Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

A nation's greatness depends upon the education of its people

Quality in Education: Accountability & Responsibility

Discussion Document and Proceedings of the Consultative Conference on Education 2014

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Table of Contents

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Foreword

Developments in education in the 21st century have brought a lot of change for teachers. Globalisation, particularly when accompanied by neoliberal economic policies, has had a significant impact on teachers and their work. Ireland has not escaped the global trend of education reforms, therefore, the emerging accountability agenda which is a core dimension of current education change, is becoming increasingly visible in Irish education policy.

Accountability for teachers is not new, however, the context of accountability has changed and the focus on measuring accountability has the potential to alter teachers' professional work. Ireland is increasingly participating in international assessments such as PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS. The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy set targets for improvements. There are higher stakes associated with standardised test results. Schools are now obliged to send their results in aggregate form in to the Department of Education and Skills.

The INTO has always been an advocate for quality education. Our pupils deserve quality education and teachers deserve to work in a quality education system. Quality is difficult to define, but increasing accountability demands on schools and teachers, which increase bureaucracy and paperwork does not ensure quality. The focus must be on responsibility and trust.

These proceedings reflect the contributions and debates of the INTO Consultative Conference on Education on the theme of quality, accountability and responsibility. We are very grateful to our keynote speakers, Dr Carmel Gallagher, The General Teaching Council Northern Ireland and Professor Eugene Wall of Mary Immaculate College, who offered us much to reflect on in discussing this theme. We also thank our workshop presenters who stimulated much discussion and debate and our facilitators and rapporteurs who worked hard in the discussion groups. Our thanks are also due to Dr Margaret O'Donnell of St Patrick's College of Education who was commissioned to write the background discussion paper. Deirbhile Nic Craith, who directed the conference, was ably supported by the education team, Claire Garvey and Ann McConnell of INTO Head Office and Tommy McGlone, official in Northern Office.

Our discussions on quality in education continue. Teachers will rise to the challenge, as long as they are supported and appropriately rewarded.

Sheila Nunan
General Secretary
May 2017

Part 1

Quality Education: Teacher Responsibility and Accountability

Dr Margaret O'Donnell

Discussion Document

1

Introduction

> The quality of teaching is determined not just by the 'quality' of the teachers—although that is clearly critical - but also the environment in which they work. Able teachers are not necessarily going to reach their potential in settings that do not provide appropriate support or sufficient challenge or reward.
>
> (OECD, 2005, p.9).

The focus on quality teaching and the continuum of teacher education has become a key policy focus for national and international governments, trans-national agencies and inter–governmental bodies (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Cochran–Smith, 2006). Their collective concern is focused on how best to respond to the challenges of globalisation, sustainable development and the knowledge society and how to attract and maintain quality teachers who will teach to an even higher standard and to an ever increasing diverse pupil population (Conway, Murphy, Rath & Hall, 2009).

In the drive for higher standards of teaching, learning and achievement (Day & Gu, 2014) across schools and countries using international comparison tests such as PISA and TIMMS, teachers can be caught in the conflict of trying to serve in emotionally challenging contexts set against the policy demands of results-driven agendas by which the relative success of schools and teachers are measured.

At a national level, teachers are being asked to improve their schools, to respond in a more effective manner to higher social and economic expectations and to transform educational outcomes, often under difficult conditions. At a school level, teachers have to construct learning experiences to meet the increasing diversity of cultural and learning needs in their classrooms and to equip students with the competencies that they need to become active citizens and workers in the twenty-first century. In addition, they also need to keep abreast with innovations in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and digital learning (OECD, 2011).

Teachers are central to school improvement efforts (Darling, Hammond & Bransford, 2005) in that improving the efficiency and equity of schooling depends, in large measure, on ensuring that teachers are competent and that all students have access to high quality teaching (OECD, 2005, p.7). While student learning is influenced by a myriad of factors it is broadly recognised that 'teacher quality' is the single most important school variable influencing student achievement. However, protecting and nourishing 'teacher quality' is problematic due to the ever-changing demands on teachers from national policy directives and changing school contexts.

Cochran-Smith (2006) claims that the issue of 'teaching quality' which emerged from the standards and accountability movement of the 1990s, focused on school improvement, and resulted in teaching quality and teacher accountability becoming linked inextricably in policy agendas. While few would argue about the importance of defining 'teacher quality' in terms of student learning, the problem arises when the definition of 'teacher quality' is narrowly equated to higher scores on standardised

student achievement tests. Critics (Cochran-Smith, 2001, Earley, 2000; Engel, 2000) argue that this narrow focus ignores the complexity of the teaching task and context and presents an impoverished notion of teaching and learning which is grossly inadequate in helping to understand and ultimately improve quality teaching and learning in a diverse but democratic twenty-first century. In this regard, it is important to understand the factors that gave rise to this accountability agenda and to explore its impact on quality teaching and learning.

