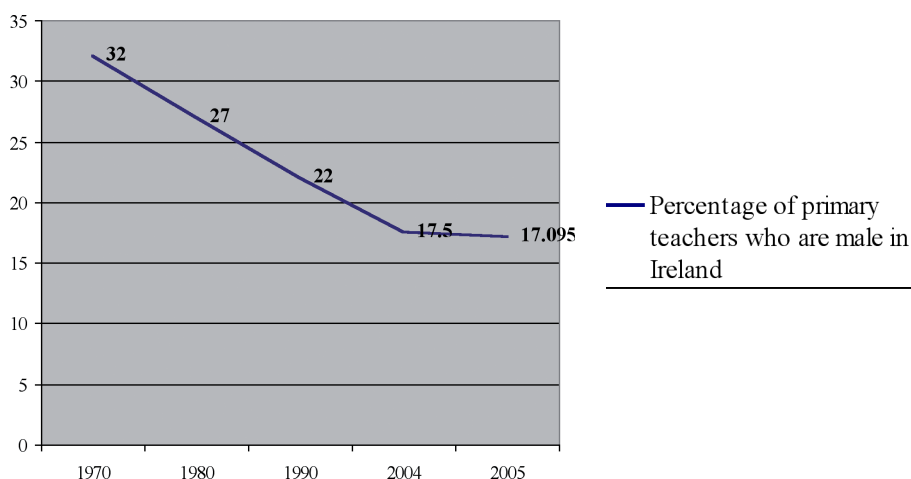
The graphic illustration of what has been dramatically labelled the 'Demise of the Male Primary School Teacher' quoted in Figure 3 above obscures the fact that while recent years have indeed seen a marked decline in the relative percentage of males as a proportion of the primary teaching profession the actual number of men working as primary school teachers hasn't changed significantly over the past 75 years[24].

The 2007 *Sé Sí* Report on gender in Irish education includes an illuminating longitudinal study of the male to female primary teacher ratio from 1930 to 2003. The study indicates, for instance, that while the proportion of female primary teachers increased from 58% in 1940 to 82% in 2003[25], in the words of Minister Mary Hanafin, 'the actual number of male primary teachers has not changed a lot over time'[26]. In highlighting this fact, the report itself observes:

24 *Sé Sí* Report (2007), Chapter 8. Educational Personnel, p.138, Figure 8.1, *Primary Teachers, 1930-2003.*

25 *Ibid.*

26 An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta (27 July 2007) *New Report on Gender in Irish Education launched by Minister Hanafin.*

While the total number of teachers at the primary level has doubled over the last fifty or sixty years, the number of male primary teachers in 2003 is broadly equivalent to the number of male teachers in the 1950's and 1960s.[27]

In actuality the increased feminisation of the Irish primary teaching profession has expressed itself through an increase in the number of female teachers as the profession has expanded while the numbers of male teachers has remained, broadly speaking, unchanged. The figures for the period 1996-2005 help to illustrate this clearly.

Figure 4: *The number of teachers, distributed cumulatively and by gender, operating within the Irish primary school system between 1996 and 2005, during which period the profession increased by almost a quarter[28].*

☐ Number of Male Primary School Teachers

☐ Number of Female Primary School Teachers

☐ Total Number of Primary School Teachers
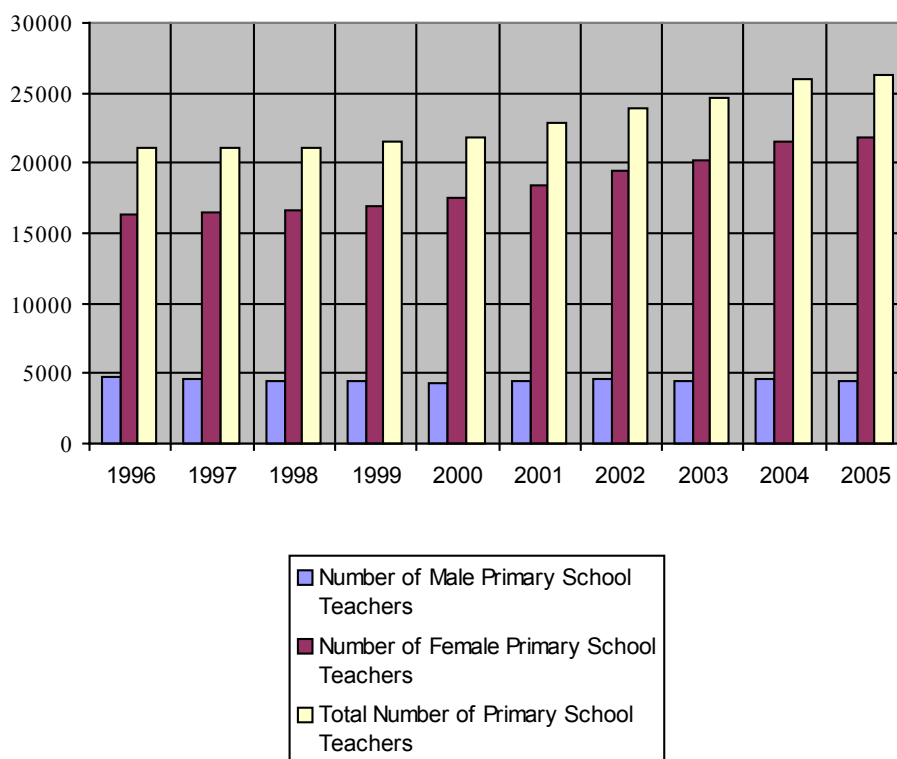
Between 1996 and 2005 the number of primary teachers in Ireland increased from 21,052 to 26,282 (an increase of 5,230 or 24.8%). During this same period the number of female teachers increased by 5,418 while the number of males decreased by 188. In other words while the number of male teachers changed

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27 *Sé Sí* Report. Chapter 8, 'Educational Personnel', p. 138. Figure 8.1, *Primary Teachers, 1930-2003.*

28 Census of Ireland Report. Also Central Statistics Office Ireland. See http://www.cso.ie/stastics/primary_teaching_post.htm

little between 1996 and 2005, as a proportion of the overall profession, the percentage of male teachers decreased by 5.14% over the same period (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: *Male and female teachers as proportions of the overall primary teaching cohort between 1996 and 2005.*
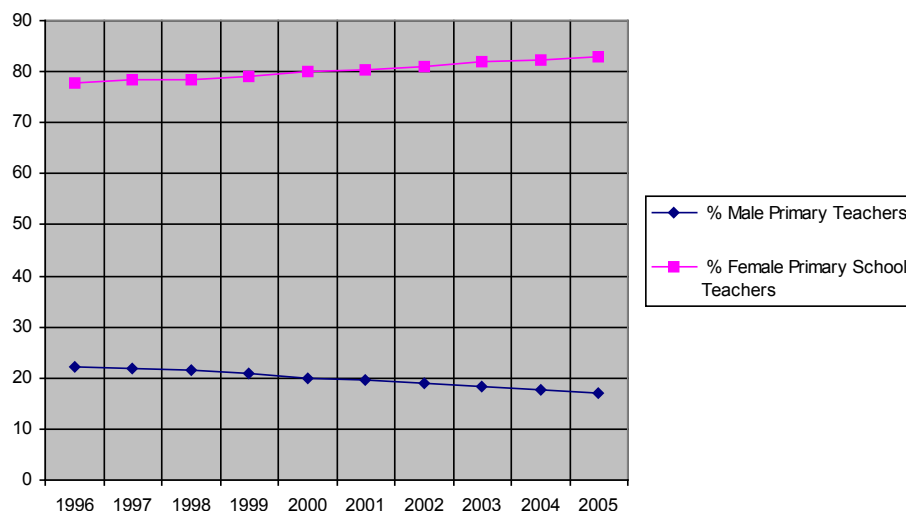
Expressed in another way, the decreasing proportion of males as a fraction of the overall primary teaching cohort (see above) belies the fact that the number of qualified male primary teachers employed at first level has neither increased nor decreased significantly over the period in question.

While gender imbalance is doubtless both a disquieting reality and a pressing concern, the decreasing proportion of male teachers tends to create a misleading impression that fewer men are working as primary teachers than was heretofore or even historically the case. In fact, their numbers within the profession have remained relatively steady over past decades but the increased number of teaching positions has encouraged a far greater number of women to enter this pedagogic arena.

Calls for the removal of the *Gaeilge* requirement in order to arrest a catastrophic 'decline' in the number of male primary school teachers are predicated upon a tendentious interpretation of the empirical evidence. There are not less men teachers because of the *Gaeilge* requirement. There are simply more women teachers because of a recent expansion of the profession which has attracted a greater proportion of female candidates for teaching. What is required to correct this imbalance is not a revision of the *Gaeilge* requirement, but rather a continuing dynamic campaign to educate and inform young men about primary teaching as a viable and rewarding career option. This has been recognised by both the *Report of the Primary Education Committee* (2005) and, earlier, by Fine Gael

deputy education spokesperson David Stanton TD who urged in 2004 that

> ....the Government and the Department of Education should do
> more to promote teaching as a career for men, particularly though
> guidance counselling and other services in second level.[29]

STATISTICS

So what of the body of statistical evidence adduced by the INTO in its 2004
report advocating a review of the *Gaeilge* requirement for entrance to colleges of
education? Disraeli once famously quipped that there are 'lies, damned lies and
statistics!' and crossing swords over differing interpretations of the same official
tables of statistical data can often be as pointless as it is ineffective. Nonetheless,
the following observations are of relevance.

Between 1999 and 2007, no less than 78.9% of the male candidates who sat
the Leaving Certificate honours *Gaeilge* exam, scored a Grade C or better[30]. By
any standards that is a high rate of success. In other words, from 1999 to 2007
an annual average of just over 4,049 male students obtained a grade C or higher
in honours *Gaeilge*. To place this figure in perspective, in 2005 there were 4,493
men[31] working as primary school teachers in the Republic of Ireland at every
professional level of the school system, from classroom teachers to principals.

By any standards 4,049 students represents a large pool of potential male
trainee teachers for the limited number of places available annually in the main
colleges of education. In fact, there were *in total* 3,547 students studying to
become primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland during the academic year
2004/5[32]. This includes students in each of the three years of the BEd course in
the five colleges of education[33*], as well as those pursuing the Graduate Diploma
in Education in each of these colleges and Hibernia College[34]. Clearly, the annual
pool of male candidates for primary teaching with a minimum C grade in honours
Irish is sufficiently large that to suggest, as the INTO has done, that the *Gaeilge*
requirement serves as a gender filter is to misread the data. Simply because
relatively more females than males take the honours Irish paper every year, this
does not mean, in and of itself, that males are less likely to become primary
school teachers. It is a *non sequitur*.

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29 *The Irish Examiner* (2004) 'Decline in male teachers- robbing young boys of role models' *(,* 1
    April).

30 Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit. See also *Gender Imbalance in Primary Teaching* Page 9.

31 http://www.cso.ie/statistics/primary_teaching_post.htm

32 *Report of the Primary Education Committee*, Table 3, p.15.

33 The Church of Ireland College of Education does not have postgraduate students.

34 Hibernia College was recognised in 2003 as a college for the accrediting of the Graduate Diploma
    in Primary School Teaching. It offers teacher training courses through a combination of online
    lectures, school visitations and group seminars.

SEPARATE ISSUE

Admittedly, as has been outlined, less males than females study honours level Irish to begin with (of those candidates who sat the higher level Gaeilge paper in 2007 33.7% were male and 66.3% were female). But can the proposition that the discontinuance of the grade C in honours Gaeilge requirement would lead to an increase in male primary teachers be seriously entertained? It is to be doubted. The variables involved in this question are manifold and so complex that such a hypothesis is at best naive. If fewer males are studying Irish at higher level than girls, then we must ask ourselves why this is so, and to remedy the situation we should act in conjunction with our primary and post primary teacher colleagues, parents' representatives, Comharchumann na Múinteoirí Gaeilge and the relevant Department officials to address the issue. Ultimately, this remains an extremely important subject, but one which is separate from the question of gender imbalance in primary teaching. Linking the *Gaeilge* requirement with gender imbalance distorts the issue and confuses the contours of the debate.   Interestingly, from 1922-2005 entry to *An Garda Síochána* was limited to those with an established minimum standard of Leaving Certificate Irish. No one could seriously suggest that this ever served to inhibit male recruitment to that organisation.

Nonetheless, professional education practitioners should find grave cause for concern in recent statistics relating to the popularity of Irish in state exams generally. In 2005 only 89% of Junior Cert students took Irish as an exam subject. In fact the number of pupils sitting the Junior Cert Irish paper decreased by 4,000 (a drop of 8%) between 2002 and 2005, making Irish in that year only the sixth most popular Junior Cycle exam subject after English. Indeed the number of students, both male and female, opting out of Irish altogether at both Junior *and Leaving Cert* increased by 400% from 1995-2005[35]. This year (2007) the percentage of Junior Cert students taking Irish has fallen yet again to 87 per cent of all candidates and the national language was replaced by science as the sixth most selected subject for exams at this level[36] .

Of more immediate pertinence to the subject of this paper it should be noted that between 1999 and 2007 the number of candidates sitting the Leaving Cert higher level *Gaeilge* paper fell by 19.7%, from 17,221 to 13,831[37]. If these trends continue unabated it shall soon become difficult to find teacher-training candidates of either gender with any meaningful level of Irish whatsoever.

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35 *Irish Times* (2005), September 14.

36 *Irish Independent* (2007)   'Irish drops in popularity as one in eight opt out'. 12 September

37 *Gender Imbalance in Primary Teaching* (2004) p.9 for 1999-2003 figures. Figures from 2004-2007 obtained from website of Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit.

LOW ENROLMENT

So why do males currently represent a low 19% of all trainee teachers[38]? Can this honestly be attributed to the exigencies of the *Gaeilge* requirement? It is to be doubted, and to suggest otherwise is somewhat disingenuous. The respective Leaving Certificate classes of 2004 and 2007 disproves this thesis conclusively.

In 2004, some 4,932 males sat the higher level *Gaeilge* Leaving Certificate examination[39] yet only 275 (under 5.6%) of these placed primary teaching as their first choice in their CAO application that year[40]. This year, of the 4,664[41] male candidates who sat the higher level *Gaeilge* paper only 781[42] of them (or 16.7%) had sought a place in a college of education teacher training course by January 2007[43]. In other words, of the male students eligible to do so in the class of 2007, over 83% had expressed no desire to enter the primary teaching profession by January of that year. In brief, the *Gaeilge* requirement was not the problem. The problem lay, and continues to lie, in the lack of motivation amongst male students to become primary school teachers in the first place. It is simply speculative to claim that the rate of male CAO applicants would increase if the *Gaeilge* rule were to be abolished.

So why in fact is the percentage of male trainee teachers so low? Certainly one of the principal disincentives to young men seriously considering the profession as a career seems to economic / financial. The siren song of Ireland's recent rates of economic growth and technological development seem to have led many Leaving Certificate students down more enticing career routes. The link between the *Gaeilge* requirement and low male enrolment in primary teaching programmes is at best unproven and at worst contrived.

In Stranmillis University College in Northern Ireland, which does not have a *Gaeilge* requirement, the average male enrolment between 1999 and 2003 was 18.8%. This corresponds almost exactly with the figure for male enrolment in Australian primary teaching programmes, which has led the Federal Government to amend equality legislation and vote male trainee teachers one million dollars in additional scholarships!

So whence the very real crisis of gender imbalance in our staff rooms and Colleges of Education? The causes are complex and involved but some factors are doubtless more prominent than others.

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38 *Irish Times* (2007) 'Gender Gap in Education Widens as Girls Run Ahead', Monday, 4 June.

39 *Males into Primary Teaching: Report of the Primary Education Committee*, *op.ci.,* Appendix 3. Statistics, p.39.

40 *Ibid*. P.16Table 5.

41 Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit.

42 The figure is quoted by Minister Hanafin in *World of Work: Hey Mate, want to be a primary teacher?* http://www.loadzajobs.ie/news_details.asp?id=1178

43 *Ibid*

SOCIO-ECONOMICS

There can be no doubt that economic factors have been to the fore in the decision of successful male Leaving Certificate candidates to choose the more lucrative options of the private sector and the more richly remunerated 'higher professions' over primary teaching. The prodigious levels of economic growth and expansion witnessed in Ireland over the past number of years has lead into corporate life many young men who might otherwise have considered becoming primary teachers. By and large, conditions of service in corporate life are perceived to be superior and financial rewards more immediate. Between 1995 and 2005 Ireland experienced an average annual export growth rate of around 9%, the highest in the EU and OECD. In the same period our export growth outpaced world export growth by a ratio of 3:1[44]. In 2005, Ireland's was the most competitive and globalised economy in the world for the second consecutive year[45]. Given the obvious allure of a dynamic enterprise/knowledge based economy with all the financial and material rewards associated with it, is it really surprising that the percentage of male primary school teachers declined from 22% to just over 17% between 1990 and 2005?

In 2004 Fine Gael's deputy education spokesperson, David Stanton, presciently observed that 'part of the reason fewer men were entering the profession was the swing towards other sectors, such as computers and information technology'.[46] In face of the huge evidence to the contrary, can it be realistically suggested that the abolition of the *Gaeilge* requirement would contain or even reduce this haemorrhage from the public to the private sector?

Salary is clearly a major consideration for ambitious, academically successful young men. Apart from the fact that many consider primary school teaching to be a job with limited potential for promotion and career advancement[47], the perception of a relatively low public service salary is clearly an additional disincentive[48]. In a 2003 publication, the US based *National Education Association (NEA)* treats of this factor as follows:

> Salaries are low for teachers when compared with other professionals, which lowers the prestige and social value of a career in teaching. Many men don't see the teaching profession as a lucrative way to provide for their families.[49]

The NEA has itself identified a significant link between teacher pay and the relative gender differential within the teaching profession within the various US

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44 Speech by An Taoiseach Bertie Aherne to U.S. business leaders at the Waldorf Astoria, September 2005, Website of Roinn an Taoisigh.

45 Globalisation Index Study, 2005.

46 *The Irish Examiner*, 1 April 2004.

47 Drudy *et al.* 2002, p.185

48 *Ibid.*

49 The National Education Association (U.S.A.) *Male Teacher Fact Sheet 2003* (http://www.nea.org/teachershortage/03malefactsheet)

states. It points to the states of Michigan and Mississippi as instructive examples of the link between salary and gender in teaching.

In 2005 teacher salaries in Michigan were the fourth highest in the US, with most educational districts in Michigan offering excellent benefits. The result is that 26% of elementary teachers and 37% of teachers overall within the state are male[50]- a figure well ahead of the US national average of 9% for elementary teachers and 24.9% for teachers in general. Conversely, Mississippi, which is ranked forty-ninth out of the fifty US states in terms of teacher pay, has the lowest percentage of male teaching staff in the USA[51].

The Queensland (Australia) Government's *Male Teachers' Strategy 2002-2005* for improving the recruitment and retention rates of male teachers sought in its terms of reference, to address, amongst other factors 'The attrition of male teachers from the...State Schooling System into other areas of employment'[52]. An examination of salary and conditions represented a major plank of that strategy. Clearly there is an added link between salary and the prestige and status of a career[53], factors thought to be more influential amongst males in determining their career path.

THE POINTS RACE

Ireland is almost unique in the developed world in that her primary teaching students are drawn from the top 25% of all students proceeding to colleges of higher education in the country[54]. The open, competitive nature of our CAO system means that candidates applying for positions on teacher training courses need to obtain high points. Male students who manage to achieve these points tend to gravitate towards the more high status-and ultimately more lucrative-university courses. Not only that, but the evidence to this very day indicates that girls are significantly outperforming boys at all the points levels which affect entry to all third level programmes, including primary teacher training. In actual fact, girls are currently achieving higher points in the Leaving Certificate than boys. Indeed, this recurring trend at Leaving Certificate level of enhanced female academic success and comparatively poorer results from male students (a trend witnessed in the September 2007 Junior Certificate results too[55]) would seem to be symptomatic of a broader and worrisome phenomenon within our education system as a whole.

In the Leaving Certificate Examinations of 2004 over 9,000 girls achieved 400 points or more compared with 6,500 boys[56] while in 2005 one third of female

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50 *The Eastern Echo (2005,* 2 September .
51 U.S National Education Association (2003) Wanted*: More Male Teachers*.
52 Website of the Queensland Government: Male Teachers' Strategy 2002-2005.
53 U.S National Education Association (2003) *Wanted: More Male Teachers.*
54 Greany, Burke, McCann (1999) *Irish Journal of Education,* pp.23-27.
55 *Irish Independent* (2007) 'Lack of Male Teachers hits boys' grades', 13 September.
56 CAO 2004.

students obtained over 400 CAO points, compared to only one quarter of male students[57]. In 2006, according to a recent Higher Education Authority Report, only 39 per cent of those accepting places on courses requiring 450 points or more were male; 61 per cent were female[58]. If the corresponding figures for the class of 2007 prove to be similar then an overwhelming number of potential male teaching candidates will this year have found themselves excluded from the various undergraduate courses for first level teaching, not by the Irish language prerequisite, but by the following minimum points requirements:

Figure 6: *Minimum points requirements for Primary Teaching (BE.) courses 2007[59]*

College of Education	St. Patrick's College (Honours Course)	MICE (Honours Course)	Coláiste Mhuire	Church of Ireland College	Froebel College
Round 1	465	465	455	390	450
Round 2	465	465	455	385	450

The cumulative effect of the emerging trend of higher female achievement in the Leaving Cert has been to significantly alter the complexion of higher education in Ireland in general. Female students currently represent 77 per cent and 60 per cent of students in medical and law faculties, respectively, while the overall gender ratio at third level in Ireland is now 54 per cent female to 46 per cent male (See Figure 7)[60].

It is not within the parameters of this paper to offer anything other than the briefest tour *d'horizon* of gender differences in higher education in Ireland. Nonetheless, the data considered thus far renders it apparent that if there is a real gender filter in the primary teaching application process, it is not the *Gaeilge* requirement. It is, rather, the Leaving Certificate / CAO system as a whole which would seem to be failing a higher proportion of male students. It is the system as it currently operates which stands indicted of filtering out male applicants and not minimum C in higher level the data considered thus far renders it apparent that if there is a real gender filter in the primary teaching application process, it is not the *Gaeilge* requirement. It is, rather, the Leaving Certificate / CAO system as a whole which would seem to be failing a higher proportion of male students. Indeed, taking into account the higher success rates of female candidates in the Leaving Cert, removing this requirement would in all probability reduce even further the number of males securing places on primary teaching courses.

57 *Irish Times*. (2007). 'Gender Gap in Education Widens as Girls Run Ahead', Monday, 4 June
58 *Ibid*.
59 http://www.rte.ie/cao/ and the website of the Central Applications Office. Note that these cut off points do not refer to the minimum requirement for students from the Gaeltacht, which are considered separately.
60 *Ibid*.