The rise of the accountability agenda: Challenges to quality teaching and learning

Knowledge possession is now considered essential for the successful pursuit of competiveness and economic growth (Stromquist & Monkman 2000, p.12), therefore, economic survival in a competitive global market has commodified knowledge and conflated educational and economic purposes (Cowie & Cisernos-Cohernour, 2011, p.103). Market prerogatives now drive educational policy and influence school governance in that indications of a reduced level of performance in educational standards, occurring in a climate which supports a competitive economic environment, bring renewed pressure to increase educational standards across the globe (Castro, Carnoy & Wolff, 2000).

Educational systems in all nations are experiencing intensified international competitiveness to improve overall quality and 'efficiency' (PISA, OECD, 2010). Set against a background of economic instability and market uncertainty, the approach nationally and internationally has been to prescribe standard-based reforms, externally imposed accountability and performativity measures on schools. Underpinning the drive for greater accountability, therefore, lie two assumptions about the outcomes, namely, that better alignment between school system goals and public aspirations will result in improved performance when compared with traditional criteria for performance in the belief that a 'better fit equates to a higher bar' when measured against politically predefined and universally applicable standards (Green, 2011, p.54).

The main factors influencing this new emphasis on accountability at school-level relate to the rise in economic globalisation and governments' faith in education as a panacea to ensure economic productivity, equity and social cohesion, together with the belief that performance management and audit systems will optimise governance and improve the management of education at school level (Lauder et al. 2007). The term 'globalisation' invites international comparison which is a feature of performance management used to induce compliance and put pressure on school systems to be accountable and to demonstrate continuous improvement in school performance.

All of these factors are underpinned by neo-liberal economic theories with associated models of *New Public Management* (NPM) which emphasise quality assurance, performance management and increased accountability. Underlying the NPM approach is the belief that optimising public service provision, at an educational level, is best achieved through a focus on target setting, outcomes, performance management systems and the overall design and implementation of accountability systems (Barber 2005). Performance management involves setting targets that schools must meet and is based on the assumption that improvement can be accomplished by external measurement and comparison. However, many writers (Lawn & Ozga, 2009; Apple, 2006, Ladson–Billings & Tate, 2006) argue that this form of governance has little effect on improvement, does not produce socially just outcomes and leads to concepts such as equality and justice being denuded of meaning and replaced by 'hollowed out' concepts

such as quality and excellence (Ozga, 2000, p.355). The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB, 2001) agenda in the United States, for example, which was intended to ameliorate disadvantage, and used high stakes testing to determine academic achievement, appears to have widened the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' (Apple, 2006, Ladson-Biling & Tate, 2006). Performance management systems in schools therefore raise questions about educational purposes and values and about who and what is valued in education (Cowie & Cisernos-Cohernour, 2011, p.104). Understanding what accountability means under the performance management approach is critical in that it is central to an understanding of the relationship between schools and school systems.

Understanding the tensions between professional responsibility and accountability

In order to explain the tensions that exist between professional responsibility and accountability, Englund and Solbrekke (2010) point to the traditional meaning of professionalism where professional responsibility implied a commitment to acquiring a body of knowledge and skills, for the profession's own sake, for the good of others and society in general. According to this ideal, the work of the teacher as professionally responsible implied a moralising effect by upholding standards and purposes beyond the utilitarian goals of the marketplace (Turner, 2001). These purposes have been described as the moral and political dimension of professionalism - characterised by Brint (1994) as 'social trustee professionalism', by Sullivan (2005) as 'civic professionalism' and by Barnett (1997) as 'critical professionalism'.

Englund and Solbrekke (2010) highlight two factors that have contributed to the shift in focus away from professional responsibility to accountability namely, the strong political emphasis in European policy documents emphasising innovation, economic growth and competitiveness in society, through achieving sustained educational standards, coupled with a NPM system which advocates the devolution of decision-making and responsibility to school level and away from central government. However, rather than increasing professional responsibility at local school level, this devolution of decision-making is being accompanied by goals and standards of quality outcomes defined by politicians, resulting in demands for greater 'oversight', 'transparency' and 'accountability' (Svensson, 2008). While few would argue with the need for public accountability as a means of ensuring quality teaching and learning, the focus on 'efficiency' in terms of 'cost effectiveness' has created a new vocabulary of accountability, in which there is little room to ask the necessary questions: 'for what purpose' and 'for whom' are the services effective? (Gross Stein, 2001). Consequently, we need to analyse how the demands of accountability challenge the moral and societal dimensions of teachers' professional responsibility.