Figure 7: *The respective proportions of male and female students at third level in Ireland*
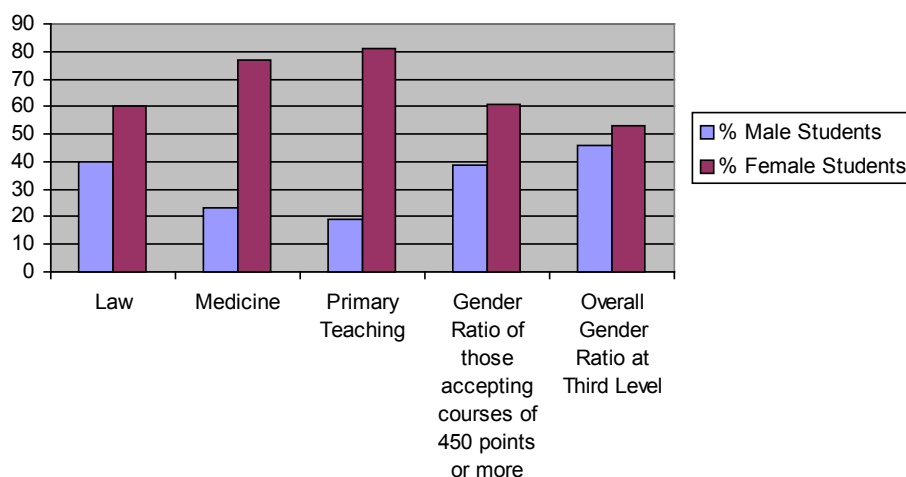
CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE

In 1970, 32% of all primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland were male. Even in an era of high emigration, high inflation, and limited third level opportunities, the statistics indicate that primary school teaching was a profession marked by a significant gender imbalance. In other words, despite the more limited range of opportunities for young men to advance themselves professionally in 1970 and the existence of a *de facto* quota system for male teachers until 1975,[61] primary teaching did not attract an overwhelming number of male candidates. There was, what might be termed, a 'naturally occurring' gender differential.

On the other hand, *despite* the more strenuous emphasis on proven proficiency in Irish (until 1993, an Irish language interview combined with a minimum C in the Leaving Certificate were prerequisites for preservice training), the proportion of males in primary teaching in 1970 was almost double what it is today - further evidence if needed that no meaningful, causal, scientific link can be established between low male enrolment in primary teaching courses and the *Gaeilge* requirement. Indeed, to extend the retrospective narrative further it should be noted that between 1930 and 1940 forty-three per cent of all teachers trained within the state and forty-six per cent of all teachers appointed permanently within the state were male[62]. This was during a period in which the preservice training of primary teachers was conducted almost exclusively through the medium of the

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61 From 1875-1975 St. Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra was a male-only teacher training. College. In 1975 it became coeducational teacher training college awarding BEd degrees validated by the National University of Ireland.

62 Ceisteanna chun an Aire. Dáil Éireann. Imleabhar 173, 10 Márta 1959. Oral Answers. Male and Female Teachers. Mr. Mooney to Mr Childers, Aire Oideachais.

Irish language and the emphasis on both teaching and using the language within the primary school system was markedly stronger than it is today. The broad historical experience of male participation in primary teaching demonstrates categorically, therefore, that the Irish language has never proven to be a barrier to a more favourable gender balance within the profession. Protestations to the contrary risk being viewed as special pleading.

Nonetheless, it is incontrovertibly true that for many decades a significant gender disparity has existed within the primary teaching profession. Why did this imbalance exist in the past and why does it continue to exist today? Naturally, cultural factors were then at play and these continue to exert their influence today. There is the perception that teaching is 'women's work' and that the primary teacher in particular has a nurturing, caring role[63] which is inconsistent with the typical male self concept which by and large is aggressively competitive and emotionally self-contained. Indeed the above mentioned Queensland Government's *Male Teacher's Strategy 2002-2005* takes account of the 'community perception of.... male teachers in the profession' as part of its brief.

TEACHER APPLICANTS

One possibility not countenanced by proponents of the abolition of the language requirement is that its removal could actually advance the rate of feminisation of the profession. Between 1999 and 2003 an average of 34% of female Leaving Certificate students achieved the minimum Irish requirement for primary teaching. Considered in reverse this indicates that over the same period 66% of all female candidates did not qualify for a college of education place due to the language requirement. Yet by January of this year, 2007, female applicants for positions in training colleges had outnumbered male applicants by a ratio of 7:1. A total of 3,709 female Leaving Certificate 2007 students indicated a desire to become primary school teachers. The corresponding figure for boys was 781[64]. In fact between 2000 and 2004 on average 85% of all applicants to the CAO for primary teaching were female[65]. Common sense dictates therefore that considering (a) how girls are outperforming boys in the Leaving Certificate (b) how girls in general appear more motivated to become teachers than males and (c) how disinclined boys in general seem to be to become teachers, the removal of the *Gaeilge* requirement could plausibly lead to a deluge of high points scoring female applicants who would otherwise have been excluded from consideration by reason of the language requirement. This possibility was acknowledged by the *Report of the Primary Education Committee (2005)* which noted that 'some

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63 News Release ,U.S. National Educational Association (2004) 'Are Male Teachers on the Road to Extinction?'.

64 Hanafin, Mary, TD, *World of Wor:; Hey Mate, want to be a primary teacher?*

65 Based on CAO figures quoted in *Gender Imbalance in Primary Teaching* and *Report of the Primary Education Committee.*

Committee members contended that one possible result (i.e. of changing the Gaeilge requirement) would be an increase in the number of female entrants to the Colleges'.[66]

AN GHAEILGE SA CHÓRAS BUNOIDEACHAIS

Is ar chumarsáid agus ar úsáid na teanga mar ghnáththeanga bheo a leagtar béim sa Churaclam Gaeilge. Tá béim ann ar líofacht cainte agus ar leathnú chumas cumarsáide an pháiste i gcoitinne. Cuirfidh foghlaim na Gaeilge ar chumas an pháiste cumarsáid a dhéanamh in dhá theanga

Curaclam na Bunscoile, 1999[67]

Chomh maith leis an gceacht Gaeilge ba chóir go mbeadh atmaisféar na scoile fábhrach don Ghaeilge agus go mbeadh an teanga le feiceáil ar fhógraí agus ar pháipéarachas na scoile agus le cloisteáil ag na páistí agus í á labhairt ag na múinteoirí ina measc féin agus idir na tuismitheoirí agus na múinteoirí ó am go ham.

Curaclam na Bunscoile, 1999[68]

Accepting momentarily, for argument's sake, the highly contentious claim that the *Gaeilge* requirement is a 'gender filter', and that that its abolition would lead to an increase in the number of men in entering the training colleges, these new, additional male student teachers would still be faced with rigorous courses in *Gaeilge Ghairmiúil* and *Múineadh na Gaeilge*, which form an obligatory part of preservice training in the colleges of education. Most trainee teachers would agree that these courses are challenging and are pitched at a higher academic standard than Leaving Certificate honours Irish. The natural corollary to abolishing the minimum C requirement is that the academic standards of the colleges in relation to the Irish language would have to be diluted or lowered to reflect the reduced ability in Irish of the increased male enrolment. The *Report of the Primary Education Committee (2005)* took cognisance of this possibility, noting :

...that lowering the entry requirement would dilute the overall standard of the Gaeilge taught in the Colleges of Education and thereby lower the level of the Gaeilge taught in schools[69].

In the words of the old proverb *Ní féidir an dá thrá a fhreastal!*

And what of the schools themselves? Department of Education and Science

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66 *Males into Primary Teaching: Report of the Primary Education Committee*, p. 19.

67 Gaeilge. Teanga: Treoirlínte do Mhúinteoirí, lth. 2

68 *Ibid*. lth. 4

69   *Report of the Primary Education Committee*, pp. 19-20.

guidelines stipulate that 3.5 hours per week must be allocated to the teaching of the Irish language. The revised curriculum clearly indicates that the Irish language should not be confined within the narrow limits of the daily timetable window, but that its use should be seamlessly integrated into the whole life of the school and the school community. In other words, the Irish language represents a central pillar of the curriculum of primary education in this state, and has done so since 1922. Indeed it has been *the* defining cultural influence in the Irish primary school system for over eighty years. Because the language enjoys such an esteemed position in the life of Irish primary schools, there is a very great need for teachers, both male and female, who are competent to teach it effectively. There is a very real risk that in tinkering with the current requirement, the standard of teaching might be adversely affected.

The recently published Harris Report [70] on Irish in primary schools indicates a substantial decline in Irish Listening and Irish speaking in ordinary schools since 1985 and evidence of changes in teachers' attitudes during the same period. This report suggests that, if anything, a more vigorous approach must be adopted towards the teaching of Irish in primary schools and the preparation of teachers for that purpose. Furthermore, the Government of Ireland's December 2006 *Ráiteas i leith na Gaeilge / Statement on the Irish language,* commits the state to 'a twenty-year strategy for the Irish language' based on thirteen key objectives including the following:

> Irish will be taught as an obligatory subject from primary to Leaving Certificate level. The curriculum will foster oral and written competence in Irish among students and an understanding of its value to us as a people. This will be supported by enhanced investment in professional development and ongoing support for teachers, as well as in provision of textbooks and resources, and in support for innovative approaches to teaching and learning.
>   and
> A high standard of all-Irish education will be provided to school students whose parents/guardians so wish. Gaelscoileanna will continue to be supported at primary level ....[71]

These ambitious commitments by the state combined with the disquieting findings of Dr Harris' report suggest that the removal of the *Gaeilge* requirement would represent a retrograde and counterproductive step. It is certainly not a move that could be calculated to foster enhanced standards of Irish language teaching by even its most sanguine proponents.

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70 Harris *et al.* (2006) Irish in Primary Schools: Long Term National Trends in Achievement.
71 Government of Ireland (2006) *Ráiteas i leith na Gaeilge / Statement on the Irish language.*

CONCLUSION

There is a large measure of agreement that an increase in the number of male primary school teachers best serves the interests of Irish education and society. This can be most effectively accomplished through an impartial examination of the best available research - local and international- and by merging the findings and recommendations of such studies with the needs, objectives and cultural ethos of the Irish primary school system. Only through a synthesis of best international practice with local pedagogic needs and cultural prerogatives can gender imbalance in primary teaching be addressed and remedied without impinging negatively upon or destabilising the existing system. Strategies which strive towards ameliorating the gender balance in the profession should mediate judiciously between the attainment of this worthwhile goal and the maintenance of the core curricular and cultural values of primary education in Ireland.

During the course of the public debate on this issue many commendable recommendations have been made with regard to how greater gender balance might be achieved. The most insightful of these acknowledge candidly that male students are simply not applying in large numbers to be teachers in the first instance. They do not find the career attractive or appealing and there is simply no evidence to suggest that large numbers of potential male teachers are being lost to the system because of the *Gaeilge* requirement. However, there is, evidence that those males who do apply are failing at the hurdle of a CAO points system that requires a high overall standard in six subjects.

The 2006 MATE (Males as Teachers and Educators) promotional campaign 'aimed at encouraging more men to consider primary teaching as a career choice'[72] is a sterling example of the sort of sensible and practical measures which can and should be taken to promote teaching as an attractive career option to males who might not otherwise have entertained it as such. Indeed its success can already be measured by the increased number of males applying for positions on BEd. courses since the campaign was launched (See Figure 8) :

Figure 8: *The percentage of male CA.O applicants for primary teaching courses from 2005-2007.*[73]

Year	2005	March 2006	March 2007
% of Male Applicants for Primary Teaching	17.37%	18.85%	20.78%

Furthermore, the recommendations in *Report of the Primary Education Committee: Males into Primary Teaching* (2005) that 'appropriate targets be

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72 An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta, Press Release (24 January 2006).