While many writers (Green 2010; Hoyle & Wallace 2009; Englund & Solbrekke, 2010) highlight the tension that exists between the concepts of professional 'responsibility' and 'accountability,' in an era of managerialism, entrepreneurship and market-oriented educational policies, it becomes important to understand how teacher professional responsibility and accountability are conceived and more importantly how they relate to each other (Brint & Levy, 1999).

How can we best understand the concepts of responsibility and accountability in relation to current practices?

Professional responsibility is a concept which, on a general level, appears to be relatively unambiguous. It infers trustworthiness, dependability, reliability, trust, capability, judgement and choices with respect to both individual clients and the public interest (Freidson, 2001). 'Responsibility' in this sense relies on trust in the teacher, being qualified and willing to handle dilemmas and having the freedom to deliberate on alternative courses of action (Benner et al, 2010). Exercising such a responsibility goes beyond the limits of accountability and is linked to a sense of freedom, because professionals are *trusted,* yet also *committed,* to act in the interests of others (Sullivan, 2005) – and the greater the freedom, the greater the responsibility.

While responsibility in the general sense is easily understood, however, 'in real world settings', being professionally responsible takes on a more complex meaning as dilemmas arise between individual and collective concerns and between those of external stakeholders (Barnett, 1997; Sullivan, 2005). For example the conflict that arises when accountability agendas of assessing and reporting students' results conflicts with time for planning and engagement with students' learning (Becher et al, 1979). Gross Stein (2001) states that contesting claims on professionals will always create a tension between what is evaluated as good and efficient in terms of *'(ac)countable*' and *'economic'* priorities and what is good and 'efficient' in terms of *morally responsible* actions.

While responsibility as a concept assumes a proactive attitude and an approach in which a professional *voluntarily* takes responsibility for 'the other' by involving his or her capacity to act morally responsibly (Martinsen, 2006). In contrast, 'accountability' implies quite different notions and emphasises the *duty to account* for one's actions and concerns what is rendered to another (Englund & Solbrekke, 2010). In relationships of accountability, teachers' professional actions are controlled by evaluating them against pre-defined measures or standards. Consequently, the practices of 'accountability' are oriented towards control rather than trust. 'Good services' are guaranteed by means of measuring and 'accounting' instruments, rather than by relying on professional discretion" (Englund & Solbrekke, 2010, pp.7-8).

Professional 'responsibility' assumes a different logic that relies on personal integrity and values. It is concerned with justifying decisions and actions in a specific setting from a professional point of view (Solbrekke, 2007). From this perspective, responsibility depends on accepting that teachers as professionals are trusted, yet also committed, to act in the interests of others (Sullivan, 2005). Conversely 'best practice' in the accountability agenda is distinctly different within the logic of 'responsibility' (Sugrue & Solbrekke, 2011, p.13). Solbrekke and Englund (2011) outline the difference between these two concepts and detail how they have evolved and have been re-configured over time.

The logics of professional responsibility and accountability adapted from Solbrekke and Englund (2011, p.855).

Professional responsibility	Professional accountability
• Based in professional mandate • Situated judgement • Trusts • Moral rationale • Internal evaluation • Negotiated standards • Implicit language • Framed by professions • Relative autonomy and personally inescapable • Proactive	• Defined by current governance • Standardised by contract • Control • Economic/legal rationale • External auditing • Predetermined indicators • Transparent language • Framed by political goals • Compliance with employer's/politicians' decisions • Reactive

Likewise, Leithwood (1996, p.392) suggests the need to move away from a policy of compliance toward a policy of commitment. In keeping with the work of Fullan et al, (2004) and Leithwood et al, (2006) both suggest that the focus should be firmly placed on re-shaping local school systems and developing both schools and systems as learning communities. In this regard, the focus should be on capacity building and developing policies that increase the collective power at every level in the system to sustain improvement, to develop relationships of trust and shared commitment in order to develop an intelligent accountability framework that supports quality teaching and learning for all students.

Accountability versus responsibility

Accountability is a complex 'multi-layered concept' (Ranson, 2003, p.459) in that there are different value systems involved and there is often tension among them, for example school principals have multiple and often conflicting accountabilities and it is not always clear who is accountable to whom and for what (Cowie & Cisernos-Cohernour, 2011, p. 104). Likewise, there are multiple definitions and varied interpretations of what accountability means – Rothman (1995) defined educational accountability as 'the process[es] by which school districts and states attempt to ensure that schools and school systems meet their goals' (p. 189). Solbrekke and Sugrue (2014, p.13) claim that we need to deconstruct the concepts of professional responsibility and accountability in order to focus on the current tensions between being *professional, responsible and being held accountable*. While accountability is associated with terms like answerability, blame, liability and obligation - it is strongly linked to audit systems of NPM approach:

> It is bound to a contractual obligation, defined by politicians or bureaucrats and emphasises the duty to answer for your actions to others or to society. Such externally determined regimes of control, oblige professionals, such as teacher educators, to adhere to, and be accountable against prescriptive policy standards of quality and to make their work as explicit and transparent as possible. Understood in this vein, accountability requires compliance with rules and regulations
>
> (Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014, p.13).