73 Data supplied by Íomhair Ó Glíosáin, CAO. Figures for 2005 relate to the end of that year. The figures for 2006 and 2007 are valid for the month of March in those respective years.

set' for increasing male teacher numbers over the next five and ten years; that career 'guidance (be) more widely available ...both at junior cycle...and senior cycle' and that 'the institute of Guidance counsellors...address the perception and evidence that primary teaching is not being offered by all guidance counsellors for consideration' are the sort of excellent proposals which could see progress in this area.

In relation to the broader issue of *Gaeilge* at second level the committee has made worthwhile recommendations which, if implemented could see the numbers of male higher level *Gaeilge* students increase, thereby assuaging any concerns that commentators have raised, albeit misguidedly, in linking the language question with gender imbalance.

In safeguarding, promoting and cultivating national cultural identity, the primary school system has played an invaluable role since the foundation of the state. Primary teachers of both genders have been to the forefront in the promotion of the national language, literature, sports and music. In this role their dedication has been widely acknowledged, their professionalism above reproach. While recent decades have witnessed a slow erosion of the Irish language in many areas of the public service, the primary school system has resiliently maintained both a cultural ethos and a professional ethic which is favourable to its continued cultivation and use.

The gradual attrition of Irish from many spheres of public life should encourage those keen to safeguard a meaningful future for the language to view the primary school as the *ne plus ultra* of a process which has seen its status encroached upon and diminished. The role of Irish at primary level is vital to securing its effective future both as a robust expression of national identity and as a positive agent of social cohesion in an increasingly multicultural Ireland. It is within this system that the long-term socio-cultural trajectory of the Irish language will ultimately be determined one way or another. Precipitate action in regard to the *Gaeilge* requirement could irrevocably compromise the standard of Irish amongst primary teachers, with grave consequences for the language's future.

Gender imbalance in teaching is a relatively recent phenomenon. It is a serious issue which defies the sort of facile analysis that overlooks its deep-rooted complexity. All education stakeholders have a vested interest in seeing that it is addressed constructively. Politicising the Irish language requirement or tampering awkwardly with established teacher training practices in a way that is insensitive to the cultural imperatives of the primary school system will not advance the cause of gender balance in teaching. It will, however, impinge negatively on the system as it currently exists. The *Gaeilge* requirement and a more balanced gender ratio in primary teaching should not be seen as mutually incompatible. It is to be hoped that future government policy in these areas will reflect that position.

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Oideas 53

Liam Turner

AN EXAMINATION OF PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE PROVISION FOR MULTI-CLASS TEACHING IN IRELAND

Liam Turner is teaching principal of Sacred Heart NS, Newbawn, Co Wexford. He taught for twelve years in a large urban school with disadvantaged status and spent a further two years in private schools abroad. In 2000 he began teaching in small rural schools in Co. Wexford. This paper is based on his Masters thesis with Trinity College, Dublin in which he evaluated the pre-service and in-service provision for multi-class teaching in Irish primary schools. The full thesis is available on-line at http://homepage.eircom.net/ ~lturnerdsl/.

ABSTRACT: Given the world-wide prevalence of multi-grade classes, and in response to 'Teaching and Learning in Multi-grade Classrooms: More Questions Than Answers' (Oideas 51), the more salient points that need to be made on the systematic neglect of multi-grade service provision in Ireland are presented. Irish research that corroborates the academic benefits of small schools is cited and reference is made to international studies that confirm both the social and cognitive benefits of the multi-grade classroom. Sixty-four teachers and four Colleges of Education returned questionnaires that examined their experience of pre-service (including teaching practice) and in-service provision for teaching in a multi-grade classroom. Although the study was mainly quantitative in nature, a qualitative element was employed in assessing the perceptions of teachers about teaching in mono-grade or multi-grade classes. The stark research findings reveal a clear chasm exists between what the providers think they are providing and what the practitioners are actually experiencing on both pre-service and in-service fronts. In conclusion, a number of recommendations are made with regard to future pre-service and in-service provision for multi-grade teaching.

DEFINITIONS OF AND HISTORICAL PREVALENCE OF MULTI-CLASS TEACHING

For this paper, the term 'small school' refers to 'schools with less than 180 pupils and less than eight teachers', a definition adopted by the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN, 2004, p.5). Likewise, the expression 'multi-class' is that defined

in 2003 by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), namely 'the teaching by one teacher of children working in two or more grades or age groups and in the one classroom' (INTO, 2003, p.9).

In *Oideas 51* Mulryan-Kyne contends that 'traditionally the most favoured option in education systems throughout the world has been the single-grade or mono-grade class structure where children are grouped in classes according to a narrow age band' (Mulryan-Kyne, 2005, p.85). However, research has shown that was not the case traditionally nor does it reflect current practice. Pratt claims that because 'most of us grew up in an age segregated school system. So too did our parents and grandparents, and this makes it easy to assume that such a school structure is both natural and universal. In fact, it is universal neither geographically nor historically (Pratt, 1986 p.111).

The multi-age concept has been around for thousands of years. In the earliest Jewish schools in the synagogues, boys aged from six to twelve years were taught together and Greek boys, from the ages of seven through to eighteen, were trained together for 'mental as well as physical fitness'. Swiss, Irish, Dutch, American, Scottish and English systems examined at length in one's thesis, firmly established multi-age teaching as the popular norm because it enabled a small number of adult masters to educate large numbers of students in basic skills at a low cost.

Horace Mann, the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, visited Prussia in 1843 and was very taken with what he observed. Cited in Pratt, Mann reported that:

> the first element of superiority in a Prussian school...consists in the proper classification of scholars. In all places where the numbers are sufficiently large to allow it, the children are divided according to ages and attainments, and a single teacher has the charge of only a single class... There is no obstacle whatever... to the introduction at once of this mode of dividing and classifying scholars in all our large towns.
>
> (Pratt, 1986, p.112)

Urban education administrators in the US were soon to recommend that schools be divided on the lines of age and grade, a development that mirrored the division of labour in industry. The single class model became the common school system and was advocated universally in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Kasten stated that 'grade levels were not an invention designed to suit the needs of children; they were instituted to emulate the factory model and to be cheaper, more efficient and easier to monitor for administrators…the industrial model is alive and well in twentieth century schools' (Kasten, 1998, p.2)

CURRENT INTERNATIONAL PREVALENCE OF SMALL SCHOOLS

Professor Angela Little, School of Lifelong Education and International Development (LEID), Institute of Education, University of London, best represented the prevalence of multi-class teaching when stating that 'the multi-grade reality has characterised hundreds of thousands of schools throughout the twentieth century and will continue to do so well into the twenty first' (Little, 1994).

In spite of a century and a half of 'single class and big school conditioning' there is still a large and significant part of the worldwide primary education sector that is served by multi-age classrooms, and their survival has often arisen as a result of issues such as population scarcity or socio-economic factors, However, there are significant ideological based movements developing throughout the world advocating the benefits of small schools, and in some cases governments and/or departments of education are mandating and actively supporting the formation and continuance of small schools. Unfortunately, no such movements or agencies are to be found in Ireland.

In a comprehensive study conducted in the late 1950s by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) International Bureau of Education, information was collected on the frequency of multi-class teaching in fifty-five countries. But little if any comparable data was collected in the next three decades, a fact bemoaned by Little. Her research, flagged by Mulryan-Kyne, shows that 'in the Northern territories of Australia, for example, forty per cent of schools have multi-grade classes. The comparable figure for France is 22% and Sweden 35%' (Little, 1994).

In 1999, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) in Oregon, USA produced a series of booklets for multi-grade teachers. In 'The Review of the Research on Multiage Instruction' the NWREL reflects on the professional lives of multi-grade teachers in diverse worldwide locations and reports that 'currently, Peru has approximately 21,000 primary multi-grade schools, 96% of which are located in rural areas. In terms of teachers, 41 000 teach in rural primary schools with multi-grade classrooms, representing 69% percent of the total rural teaching force' (NWREL, 1999, p.14).

In the early 1980s, the Colombian Ministry of Education initiated the *Escuela Nueva* programme. This was an especially designed programme for multi-grade schools predominantly in rural areas. Such was the success of the strategy that in 1989 the World Bank singled out *Escuela Nueva* 'as one of the three primary school experiments in the world which had succeeded in making educational innovations, and recommended that 'the lessons of this experience be widely disseminated among policy-makers in developing countries' (López, 1999). Currently there are about 12,500 operating under the *Escuela Nueva* umbrella in Colombia.

Guatemala was one country that adopted Colombia's multi-grade school model in its entirety. Renaming the programme *Nueva Escuela Unitaria* (NEU-'New Multi-grade School') and 'in 1996, there were an estimated 927 NEU

schools out of a total of 11,664 schools, with 1,315 teachers and 49,472 pupils. Plans were underway to expand the program to the whole Guatemalan primary system.' (Worldbank, 1999).

The Philippines was the first country outside of South America to adopt the *Escuela Nueva* model and in 1997 the Filipino Department of Education had employed 20, 479 multi-grade teachers throughout the country and were in the process of setting up multi-grade demonstration schools in twelve districts based on *Escuela Nueva* principles and designed to facilitate training of teachers' (Loewe, 1997).

More than 75% of India's 678,000 primary schools have multi-grade classes, and in 2000 the Japanese Ministry of Education reported there were 7, 145 multi-grade primary schools in the country out of a total of 24, 106 primary schools (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2000).

Statistics for New Zealand, published by the Education Review Office (ERO) in 1999 showed that over half the primary schools in New Zealand had multi-grade classes. Again, while taking cognizance of forced factors such as sparsely populated far-flung island populations, both of these countries are actively promoting the culture of multi-class teaching.

In 1999, the Department for Education and Skills, Scotland (DfES) reported there were 4, 696 multi-grade classes' (DfES, 1999). This represented just under twenty seven per cent of Scottish primary schools having multi-grade classes, whereas the Office for Standards in Education, England (OfSTED) reported there were about 3,700 small schools in England (OfSTED, 2000)

Multi-class schools are a significant feature of the Irish Primary school system. The IPPN has stated 'that more than 56% of primary school teachers and principals in Ireland work in small schools and 53% of pupils are taught in these schools' (IPPN, 2004, p.5).

These figures are backed up by the DES online statistics where out of 3,150 primary schools in 2006, 2, 100 of them have seven teachers or less (DES, 2006). The majority of these schools are to be found in rural areas where the sparse populations, travel times to larger towns and the parish ethic ensure their presence as a socio-economic necessity.

Mulryan-Kyne refers at length to mixed classes in small multi-class schools and mixed classes in larger, mainly single-grade schools, and acknowledges that: multi-grade teaching differs from single-grade teaching on a number of dimensions…indeed the teaching and learning context in these classrooms appears to be different enough to justify the use of different terminology to describe them' (Mulryan-Kyne, 2005, p.86)

In Ireland the educational misnomer 'a consecutive class,' is adopted and readily used. But, the continued use of such a phrase camouflages the irrefutable fact that two classes of different ages, ability levels and maturity levels are still being taught in the same classroom by the same teacher, who as one's research has found, has been trained in a mono-grade mindset'.

Having professionally experienced both small multi-class schools and mixed classes in larger schools, this author sides with Mulcahy who maintains that

whether a multi-grade classes are formed by a geographical cum economic necessity or by an educationally sound desire to educate through multi-grade, the fact remains that the result is a multi-grade class. He calls on multi-grade teachers 'to make a virtue out of necessity and…(seek)… some assurance that their educational leaders understand and support the implications of multi-grade teaching not just for curriculum and instruction but also assessment and evaluation (Mulcahy, 2000). This has already been done in Peru, Colombia, Guatemala and the Philippines where forced conditions have been taken on board by the relevant authorities to formulate policies especially designed to meet the needs of the school-going population.

EFFICACY OF SMALL SCHOOLS

North American research conducted by Rule (1983) Pratt (1986) Stone (1986) Miller (1990) and Pavan (1992) affirm the status of multi-grade students when academically compared to their single-grade counterparts. Pavan also corroborates the social benefits of multi-age classrooms, cited by Pratt (1986) and Miller (1990) - benefits later reaffirmed by Katz (1995), Viadero (1996), Gaustad (1997) and Kasten (1998).

European studies conducted in Finland by Pietila (1978) and in the Netherlands by Veenman (1995) reflect the Australian findings of Russell *et al* (1998) that suggest there was no discernable difference in the academic performance of multi-grade and single-grade pupils. Closer to home, in 2000, OfSTED presented 'Small Schools, How Well Are They Doing'. This study was based on four years of school inspections of every primary school in England, coupled with National Curriculum tests results. It claimed that:

> in terms of the overall quality of education inspections show that pupils in small schools are not disadvantaged in comparison with those in larger schools because of the size of school. Small schools are equally capable of providing an effective education and many are among the most effective in the country.
>
> (OfSTEDa, 2000, pp. 3 - 4)

In one isolated American instance, from 1998 the state of Vermont has actually increased funding to small schools deeming them worthy of the investment 'because of the value they add to student learning and community cohesion. Academically, small school students do as well or better than large school students (Equity, 2000).

Very few studies have been done in Ireland on the efficacy of small schools. However, the results of the limited number of studies done to date all come to the same conclusions as the international studies already discussed.

In 1977, Martin and Kellaghan examined the relationship between school variables and reading attainment in Irish and English in Third and Fifth classes (that is, children aged approximately nine to eleven) in a national sample of single-class and multi-class primary schools. Two national assessments, 'English Reading in Fifth Class' in 1998 (Cosgrove *et al*, 2000) and 'The 1999 National Assessment Mathematics Achievement' (Shiel and Kelly, 2001), are also worth mentioning because in both studies 'no significant differences in achievement by school size at primary level were found'.

In 1999, Keenan looked at the idea that small schools are educationally unsound. Examining two teacher schools in Roscommon, Longford and Westmeath in the area of curriculum provision from the 1960s to the 1990s Keenan held that 'there was little evidence that this restricted the delivery of a wide curriculum…School size did not hamper the delivery of the curriculum (Keenan, 1999, p.117).

'Succeeding in Reading' (Eivers *et al*, 2004) which looked at reading Standards in First and Fifth Classes in Irish primary schools found that:

> First (but not Fifth) class pupils taught in a multigrade classroom scored significantly higher on the reading test than pupils taught in a single grade classroom…..This is partially accounted for by the fact that there were no multigrade classes in the designated disadvantaged schools surveyed. If we consider only non designated schools there was no significant difference between multigrade and single grade schools.
>
> (Eivers *et al*, 2004, p.15)

In the recent 2006 study of Mathematics achievement, 'Counting on Success', it was found that 'pupils who attended schools in rural areas achieved significantly higher scores than pupils who attended schools in cities, but did not differ in mean achievement from pupils in large or small towns (Surgenor *et al*, 2006, p.25).

In this limited Irish context, which reflects the international studies, children in multigrade settings, taught by teachers trained in monograde methodologies, using monograde curricula, do as well, if not better, than their monograde counterparts.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The data collection for the research project was based on the evidence supplied by means of questionnaire to schools and colleges of education in Ireland in 2004.

A total of 100 questionnaires were sent to schools. Fifty of these were posted to schools with administrative principals and single grade classes (thirty-eight were returned) and fifty questionnaires were sent to small schools with teaching principals and multi-age classes (twenty-six of these were returned). Table 1

shows that the sixty-four teacher participants graduated from fourteen different Colleges of Education, of which fifty-six of these graduated from the Irish colleges of education.

TABLE 1. *Colleges of Education attended by respondent*

St. Patrick's College of Education, Dublin	24	University of Wales, Aberystwyth	1
Carysfort College of Education, Dublin*	8	University of Wales, Bangor	1
Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education, Dublin	8	University of Wales, Cardiff Institute	1
Mary Immaculate College of Education, Limerick	8	University of Glasgow	1
Froebel College of Education, Dublin	6	Bath Spa University	1
Church of Ireland College of Education, Dublin	2	St. Paul's College of Education, Rugby	1
University of Ulster, Coleraine	1		

* *Ceased as a College of Education in 1988*

Of the sixty-four respondents, forty-one (64%) of them had graduated in the previous ten years, with twenty- two (34% in total) of these having graduated in the previous five years. This would imply that most of the respondents would remember pre-service and in-service provision for their chosen profession without much difficulty.

In respect of the colleges of education, the respective heads of the education departments and the heads of teaching practice departments were contacted by electronic mail, and eventually four of the five Irish colleges responded. What now follows is the data obtained from the schools and colleges of education respectively.

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Data from the schools

- *Teachers were asked if either compulsory or elective courses/modules on multi-class teaching had been provided during their pre-service training and, if so, what was the duration/composition of these modules.*

Three of the respondents (all of whom qualified in the last five years) remember a partial module on multi-class teaching that consisted of three lectures (in the case of two respondents) and one lecture (in the case of the other respondent) in total. These lectures were delivered the week before home teaching practice.

A fourth respondent who had completed a postgraduate diploma in a UK College described a compulsory module on multi-class teaching. This extended for three hours per week for six months and successful completion depended on a combination of assignment and examination.

Sixty of the respondents (93.75%) had received no compulsory training in multi-class teaching and sixty-three (98.4%) had not been aware of any elective module/course/series of lectures during the whole of their pre-service training. This lack of training was earlier flagged by the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) who found that teachers felt of their pre-service provision 'did not prepare them adequately for the challenges of teaching in a multi-class situation. The Colleges of Education seem to ignore small schools and the problems associated with them' (INTO, 2003, pp.24-25). These Irish sentiments echo the findings of Veenamn who found that 'teachers were generally critical of teacher-training courses and claimed that these courses did not prepare them for teaching in a multi-grade situation (Veenamn, 1995, p.232).

- *Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency with which they completed Teaching Practice (TP) in a multi-class situation.*

TABLE 2. *Frequency of teaching practice completed in multi-grade classes*


89
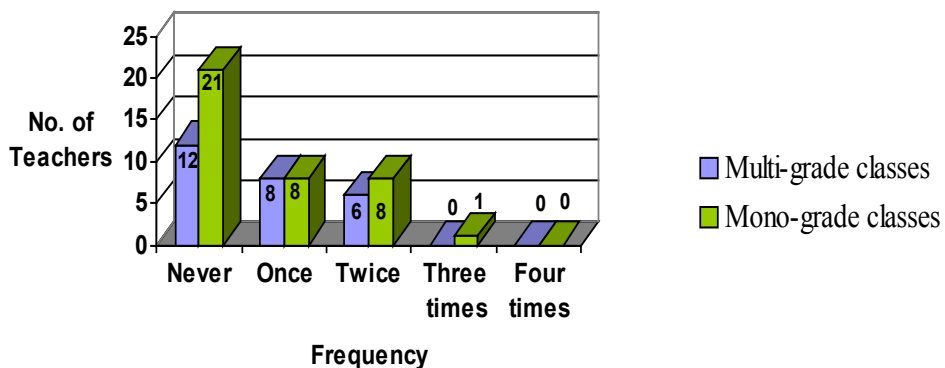
Just over half of the sixty-four respondents had never undertaken teaching practice in a multi-class setting, while another quarter had been in this situation only once.

- *Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency with which they completed final teaching practice (TP) in a multi-class situation.*

Table 3, shows the frequency in which student teacher completed final teaching practice in mono-grade situations as opposed to multi-class situations

TABLE 3. *Frequency of Final TP being completed in a multi-grade class*
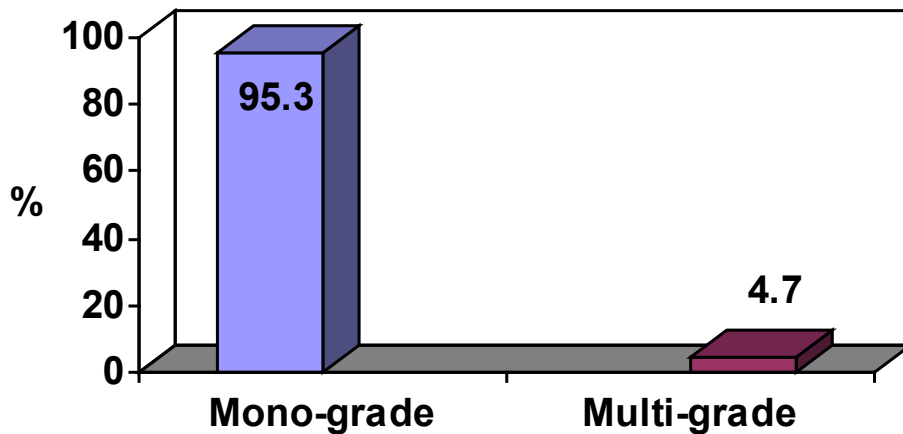
The data collected showed that sixty-one of the respondents had completed final TP in a mono-grade class with the other three students completing their final TP in a multi-class situation. Interestingly, all three students had completed their training in the same college of education and two of them had taken their degrees after 2000.

- *Teachers responses relating to in-service provision*

This author formed the professional opinion that the best sources for resources, guidance, texts and or training should be the Department of Education and Science, the INTO, the County Wexford Education Centre, and the School Development Planning Support (SDPS) / Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP). One's opinion was influenced by the data in Table 4.

TABLE 4. *Multi-grade in-service provision as experienced by respondents*

	• Informed	• Not Informed
Number of teachers who have been informed of In-Service Training in Multi-Class teaching, facilitated by DES, INTO, Co. Wexford Education Centre, SDPS or PCSP.	0	64
Number of teachers who have attended In-Service Training in Multi-Class teaching, facilitated by DES, INTO, Co. Wexford Education Centre, SDPS or PCSP.	0	64
Number of teachers who have received from or been guided towards Multi-Class Teaching Resources by DES, INTO, Co. Wexford Education Centre, SDPS or PCSP.	0	64

- *Data from teachers' questionnaires with possible implications for recruitment*

A recruitment crisis in multi-class schools led to the Irish Government setting up the Joint Committee on Education and Science on the Availability of Teaching Staff in Primary Schools in 2000. This fact coupled with one's own professional experience of having no qualified applicants for full time teaching posts in small rural schools in 2002 and 2004 prompted this author to ask teachers working in single class settings, if, hypothetically, and incurring no loss of earnings, no increase in travelling time and no additional expense, would they opt for jobs in a multi-class teaching position.

Out of thirty-six respondents only one (i.e. 2.7%) would be prepared to move to a multi-class teaching post. The thirty-five single class teachers who would not countenance a move to a multi-grade setting mentioned the absence of any pre-service training or teaching practice in multi-class situations as a major influence on their answers. To them, the lack of organised and official support structures for practising multi-class teachers would leave them totally bereft of any of the skills needed for this type of work and this would be compounded by the paucity of books and resources specifically suited to the multi-class set-up.

Data from colleges of education
As stated above, four of the five colleges responded and each 'respondent college' was assigned a letter e.g. College Z, and the personnel were assigned pseudonyms e.g. Alex, Beatrice.

- *The Colleges were asked if multi-class teaching is a recognised field of specialisation in teacher training colleges.*

In College A:
> multi-class teaching is not at present a field of specialisation in this College but may be in the future.