In light of the current tensions that exist with regard to accountability versus being responsible it becomes important to examine the consequences and implications of accountability and to explore if there is a better way for teachers to give account and to be accountable.

Accountability: Consequences and implications

The belief that increased accountability will lead to improvement is challenged by writers who have pointed to the corrupt impact of high-stakes testing (Ball, 1997; Nichols & Berliner, 2007). When there is much at stake, teachers and school principals may be tempted to distort or fabricate outcomes or adopt behaviours that are contrary to educational purposes. Webb (2006) points to the fact that data may be ignored or used in tactical ways to deliver short term gains that are unsustainable, or teachers may focus on impression management in order to satisfy accountability demands in the short term. In a study by Cowie & Cisernos-Cohernour (2011, p.107) which examined accountability processes in the educational systems in Scotland and Mexico, findings reveal that pressure to improve attainment encouraged principals to introduce practices that may benefit outcomes in the short term, but in the long term they exacerbate inequity and do little to improve learning and teaching.

Making accountability more 'intelligent': Implications for school leaders, management and governments

The assumption that accountability as currently construed will lead to improvement is not warranted, in fact evidence points to the belief that accountability based on student performance leads to inequalities. However, that is not to claim that monitoring performance is not important, as educational systems need information about their performance if they are to learn and improve, but the indicators that systems use must be useful to help measure inequalities, ensure inclusion and induce learning (Fitz-Gibbon, 1996). In a time when inclusive education policy and practices are being implemented in schools, a distinction needs to be made between official accountability systems and systems aimed at improving educational provision for all students (Tymms & Albone, 2002). These two sets of data generate different mind-sets, one reduces trust and exacerbates inequalities, encourages schools to conceal problems, the other enables schools to identify and deal with emerging problems. For example, it can point to inequalities in student attainment between advantaged groups and other students who are challenged by socio-economic disadvantage or special educational needs. In this regard, it can outline the extent to which the school system equitably enables access and participation for *all* students in quality educational provision (Croxford, 2003).

Intelligent accountability: A better way

The idea of 'intelligent accountability' which was first introduced by O'Neill in 2002 highlights the negative effects of the accountability culture on schools. She argues that what has to be accounted for is not easily measured and that more intelligent accountability is needed - accountability that does not damage professional performance, pays more attention to governance and is less concerned about control and micro-management from the centre. Intelligent accountability implies trust in professionals, the use of measures that do not distort the purpose of schooling and most importantly, encourages the holistic development of all pupils.

It is important to point out that accountability can have very different meanings within the wider educational reform discourse in which it is embedded. The Scottish government took up the theme of intelligent accountability (SE, 2004b) and called for a reconsideration of the relationship between accountability and educational purposes, with measures that encourage and support personalised learning and the development of all pupils. In addition, they call for a re-conceptualisation of the relationship between

principals and those they serve, with a more communicative approach to governance and collaborative decision making at local level.

Likewise, Sahlberg (2007, p.2011) claims that Finland's educational success can be attributed to the 'intelligent accountability' which underpinned its teacher education reforms over the last 30 years. These reforms have been characterised by flexibility and trust in local, well-supported networks of teachers and other education professionals, as well as accountability rooted in trust-based professionalism.

The rise of the accountability agenda in the Irish context

The growth in evaluation, inspection, education accountability and reform has been widely supported by governments, media and trans-national agencies such as OECD, the World Bank and the European Union (Martin, 2005). Key words have come to the fore and are now in common usage - these include choice, accountability, transparency, value for money and decentralisation of responsibility for performance to individual professionals and institutions such as schools (McNamara & O' Hara, 2008, p.173).

Conway and Murphy (2013) track the historic rise of accountability in teaching and teacher education in Ireland from 1997-2012. While they point to the existence of accountability agendas for teachers over time, as exemplified in three requirements - global compliance with regulations, adherence to professional norms and attainment of results/outcomes, they point to significant changes in relation to compliance and results – driven accountability agendas in recent times. They highlight the factors influencing this new emphasis as the rise in economic globalisation and governments' faith in education as a panacea to correct and ensure economic productivity, equity and social cohesion (Lauder et al. 2007) and also, the appeal of performance management and audit systems to optimise governance and management of education.

In discussing the rise of accountability in the Irish context, Conway and Murphy, (2013, p.11) point to five examples of new requirements at teacher education and teaching level. These relate to quality assurance and learning outcomes (LOs), which can be traced to policy development at a European level and a professional code of conduct for teachers, accreditation of teacher education programmes, registration of teachers across the professional life cycle encompassing initial, induction and ongoing professional learning, the latter three emerging from policies and regulations developed by the Teaching Council in fulfilment of its role and remit. They report that this rise in accountability was punctuated by the perfect storm in 2010 resulting from the 'bad news' from PISA 2009, the economic bailout and strategic leadership at a system level. The cumulative impact of the 'rising tide' and 'perfect storm' is evident in how accountability in teacher education relates with respect to both 'to whom' and 'for what' accountability".

Quality education: European influence

When looking to the theme of quality and accountability, from a macro perspective, Ireland is influenced by OECD policies and practices which have implemented quality assurance and evaluation processes as a means of ensuring that quality education systems will contribute to a more productive knowledge economy and an overall better society (Grek, 2009).

In line with the European drive for increased accountability at school level, the White Paper on Education *Charting our Education Future* (1995) indicated its intention to develop the school evaluation system within a broad framework of school improvement, system improvement and accountability. Whole School Evaluation (WSE) first introduced in the years 2003-2004 was designed "to monitor and assess the quality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system provided in the state by recognised schools and centres for education" (Education Act 1998, section 7 (2)(b)). It replaced *Tuairiscí Scoile* which had formed the basis for school evaluation since the 1970s. Under WSE, schools were advised to examine practices and policies in relation to the quality of school management; school planning; curriculum planning; learning and teaching and support for students.

While teachers recognise the need for accountability on many fronts, and suggest that accountability is central to their role as teachers, findings from a long term study on Whole School Evaluation (WSE) (INTO, 2009) reveal both positive and negative outcomes. The positive outcomes related to increased collaboration among staff as they reviewed, shared and discussed the school plans, priorities and policies. Overall, the report suggests that there are more negative aspects than positive with teachers experiencing increased stress due to lack of guidelines explaining the process and the expected level of detail involved in planning and writing notes. Principals regarded the whole process as very stressful (43%) or somewhat stressful (43%).

The findings in this report raise questions about the appropriateness of the WSE process as a means of enhancing quality teaching and learning in schools and as a mechanism for demonstrating school and teacher accountability. The belief that it trampled on teachers' creativity and professionalism, led to a narrowing of the curriculum and was none other than an exercise to satisfy the inspector was expressed by some teachers while others spoke of getting back to 'real teaching' when the inspection was over.

In conclusion, it appears that the views expressed in the Report suggests that the WSE, as it was originally conceived, was heavily laden with bureaucratic or administrative requirements which served to undermine professional efforts to improve schools and to support quality teaching and learning (O'Neill, 2002).

School Self Evaluation Approach

This recent focus on accountability has primarily been seen by some supporters as a means of reforming public services and introducing much needed reform (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004). In education, "the manifestation of this is seen in the prioritisation by many governments of two key goals namely school autonomy and school accountability" McNamara & O'Hara (2008, p.173). School accountability involves transferring primary responsibility from a central authority i.e. The Department of Education and Skills to individual schools and teachers. In this way schools are required to take on greater responsibility for budgets, planning, self-evaluation and professional development.

Under the influence of a National Performance Management (NPM) approach, as previously discussed, there is much evidence of the prioritisation by many governments of two key goals namely, school autonomy and school accountability. This is reflected in the decentralisation of responsibility for performance from the Department of Education and the Inspectorate to schools as they engage in a self- evaluation audit of their own performance.

At a European level, the *Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council on European Cooperation in Quality Evaluation in School Education* (2001) calls on Member States of the EU to 'encourage school self-evaluation as a method of creating learning and improving schools' (2001). Likewise, the OECD report *Teachers Matter* (2005) sees the development of self-evaluation skills within the education system as being a critical component of the drive to improve educational provision in all OECD member states.

In the UK, OFSTED (2004, p.7) states that what is meant by school self-evaluation is intelligent accountability based on the school's own views of how well it is serving its pupils and its priorities for improvement. To support this engagement at school level, a range of resources have been developed by OFSTED and Local Education Authorities, most notably the online 'Self-Evaluation Form' (SEF) (OFSTED, 2005).

McNamara and O'Hara (2008, p.176) categorise these support mechanisms under two broad headings as follows:

- External supports designed to facilitate the local collection of data by schools and teachers to enable them to meet the requirements of state mandated self-evaluation systems
- Supports designed to engage teachers with the theory and practice of school self-evaluation with a view to their developing their own contextually sensitive models of evaluation.

With regard to the external supports in the UK model, the support material requests schools to:

- Evaluate their progress against an inspection schedule
- Set out the main evidence on which this evaluation is based
- Identify strengths and weaknesses
- Explain the action the school is taking to remedy the weaknesses and develop the strengths (OFSTED, 2005, p.1).