(Ann, College A)

Following up this answer with a phone query, one was told that because of falling nationwide enrolments there would soon be a need for specialisation in multi-class teaching in these particular schools with dwindling numbers, as mono-grade classes are fast becoming a thing of the past.

In Colleges B and C multi-class teaching was not a recognised field of specialisation.

> In College D multi-class teaching was not an area of specialisation but one of our recent topics for staff development was multi-class teaching. Groupwork approaches is the solution to many of the issues involved. We in "College D" place huge emphasis on groupwork and catering for children's differing abilities and stages of development.
>
> (Brigid, College D)

- *The Colleges were asked if completion of teaching practice in a multi-class setting was compulsory as a part of their pre-service training provision.*

College A on the other hand was forthright its stance on multi-class teaching practice placements when stating:

> as a matter of policy in this College, all students complete a minimum of one multi-class teaching practice placement. In practice the vast majority of students complete a minimum of two such placements.
>
> (Ann, College A)

College B responded:

> No. The logistics of placing 1500 students in multi-grade classes would make this unworkable. Also, is it really necessary? How much can preservice education be expected to do?
>
> (Adam, College B)

College C responded:

> …while we do not specifically indicate that all our students experience multi-class settings, many students in their final year home TP (teaching practice) elect to teach in a multi-class.
>
> (Sean, College C)

College D did not have compulsory multi-class teaching practice but 'many students experience multi-class teaching on their two Home TPs'.

CONCLUSIONS

- The Benefits of Multi-class Teaching

The cognitive and social benefits, and the efficacy of small schools, in both international and Irish contexts, have been reaffirmed by the findings of one's study.

- Pre-service Provision

Course content
What emerges from the data is that multi-class teaching is dealt with in a manner that leaves the majority of teachers unaware that the subject area has been broached. The colleges contend that they provide an adequate level of pre-service training in multi-class teaching for students but the evidence from teachers is unambiguous and to the contrary.

Respondents suggest most Irish colleges of education prepare graduates to work in only 30% per cent of Irish primary schools. Forty-three per cent of Irish primary children are taught by people, who on basis of the respondents' answers and the colleges of education own admissions, have not attended stand alone specialist modules on multi-class teaching as recommended by LEID, UNESCO, Network of Multigrade Education (NEMED) and Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). Primarily this is because these modules are not offered at pre-service level.

Teaching practice
Teaching practice in the colleges of education needs to be examined and overhauled. One college only mandates that teaching practice be completed at least once in a multi-grade setting. The research findings show that of those questioned just over 50% had never completed teaching practice in a multi-class situation, while 95.7% had never completed final teaching practice in a multi-class situation.

It would seem logical that all five colleges offer the same pre-service provision on multi-class teaching and teaching practice. On qualification, all graduates would be enabled to work in the melting pot of Irish primary education as it stands today, yet teaching practice continues to deprive students of the teaching experience that is the daily reality of over half of the teachers and principals working in Ireland today. As College B asserts, clearly there would be some logistics problems in placing 1,500 students in multi-grade classes. However, one must question how much time and energy has been expended in seeking creative workable solutions to the logistical conundrums posed by the concept of compulsory multi-grade teaching practice.

- In-service provision

In 2003, the INTO found that the in-service programmes designed to facilitate the introduction of *Primary Curriculum* (1999) had basically ignored multi-class teachers; and this was borne out by my research. The INTO highlighted the fact drew attention to the facts that the curriculum handbooks did not realistically reflect the make-up of multi-age classes, did not give adequate attention to implementation matters in a multi-class setting and it stated that no guidance or advice was available in relation to teaching of a particular subject in multi-class settings (INTO, 2003, p.21) One's own experience of the in-service was that many of the facilitators had little, or no, experience themselves in multi-class teaching.

Data secured from the colleges of education in respect of their in-service provision shows a vast and varied approach to in-service and a premium placed on flexibility to facilitate working teachers in completing courses. However, once again it must be pointed out that none of the diplomas or degrees offered includes a stand-alone module on multi-class teaching.

- Single Class Teachers' Perceptions of Multi-class Teaching

A recent Scottish report by Valerie Wilson bears out the findings of Campbell (1986), Miller (1991), Cotton (1993), INTO (2003) and of this author's work, that mixed classes are perceived negatively and teachers tend to avoid the increased workload in planning for, and delivering, the curriculum to these classes. As Wilson puts it:

> [teachers are] usually trained in the graded method and fear non-graded classes require more preparation and a wider repertoire of instructional methods and materials… as the text book / standardised assessment industry does not produce material for composite classes.

> (Wilson, 2003, p.19)

Research and anecdotal evidence both suggest that teachers working in multi-grade situations need specialist training for this demanding role both at pre-service and in-service level. It is the author's expressed contention that this lack of pre-service and in-service in multi-class teaching contributes greatly to the perceived difficulties of teaching in multi-class schools. This in turn fuels the recruitment problem whereby young graduates, with no theoretical knowledge or practical experience of teaching in multi-class situations, do not apply for multi-class positions in rural settings as a rule. This continues to deprive small schools of the energy boost engendered by the appointment of a young teacher and conversely deprives young teachers of enjoying the many recorded benefits of teaching in a multi-class setting.

- The continuing neglect of multi-class class teaching

The commitment to multi-class teaching in Ireland must be questioned when one considers that no Irish educational partner, college of education or teacher professional development group is engaged in the current Network of Multigrade Education (NEMED).

This 'transnational network supported by the Comenius 3 Action of the Socrates Programme of the European Union, brings together educationalists and researchers from ten European countries, who share an interest in researching, enhancing and supporting multigrade education, in their countries and at the European level'(NEMED, 2007).

NEMED aims to

- Stimulate an effort to bring multigrade education to the policy front, and thus contribute to the upgrading of multigrade teaching and learning.
- Perform an extended survey on multigrade teaching and learning issues as well as on the conditions pertaining to multigrade education in Europe.
- Make specific suggestions concerning the improvement of multigrade education at the European level.
- Offer specialized support and training to multigrade school teachers. (NEMED, 2007)

'Multigrade schools typically constitute a neglected aspect of education systems' (NEMED, 2007) and the fact that there is no Irish input in this project should be a matter of professional concern to all the Partners in Education in Ireland.

Furthermore, no Irish educational partner, teaching college or teacher professional development group is listed as a research partner at the LEID which is working towards a comprehensive and connective vision of education that entails a critical exploration of learning from early years to adulthood and whose leading scholars and researchers are nationally and internationally recognised for their engagement with the diversity of policy and practice internationally.

The exclusion of the multigrade class and teacher by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Department of Education and Science in the production of the revised primary curriculum has been voiced both by the INTO and the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN).

In 2005, the IPPN produced a paper in collaboration with one of the aforementioned colleges of education entitled 'New Horizons for Small Schools and Teaching Principalship in Ireland'. The fact that the IPPN approached a college of education, which does not actively promote multi-class teaching to co-write the paper, is a moot point. One was astonished that this publication, and the 2003 INTO publication 'Teaching in Multi-Classes,' both relating to the phenomena of small schools, multi-class teaching and teaching principals, did not refer specifically to the wide ranging, prestigious 2000 report by OfSTED entitled 'Small School, How Well Are They Doing?' Instead of using the data from

this report to endorse the successes of small schools, the IPPN stated that 'in the UK it has been shown that curriculum provision in smaller schools is similar to that which emerged in studies of large schools' (IPPN, 2005, p.10). No statistics, results or dates were given, the information was not even referenced and an opportunity was lost to professionally highlight the good work being done by teachers on a daily basis in Irish multi-grade settings.

The INTO 2003 publication 'Teaching in Multi-Classes' contained interviews about people's personal experiences of teaching in multi-class situations and contained a template of work suitable for a multi-class on Information Technology, which unfortunately is not a curricular area. The report was published, publicised but not followed up.

Both the IPPN (2005) and the INTO (2003) can now say that they have published a report on the plight of multi-class teaching / teaching principals. However it is this author's firm belief that the publications by these two professional bodies were inadequate.

Sadly, the successful Ireland of the twenty-first century mirrors international trends whereby

> ….multigrade classes, in which teachers work with more than one curriculum grade at the same time, are widespread in developing countries. They are also surprisingly common in industrialised countries. Yet the needs of learners and teachers in multigrade classes remain invisible to those who plan, design and fund education centrally.
>
> (LEID, 2007)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The considerable social and cognitive benefits of multi-class teaching first and foremost need to be heralded and publicised by teachers themselves. Then through their unions, professional development groups and in-service groups, they need to highlight the excellent work being done in small schools.

2. Policy advisors and makers, course designers and resource producers should all be targeted, and the virtues and encumbrances of small schools should be clearly spelled out. Every communication must be accompanied by a demand for better in-service, resources, facilitators and properly trained graduates for small schools with multi-grade classes, which make up the majority of Irish primary schools.

3. If the colleges of education were to follow a multi-class module as outlined earlier, the author has no doubt that many graduates would indeed consider teaching in a multi-class, situation thus alleviating the current recruitment difficulties experienced in small schools. It is the author's contention that

student teachers should be tutored to teach effectively in multi-class as well as in single-class settings. There is a clear need therefore to establish a stand alone, compulsory module for multi-class teaching in all of the five colleges of education. Without doubt there would be some overlapping of modular content already on offer in the colleges but the training must be offered solely from a multi-age standpoint.

4. This author proposes the introduction of a Diploma in Multi-grade Teaching. The diploma would be an independent award, like the Diploma in Religious Studies, but successful completion of the Multi-grade Diploma (like professional Irish now) would be necessary for graduation with a BEd.

A hypothetical course content and description for this diploma has been drawn up using the research findings for this thesis, aspects of the NWREL's handbooks on Multi-grade Instruction and aspects of the Rural Elementary Teacher Training Programme (RETT) that ran for fourteen years (1972-86) in Bingham Young University, Utah, USA (Campbell, 1986) and is available at http://homepage. eircom.net/~lturnerdsl. Ch.6.htm

SUMMATION

In *Oideas 51*, Mulryan Kyne rightly says:

> Multigrade teachers tend not to maximise on the potential of the multigrade teaching and learning setting. Instead they use teaching approaches similar to those used by teachers in the single-grade setting.
>
> (Mulryan Kyne, 2005, p.85)

Given that our teachers have been trained continually for single grade settings both before and after graduation, that should really come as no surprise to those involved in Irish primary education.

In the established and separate specialist area of multi-class teaching, colleges of education, policy advisors, policy makers and decision makers in Ireland are still slow in recognising the unique needs of multi-class teachers. This reflects perfectly Broderick's position:

> The academic and professional hierarchies which legitimise some types of pedagogic knowledge and practice as more valuable than others. It is symptomatic of both academic and professional hierarchies that the realities facing the multi-grade teacher barely warrant a mention in international and national education research agenda, in teacher education curricula, in curriculum or assessment studies of curricula, in priorities attached to training scholarships, in manuals of teaching methods and in education information networks.
>
> (Broderick, 2003)

During the course on one's research an e-mail received from a Head of Department in one of the Colleges of Education quipped " I started my professional life as a multi-grade teacher....the expression was not in vogue then!!"

Multi-grade teaching is more than an expression. It is the daily reality for the whole school communities of 2, 225 primary schools in Ireland. However, in both the actions and the mindset of the DES, the Partners in Education, the Colleges of Education, the third level in-service providers, the publishers, the various teachers unions and professional development groups, one's findings suggest that the reality, like the expression, is still not in vogue.

In summary, and finally, this author concurs with Mulryan Kyne when she states:

the single/mono-grade mindset that appears to be a characteristic of most educational systems throughout the world needs to be challenged and modified to accommodate what are the realities of educational need.

(Mulryan Kyne, 2005, p.94)

Why not start those challenges and modifications in Ireland?

Notes

1a.   Since the research was undertaken one college of education has added 'multi-class teaching' to its B.Ed. syllabus. This course is taught over the three years of the BEd programme and Professional Development in the Junior Freshman year examines the requirements of teaching and introduces students to library and research skills, and includes multigrade teaching .The Senior Freshman (Second) Year Syllabus also includes multigrade teaching 2 (CICE, 2007). In relation to Teaching Practice, CICE states:

> School experience is regarded as a vital component of the BEd degree course, and students spend approximately 18 weeks in school over the course of the three year programme. Every effort is made to ensure that students gain experience of teaching various age groups, multi-grade and single grade classes, and of working in both rural and urban schools

(CICE, 2007)

1b.   The BEd handbook of St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, makes three references to 'consideration or attention' being given to multiclass teaching and requires students entering the BEd course to seek a fortnight's placement preferably with lst and/or 2nd classes or in a multi-grade setting e.g. lst/2nd combined) (St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, 2006)

No college of education yet offers a stand-alone module in multiclass teaching methodology or mandates that teaching practice be completed in multiclass settings.

2.   A rural two teacher school in Co. Wexford, very close to a major town, failed to receive any applications for the second teaching post despite separate advertisements run in 2006.

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IN DEFENCE OF PROCESS WRITING

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines a writing project in operation in a number of primary schools in Ireland for many years. The Write-A-Book Project epitomizes the very essence of the process writing movement and continues to grow more successful each year. As The Write-A-Book Project has never been evaluated and little if any research on motivation and process writing in Irish classrooms is available, the author felt that an exploration of the project would be a valuable endeavour. The research for this study was primarily designed to gather information on the factors that inspired and motivated the young writers and to ascertain the benefits or otherwise of involvement in the project. The notion that children could be motivated and benefit from emulating the process used by real writers is borne out by this study. This paper outlines the findings of the study and supports the theories and research findings of Donald Graves and others. Section One provides a background to the study and the research setting describes the sample used. Section Two presents some general findings followed by the specific factors which motivated the young writers. Section Three focuses on the teaching implications and concludes with a brief summary and outlines a number of general recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Findings from the NCCA's Report on the first phase of the review of the Primary School Curriculum suggested that teachers were responding well to the challenge of implementing the new English Curriculum. However, teachers reported difficulty implementing the process approach to writing and requested additional support (Fitzpatrick, Dr. S., *InTouch*, May 2005). According to the English curriculum, the emphasis placed on the process of writing is as great as that placed on the finished product. The curriculum stresses the importance of

purposeful writing activities, the child's role in selecting topics for writing and the value of providing children with a sense of audience for their writing. These ideas are not new. The process writing movement led by educators such as Donald Graves, Lucy Calkins, Nancie Atwell and Donald Murray has been a driving force in the way teachers approach writing instruction for nearly twenty years in the US, Australia and New Zealand. The philosophy at the heart of the *process writing movement* was simple but the implications for practice were profound. Donald Graves, considered by many as the "father" of the process approach to writing, suggests the need for a change in the way writing has typically been taught in schools. Essentially, his key proposition was this: why not teach children to write *the way real writers write?* Real writers choose topics that interest them deeply. Real writers tend to brainstorm and doodle around, or prewrite before they set pen to paper to compose their ideas. Real writers refine their work in a series of drafts; they think about their intended audience, share their work with others and invite feedback (Wood, 2000).

This form of purposeful writing is encapsulated in a relatively recent initiative in primary schools called *The Write-A-Book Project*. The project was first developed by Blackrock Education Centre in Dublin in 1987. In 2000, as part of its ongoing support for literacy, The National Reading Initiative decided that *The Write-A-Book Project* should be spread nationwide. Twenty-one Education Centres around the country became involved and since then more than 30,000 children have written books. Having been involved in *The Write-A-Book Project* for a number of years, this author observed the verve and energy with which her own pupils undertook the task. According to the project's promotional literature, children derive myriad benefits from the various processes involved in creating a book. Their self esteem is affected positively as a result of having total freedom to express their own interests and preoccupations. Since its inception *The Write-A-Book Project* "has been greeted with enthusiasm by teachers and pupils alike" (Galway Education Centre, 2003). The research for this study was primarily designed to examine these claims and to gather information on those factors that inspired and motivated the young writers. This paper outlines the findings of the study.

The population from which the research sample was selected was a clearly defined group i.e. those students who participated in *The Write-A-Book Project* in Galway in 2004. A cluster sample of fifth and sixth class children was selected. A total of 473 students and twenty-two teachers took part in the study. The sample was drawn from fourteen schools: eight city schools and six schools located in rural areas. Fifty-one per cent of the students were boys and forty-nine per cent were girls.

WERE THE STUDENTS MOTIVATED TO WRITE?

Analysis of the results of both the teachers' and children's questionnaires indicates that involvement in *The Write-A-Book Project* is a positive experience for the

majority of the participants. From the quantitative and qualitative results of this study, it is evident that ownership of writing is powerfully motivating. The evidence suggests that allowing children a significant amount of discretion in the choice of topics can influence the quality of children's texts and their attitude to writing. Furthermore, the cultivation of children's interests to produce purposeful, relevant writing and the opportunity to experience success and a sense of achievement, all contribute to inspire these young writers.

The findings from this study show that 62% of the children prefer writing a book to other forms of writing such as essays and stories. When asked for their opinions on this project 441 children or 93% gave positive answers, with most of these referring to the fun and enjoyment they experienced from this process approach to writing. A total of 61% of the children said that they would like to write another book. Results from the teachers' survey showed that 77% of them felt that their pupils showed greater interest in this type of writing than writing essays or stories in class. All of the teachers felt that their pupils benefited from their participation in the project as their writing was more focused and strongly felt. This is borne out by Barrs (2000) who claims that the writing produced through empathetic engagement with others is likely to be more focused, strongly felt and emotively expressed. When a classroom is run on children's natural motivation, emphasis is on learning and on being an active part of the environment. In order to create a learning environment in which students' needs are addressed, the findings suggest that teachers must understand their students' interests, beliefs and concerns; in short, their motivations. Kohn (1993) says it well, "We need to stop asking 'How motivated are my students?' and start asking 'How are my students motivated?'" A closer look at the findings of this research may provide some answers to Kohn's question as several factors emerged which appeared to stimulate and motivate these young writers.

Foremost among these *motivating factors* were the following:

- Ownership of Writing
- Intrinsic Interest
- Engagement of Imagination and Creative Skills
- Elevation of Self-Esteem
- The Need for an Audience

OWNERSHIP OF WRITING

The Write-A-Book Project is primarily a project that provides autonomy and ownership for the student. According to research into children's writing, this is a powerful motivating factor. One of the most effective ways of stimulating children to write is to ensure that they feel it is very much their own (*Primary School Curriculum*, 1999). This view is emphatically endorsed in the findings as almost

all the children, 433 or almost 92% indicated that they liked to be free to choose their own storyline. Grainger and Todd (2000) believe that real publishing options such as seeing their work in print can make a significant difference to a writer. They claim that greater commitment is offered to such writing while White (2000) maintains that the creation of a productive classroom culture for writing in which ownership is developed through self-directed writing projects can significantly influence the quality of children's texts and their attitudes to writing. Sixty-eight per cent of the respondents felt that writing for this project was different from other assignments. Sense of ownership, control and excitement were the reasons given and they corroborate with previous studies and theories. Graham (2003) in her study found that, given the freedom to choose and make decisions about the subject matter and presentation, children wrote confidently and with enjoyment. This freedom to choose provided significant motivation for the respondents in this study, as seen here in a section of their word for word responses:

> *No-one tells you what to do or what to write.*
>
> *You make your own story up instead of your teacher writing the title or half of it on the board.*
>
> *There are fewer boundaries.*
>
> *It's much more fun. Everyone has a different story.*
>
> *You plan it, it's yours and you can write what you want.*

Croll and Hastings (1996) believe motivation seems to explain why some children engage enthusiastically with their work and persevere in the face of difficulty. In addition, they argue that the satisfaction and sense of well-being gained from exercising control over a bit of the world can be appreciated in the very young. As one twelve year old girl said, "It was really good. The best bit was seeing how the book turned out. I've never really achieved anything so it makes me feel good". Research has made clear the need for classrooms to remain places in which young writers determine who they write for and for what purposes. Out of a sample of 473 children, 305 children, almost 65% indicated that being able to choose their storyline was most helpful to them as a writer. Furthermore, 69% of the children felt that writing for this project was different from other writing assignments in class. The majority of these respondents felt that having control over their own writing was the primary difference.

INTRINSIC INTEREST

Most children are primarily interested in their own world (Cunningham and Allington, 1999) and the results of this study are consistent with previous findings. Evidence from the data shows that *The Write-A-Book Project* enables children to

share their interests with others i.e. their peers, teacher, other classmates, other schools, thus providing further stimulation and motivation.

The discovery of a student's interests is an essential first step in the motivation process. The challenge for educators lies in discerning these interests and then developing and perhaps creating new ones.

(Thomas, J.L. and Loring, R.M., 1979)

Many of the children's inspiration for writing came from their individual interests e.g. reading, sports, T.V, holidays, music, farming, horse riding, America, beautiful scenery, etc. Fifty per cent of respondents indicated that reading other books provided them with ideas for their writing, while 35% got their ideas from T.V programmes and films. Thirty-four per cent said the ideas for their book had been something they had been thinking about a lot and 24% claimed that their inspiration came from their own lives. Rathunde and Csikszentmihalyi (1993) claim that individual interest will likely be maintained over time and combines positive qualities such as feelings of enjoyment with cognitive qualities of focused attention, perceptions of value or importance and meaningful thoughts. This is consistent with research findings. When asked their opinions of *The Write-A-Book Project* the majority of the respondents referred to the enjoyment and fun they derived from their participation in the project.

Research has shown a clear benefit from connecting reading and writing (Shanahan, 1988). Children use information from their reading to produce better writing, according to Cunningham and Allington (1999), because they have more to say. Spivey (1997) argues that readers make better writers and writers make better readers. When asked if they enjoyed reading books for enjoyment positive attitudes were expressed by 448 or 95% of the respondents. Of these, 44% said that they loved reading for enjoyment. However, ten students said they did not really like reading for enjoyment and fifteen students said that they hated doing so. More boys than girls provided negative responses to this question. Of the fifteen children who said they hated reading books for enjoyment, twelve were boys. Much research has studied gender influences on reading interests. Leng (1963) reviewed a number of studies in America and concluded that American girls expressed more desire to read than American boys. However, he interpreted this finding as a possible indication that American boys may disclaim an expressed desire to read because of cultural values that label reading as a basically feminine pursuit. Similarly, Millard (1997) studied in some detail the gendered differences in the acquisition and uses of literacy at all stages of education. She noted that the Ofsted (1993) publication, *Boys and English,* endorsed what many teachers and academics had suspected for some time, that imbalances in educational achievement were being created through boys' underachievement in every aspect of the language curriculum.

> Most boys are less tolerant than most girls of activities and focuses which they consider to be irrelevant to their lives; girls on the other hand, largely enjoy the 'literacy curriculum' whatever its function.
>
> (Millard, 1997, Ch.8)

This research makes no claims to support these conclusions. The findings perhaps merit future research.