Likewise, in the Irish context, *The Programme for Government* (2011) sets out specific targets in relation to self-evaluation and school improvement. Similarly, the *National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy, Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* requires 'all schools to engage in robust self-evaluation'. The move away from WSE to a more self-evaluative model mirrors the British model in that schools are provided with guidelines which offer an external framework and structure for the evaluation of teaching and learning. Schools are requested to:

- Gather the information needed to enable them to identify accurately what is working well in teaching and learning and where improvement is needed
- Report on their school self-evaluation processes
- Develop school improvement plans.

The DES (2012) defines School Self-Evaluation (SSE) as a collaborative, reflective process of internal school review. It provides teachers with a means of systematically looking at how they teach and how pupils learn. It helps schools and teachers to improve outcomes for learners:

> School self-evaluation is simply a structure to enable teachers, principals and the management of schools to have that focussed conversation about teaching and learning. School self-evaluation seeks to build the capacity of teachers and schools to improve – the approaches and tools in these School Self-Evaluation Guidelines are simply ways to support that capacity building in schools.
>
> (DES, 2012, p.3).

This shift from external accountability as represented in the WSE approach to a more internal accountability approach where 'the principal and teachers collaborate in a focussed way to improve how they teach and assess pupils' learning' (DES, 2012, p.3) is reflected in the School Self Evaluation approach piloted and launched in 2012.

The Minister for Education, Ruairí Quinn (2012, p.3) stated that:

> What's different about school self-evaluation is the emphasis it places on using solid evidence to inform the discussions that teachers have about teaching and learning. As teachers discuss the work of the school in self-evaluation and ask "How good is teaching in this school?" they will also ask "How do we know?" Collecting the information to answer these questions will be an opportunity to use not only existing information in the school but also to seek the views of parents and students.

While the school self-evaluation guidelines seek to build the capacity of teachers and schools to improve, there is an extended accountability agenda presented in the requirement to report to Boards of Management, parents, students and the wider school community on the literacy and numeracy attainments (Circular 0056/2011). In addition, it is noted that the policy language used to describe the change in emphasis moves from whole school *development* to whole school *improvement*s suggesting a stronger focus on public accountability for educational outcomes.

Writing about recent trends in education, in a recent publication of *Intouch,* (June, 2014, p.28), Séan Ó Foghlú acknowledges that:

> The last number of years have been challenging for everyone in education in Ireland. Increasing student numbers, the impact of the financial crisis and concerns over the quality of education standards have been to the fore.

He points to the fact that while Ireland is performing well in certain areas, educational research and international best practice indicate that change is required. In response to this call, and with the aim of improving quality teaching and learning, the Department of Education and Skills is leading a programme of reform which will impact on all students, teachers and schools. This programme of reform will focus on four themes namely, *Learning for Life* - which relates to the implementation of the *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy; Supporting Inclusion and Diversity; Quality and Accountability* and *Building the Right Systems and Infrastructure.* Under this new programme of reform, all schools will be 'more open and accountable to their local communities…..principals and teachers will increasingly work together to foster

continuous improvement at school level and there will be a greater focus on improving learning outcomes particularly in the area of literacy and numeracy'.

Presumptions underpinning the self –evaluation model from an Irish perspective

Outlining the structure of the Irish model of accountability the Department of Education and Science (2003, p.3) stated that:

> Ireland is adopting a model of quality assurance that emphasises school development planning through internal school-review and self-evaluation, with the support of external evaluation carried out by the Inspectorate.

Underpinning the concept of the self-evaluation model is the assumption that teachers have the professional skills to collect, research and collate the evidence of what is working well and what aspects need reform. McNamara & O' Hara (2008, p.178) discuss the impact of the growth of self-evaluation as a concept and a practice for professionals. They conclude that while to date many countries have supported the rationale and theory of self-evaluation together with the production of elaborate and detailed framework guidelines, 'what appears to be less developed is the capacity of schools and teachers to genuinely see the developmental possibilities and, therefore, be willing to engage in what is, in reality, time-consuming and often repetitive work'.

What supports are necessary to support a self-evaluation process at school level: A European perspective

The report entitled *Evaluation of Schools providing Compulsory Education in Europe* (2004) provides an analysis of the multifaceted 'approaches to the evaluation of schools providing compulsory education' within the European Union (2004, p.9). These supports take the form of training, evaluation frameworks and models, resource personnel, indicators on the education system (including results), research and other publications on evaluation, guidelines and manuals, support websites, criteria, indicators and procedures used in external evaluation, exchange of experience/sharing good practice, EFQM good practice model and financial support (European Commission, 2004, p.124).

The most popular choice of support across the European countries was the provision of training and resource persons which suggest that, 'support through training personnel reflects a long-term investment' (2004, p.126). This implies that while governments, education departments and other support agencies offer 'human, financial and material resources' (European Commission, 2004, p.126), creating genuinely evaluating schools requires support personnel to help enhance the skills of the school communities to engage in the self-evaluation process. McNamara and O'Hara (2008, p.178) point to a growing recognition of the value of establishing networks of schools and individual professionals who have an interest in augmenting their capacity to evaluate themselves. These networks would allow different perspectives to emerge and as a consequence would serve to challenge pre-conceived notions and procedures often embedded in schools practice.

Taking responsibility in an era of accountability

While policy statements highlight the central role of the teacher in achieving quality teaching and student learning, there is a growing concern that excessive external accountability agendas, underpinned by performance management type accountability will serve to restrict and contort teachers' responsibility to support quality teaching and learning. Kostogriz (2012, p.398) claims that in the context of this dominating, external accountability agenda, teaching is focused on outcome effectiveness, performance standards, service delivery to 'clients', customer satisfaction and accountability which are now habitually-used words that capture the mode of policy-making and managerial practices today. These business-like discourses, as Oplatka (2009, p.56) argues, 'have consistently ignored the emotional aspects of teaching, calling to intensify its'rational', measurable aspects in support of the belief that what can be measured, in their view, can be also better managed'. However, despite the fact that the rhetoric around performance management is powerful, there are opportunities within educational systems to critique, argue and to exercise choice in that there is scope for principals and teachers to exercise individual and collective agency (Cowie & Cisneros-Cohernour, 2011).

Likewise, findings from a study by Solbrekke and Sugrue (2014) which critically examined the experiences of four Irish teacher educators engaged in a new professional accreditation process, reveal that despite the pressures of external accountability requirements of the audit, they were able to navigate between the demands of accountability while engaging in proactive behaviour which examined the external demands of accountability when set against the institutional and programme traditions of the colleges. In this regard, they were able to adhere to the external demands of accountability when considered against the knowledge that they live out their "professional responsibility in ways consistent with the complexity and ambiguity inherent in democratic, deliberate decision-making" (p.18), thus, enabling them to construct multiple performance scripts of teacher education programmes. These multiple performance scripts allowed the college educators to play to two audiences – to meet, debate and consider the demands of the accountability agenda while at the same time examine their own professional responsibility, as teacher educators, in order to identify areas for improvement.

Solbrekke and Sugrue (2014) conclude that the use of creative coping strategies, through the construction of multiple performance scripts, serves to promote individual agency and sustain professional responsibility, without which the possibilities for cultivating professional responsibility (in an era of increased accountability) are reduced, if not eliminated (p.20).

They advise that current teacher education requires teacher educators who are conscious about how the hegemonic influence of the language of NPM may threaten the ability to live out a professional "mission" of teaching (Green, 2011). In addition, they state that in a climate underpinned by the drive for NPM agendas, it is not a question of either responsibility or accountability, in that all educators must cope with the claims of both and articulate more clearly the purposes and logic that this new accountability agenda actually serves, and detail how and in what manner the less tangible moral dimensions of responsibility can contribute to the drive for reform in education:

> Therefore, those with a genuine interest in the quality of teaching and learning in our schools, as well as teacher education, have an obligation to legitimate the language of professional responsibility by self-consciously choosing to articulate understandings of what prospective teachers need. ...To avoid becoming compromised, to resist a gradual

> and incremental colonisation of processes in the name of NPM coherence and consistency that is facilitated through engagement with and through the language and logic of accountability only, the language and practice of professional responsibility must be re-created. Professional responsibility demands no less.
>
> (Solbrekke & Sugrue, (2014, p.19).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to deconstruct the narrative in relation to teacher responsibility and accountability. It explored the importance of quality teaching on students' learning and points to the realignment of teacher quality with teacher accountability. It tracked the rise of the accountability agenda, set against economic instability and market uncertainty, resulting in the acceptance of a New Public Management approach which highlights external targets, external measurement and comparisons.

Against a background of managerialism, entrepreneurship and market-oriented educational policies, it explored the tensions that exist between professional responsibility and accountability and outlined the logic underpinning these two concepts. It examined the impact on school systems with high accountability agendas and it detailed the call for more intelligent accountability in support of increased equity and inclusion for all students.

Under the influence of European policies and practices, it examined the rise of the accountability agenda in the Irish context and discussed the shift from external Whole School Evaluation (WSE) to an internal School Self Evaluation (SSE) with the consequent change in language from 'school development' to 'school improvement'. Lastly, it discussed the manner in which teachers, schools and management can, through exercising individual and collective agency, live out their professional responsibility in a manner that is consistent with upholding standards and purposes of quality teaching and learning that goes beyond the utilitarian goals of the marketplace.