ENGAGEMENT OF IMAGINATION AND CREATIVE SKILLS

A review of relevant literature reveals the need for human beings to exercise their creativity and imagination. "The desire to represent and share our experiences with others seems to be a basic human characteristic", believes Duffy (1998, p.5). Almost 50% of the teachers believed their pupils' writing was much more focused and strongly felt, while 65% indicated that the children showed more responsibility for their work. One teacher declared that it was more of a pleasure than a regular writing exercise for her pupils and that they took great delight in showing their books to others. This desire to create is evidenced in the sizeable percentage, 65%, who indicated that being able to choose the storyline was most helpful to them as a writer. A further 37% indicated that creating and developing their characters was most helpful and 31% felt the most helpful thing to them was planning the storyline. Interestingly, only 14% of the respondents felt that editing and fixing punctuation and grammar was most helpful. These findings are similar to previous studies and research. According to Osborn and Lehr (1998), a central force that propels writers is their desire to tell someone something. They claim that mechanics, content and effectiveness should be put in their respective places as writers must know that their efforts will be met with respect and interest. Graves (1985) believes that many children who have learning difficulties are poor writers. They equate their struggles with handwriting, spelling and language conventions with a lack of ideas and information worth sharing. The writing-process approach to teaching first emphasizes what children know and then the conventions that will help them share their meaning with others in the class. This will be referred in greater detail later in this paper. This approach, Graves (1985) notes, has led to major breakthroughs for young writers, particularly those who have learning problems.

ENHANCED SELF-ESTEEM

A significant finding from this research was the number of times the children or their teachers referred to enhanced self-esteem or greater sense of well-being. One specific question on the children's questionnaire asked the respondents to choose the best things about taking part in *The Write-A-Book Project.* From a list of eight items the top three selected by the respondents were:

- I am free to choose my title and what to write
- I feel good when I see my finished book
- I feel I've achieved something wonderful

When asked if their pupils' self-esteem had improved as a result of their participation in the project, 68% of the teachers said that their pupils' self-esteem and confidence had improved a lot, while the remaining 32% believed it had improved a little.

According to Humphreys (1996), people's levels of achievement are influenced by how they see themselves and more specifically, self-esteem and academic achievement are strongly associated. Glasser (1969) believes that regardless of how many failures a person has in the past, regardless of his background, his culture, his colour, or his economic level, "he will not succeed in general until he can in some way first experience success in one particular part of his life" (p.5). One teacher noted that self-esteem was enhanced especially among weaker pupils probably due to the fact that they had achieved something and viewed themselves now as 'writers'. The majority of the children, 67%, felt that writing a book had helped their confidence and helped them to feel good, 17% were unable to say and 16% disagreed. When asked if they felt proud when they completed their book 50% strongly agreed and 35% agreed that they did feel proud.

EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

An examination of the literature and research on motivation includes studies and theories on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Kohn (1993), extrinsic motivators do not alter the attitudes that underlie our behaviours nor do they create an enduring commitment to a set of values or to learning. Sixty-nine per cent of the respondents indicated that to win *The Book of Merit* (Best Book) is not the reason they write their book, but 15% of the respondents indicated the opposite was true thereby revealing that the extrinsic reward did motivate them. However, these figures are similar to the findings of other researchers. According to Davis (1995) not all students are motivated by the same values, needs or wants, Lepper (1988) believes that a student who is intrinsically motivated undertakes an activity for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, for the learning it permits, or for the feelings of accomplishment it evokes. On the other hand an extrinsically motivated student performs in order to obtain some reward or avoid punishment external to the activity, such as grades, stickers or teacher approval. It is probably fair to conclude that 69% of the respondents were intrinsically motivated while 15% of the respondents were working for the reward and hence extrinsically motivated. The remaining 16% were unable to say if winning *The Book of Merit* was the reason why they wrote their book.

THE NEED FOR AN AUDIENCE

According to Osborn and Lehr (1998) the need for an audience is inherent in children's acquisition and development of language. When their writing brings results and attention, children feel its power. The implication from this research

is that the majority of the children, 64%, said that they liked people to read their book when it was finished, while 16% did not and 19% could not say. Frequently, particular children will not necessarily have the entire class as an audience. These findings reveal that most of the children would welcome an audience while over a quarter of the children had different views. This endorses the view of Osborn and Lehr (1998) who believe that children may rely on other children he or she writes with or works with to read their writing. They argue that this choice of audience is crucial to children's growth as writers and readers.

OPINIONS ON THE WORKINGS OF *THE WRITE-A-BOOK PROJECT*

Overall, the research findings indicate that the attitudes of the children and their teachers to the project are quite positive. Twenty-one teachers said that they would participate in the project again while one teacher was undecided. Just over 82% of the children thought that every student should be given the opportunity to take part in *The Write-A-Book Project.* When they were asked if they had found any part of the project difficult, 48% of the children said that they had, citing as the main reasons the difficulty in selecting a storyline or title and completing the book on time. Fifty-eight per cent of the children would make no changes to the project while two common reasons emerged from those children who would like to see changes: 21% of respondents would like to see more time given, while a number of children felt that everyone should get a token of recognition as well as *The Write-A-Book* certificate. A small number of respondents felt disheartened they had not won a prize.

While the teachers were generally satisfied with the project, they expressed clear views on areas of the project they would like to see improved. A number of teachers felt they lacked information on how this process writing project worked. They would welcome more support from the Education Centre. It was suggested that participating teachers in *The Write-A-Book Project* might arrange to meet from time to time to share ideas and support new teachers. The continued support of Galway Education Centre, including its Director, staff and Project Co-ordinator in promoting the project and providing ongoing assistance and advice was applauded.

Despite the growing number of participants in the project there is a low participation among Gaelscoileanna according to the study. Of the twenty-two classes that took part in this study only three were in Gaelscoileanna. But, all the books were written in English and this may have affected the level of interest. To address this issue, one of the Gaelscoil teachers expressed the view that a separate section for books 'as Gaeilge' should be included. Since this study was completed the issue of 'leabhair as Gaeilge' has been addressed.

Some teachers wondered about the role of skills in their writing instruction classes. Teachers of struggling readers are often concerned about their pupils' grammar, spelling and mechanical operations. The concern that teachers have

about teaching these skills is legitimate. Children need to learn not only how to express their ideas and feelings but also how to express them clearly and intelligibly. Decades of research (Langer & Allington, 1992), however, have made it clear that, if the goal of your skills instruction is improved writing, instruction must take place in the context of real writing. However, Cunningham and Allington, (1999) note that children who put *were* and *was* in the correct blanks on worksheets and who demonstrate the ability to capitalize proper nouns on a test do not necessarily apply these skills to their own writing. In fact, they argue that we have far more children who know how to spell and punctuate than how to write thoughtfully and precisely. There is no shortcut to good writing. Children who find writing difficult will learn how to write well when they watch teachers demonstrate and "think aloud" about the writing and editing process day after day. They will learn how to take a first draft and polish it when they are given the time and the peer, teacher, or computer support to do so. They will learn to care about how well their writing communicates their ideas and how easily others can read it when it is regularly displayed, and when teachers focus more on the clarity and quality of the message than on the penmanship and spelling (Cunningham and Allington, 1999). Teachers who engage children in lots of writing do not ignore the skills. Rather, they observe children's writing and decide which particular skills the children are ready to learn. Skills that are needed by many children are taught in a writing mini lesson. Skills teaching also takes place on an individual basis when teachers are helping children edit and 'publish' their pieces.

SUMMARY

The claims by co-ordinators of the project that *The Write-A-Book Project* provides myriad benefits for children are borne out by this study. The findings clearly show that it does motivate children to write. By having complete autonomy and control children are enabled to write freely on topics which are of relevance to them. By connecting writing with children's real lives and focusing on their interests, children are not only motivated to write but their writing is more intense and strongly felt. This purposeful writing is both enjoyable and more appealing and the feeling of success it generates enhances the children's self-esteem and self-image.

TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

The teaching implications from this research are obvious. Dweck (2000) notes "that in my thirty years of research, what has intrigued me most is the power of motivation" (p.11). She believes that motivation encompasses not only the desire to achieve but also the love of learning, the love of challenge and the ability to thrive on obstacles. Sansone and Harackiewicz (2000) note that as there is evidence to demonstrate that children show less and less intrinsic motivation in

their progress through school, teachers must situate learning in more meaningful and interesting contexts and promote a sense of control and self-determination in students if the problem is to be addressed effectively. A review of the literature in this area refers to a basic component of classroom instruction and this is the provision of a variety of real reading and writing encounters. Galda *et al.* (1993) argue that children learn best when they connect what they are doing in school with their lives. Teachers can learn from projects like *The Write-A-Book Project*. Connecting learning with the real lives of children is the challenge.

CONCLUSIONS

According to Graves (1996), writing is a very abstract process for many children. He argues that the source of the writing 'topic' is often invisible and the reason for an event or occasion for writing is lost in the turmoil of the event. Yet, some children continue to be given assignments that force them compose texts that have little to do with their own thoughts and feelings. It is little wonder that as they advance through their school years their urge to write and their attempts to express their inner voices become muted. Their composing is less and less connected with an attempt to tell the truth or make sense of their world (Graves, 1996). Hence, the importance of making writing activities grow out of a meaningful context and of designing them to have a real communicative relevance is crucial.

Considerations of this nature has influenced the research project and from the findings of this study the researcher concludes that *The Write-A-Book Project* provides children with an opportunity to produce writing that is relevant and meaningful. The teachers were enthused, the children were highly motivated and they wrote enthusiastically about topics which reflected their concerns, inspired from the reality of their lives or imagined experiences.

One further factor that motivated the children to write was the cultivation of interest. A review of the literature reveals that most children are primarily interested in their world and the research findings support this view. Hence, school should be a place in which children can express their own ideas, based on their observations and expressions and gain satisfaction from knowing that the school is interested in what they have to say (Glasser, 1969).

In addition, the motivating power of relevance cannot be overlooked. Children learn best when they connect what they are doing in school with their lives (Galda *et al.* 1993)**.** According to Graves (1996) teachers need to reflect carefully on assignments that have little to do with students' real lives. He argues that in a class of thirty, perhaps twenty pupils can handle a teacher-given topic with ease, while the other ten may experience difficulty as they attempt to undertake an assignment in which they have no preference or feeling.

It is clear that children need to feel they are achieving in school. The self-esteem of children is central to their educational development (Humphreys, 1996). The analysis of the results of both the teachers' and children's questionnaires

confirms that *The Write-A-Book Project* provides a sense of achievement and fulfilment for the participants. Forsyth and McMillan (1991) believe that in order to develop the drive and motivation to achieve, students need to believe that achievement is possible, which means that educators need to provide early opportunities for success.   Children, even highly gifted ones, develop at different rates.   Some students seem naturally enthusiastic about learning, but many need or expect their instructors to inspire, challenge and stimulate them (Davis, 1993). A comprehensive overview of research on teaching by Brophy and Good (1986) concludes that teachers make a difference; that is, some teachers bring about greater gains in student achievement than others. Every writer, novice or professional, needs support and feedback. Some children may lack the desire to write through insensitive marking and comment. On the positive side there are many professional authors who can recall the encouragement and inspiration of a particular teacher (Body, 1996). This is particularly noteworthy for those students who display disabling motivational beliefs. A student labelled as lazy or uncommitted could be protecting his or her own self-worth. Learned helplessness is evident in people who apply little effort and resign themselves to feelings of incompetence and failure. While 10% of the children in the study indicated that they did not like to write, the findings do not indicate why this is so. Further research might aim to identify the issues influencing such children's attitudes and experiences. According to Body (1996), every individual is unique and teachers have a crucial role in helping children to realise that their perspective, their story is unique and special. She wisely argues that educators should do everything they can to build children's confidence and belief in themselves as writers, and in helping them to understand and appreciate the uniqueness of their contributions they will have taken a major step in this direction. The lesson for teachers is that learning and writing should be situated in more meaningful and interesting contexts and in this way they will be better positioned to promote a sense of control and self-determination in more highly motivated developing writers.

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