The outcomes of this conference will serve to add more depth and analysis with regard to how professional responsibility and accountability are currently understood by the teaching profession in the twenty-first century.

On further analysis of the outcomes of the teacher questionnaire, this conceptual framework paper, set against an analysis of current literature in the field, will reflect an in-depth analysis of the questionnaire findings.

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Part 2

Accountability & Responsibility

Results of an INTO Questionnaire 2014

2

Introduction

The theme chosen for the INTO's annual Consultative Conference on Education 2014 was **Quality in Education.** As part of the process of consulting with members prior to the conference, the INTO conducted a survey to seek the views of members on a number of issues related to the theme of quality education. In an era of increased accountability in schools, this questionnaire aimed to explore teachers' views on the following issues:

- what constitutes quality teaching and learning;
- inclusive education;
- support and collaboration;
- accountability;
- planning and reporting;
- parents;
- assessment;
- continuing professional development (CPD); and
- leadership.

It was envisaged that by gathering this information, it would be possible to gain a clearer picture of how the changing nature of accountability and responsibility impacts on teachers and, by extension, on the quality of education.

The INTO circulated the online survey to a randomly-generated list of 1,000 teachers, drawn from the INTO membership database. Of the valid emails (800), there was a response of 216, which is a response rate of 27%.

Profile of respondents

The gender breakdown of respondents was 15% male and 85% female.

In relation to teaching qualifications, the majority (62%) held a B.Ed. gained in Ireland; 4% held a B.Ed awarded in a country other than Ireland; 30% held a postgraduate qualification awarded in Ireland and 8% had a postgraduate qualification awarded outside of Ireland.

Respondents' length of teaching experience ranged from 2 months to 42 years. See table 1 for a breakdown.

Table 1 Years of teaching experience

Years of teaching experience	%
<5 years	21
6 – 10 years	22
11-20 years	23
21 – 30 years	14
31 – 40 years	18
40 + years	1

In relation to whether teachers had received mentoring as a newly qualified teacher (NQT), 18% had, 63% had not, and 19% noted that the question was not applicable to them. The same question was put to newly appointed principals and 7% indicated that they had received mentoring, 11% had not, with the remainder noting that the question was not applicable to them.

Respondents to the questionnaire were made up of 15% principals, 50% mainstream class teachers, 30% learning support or resource teachers, 4% special class teachers and 1% substitute teachers.

Profile of School

There was an even spread in relation to the location of schools, with 18% describing their school as being located in a city; 21% describing their location as suburban; 32% stating their school was located in a town and 29% indicating a rural location. The majority of schools (54%) were mixed schools; 8% were boys only; 6% were girls only; 9% of schools were mixed at junior level and then girls only; 15% described themselves full-stream; 2% described themselves as junior schools and 5% as senior schools.

Only 6% of respondents taught in a special school. In relation to DEIS status, of the 25% of teachers who stated that they currently taught in a DEIS school, 12% taught in a DEIS Band 1 (Urban) school, 5% in a DEIS Band 2 (Urban) school and 6% in a DEIS rural school. A small percentage (7%) of respondents taught through the medium of Irish, with the majority of those (79%) teaching in a Gaelscoil and 21% in a Gaeltacht school. The breakdown of school patronage was as follows:

Table 2 Breakdown of school patronage

Patron Body	%
Catholic Church	89
Church of Ireland	5
Foras Pátrúnachta	2
Educate Together	2
VEC	0.5

The evaluation of the INTO (2014) questionnaire data in relation to factors that contribute to Quality Education is presented in six themes:

Leadership for Quality Teaching and Learning discusses findings in relation to the role of the principal as an effective leader, the issue of continuous professional development for both principals and teachers and the extent to which collaboration and collegiality is realised in the school context.

Teacher Stress and Well-Being explores how teacher stress is understood both nationally and internationally. In addition, it highlights the factors that teachers, in the Irish context, believe contribute to creating additional professional stress in their teaching careers.

Planning and Reporting discusses teachers' views with respect to the impact of whole school planning on quality teaching and learning. In addition, it details their perspectives in relation to the effectiveness of School Self Evaluation (SSE), and the extent to which they consider it important to engage in planning and reporting at school, class and parent level.

Assessment details teachers' view with regard to the range of assessment tools that they employ and the challenges experienced with regard to assessing and reporting outcomes to parents and other bodies.

Challenge of Inclusion explores teachers' views with respect to the rights of pupils to be included in mainstream provision and the extent to which teachers believe that they have the knowledge, skills and competencies to deliver a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum for all pupils. In addition, this theme explores the extent to which teachers can effectively plan and differentiate in response to pupils' individual needs.

Lastly, the theme **Parents** discusses teachers' views with respect to their beliefs and practices and the challenges they experience in sustaining and nurturing effective communication with parents.

Leadership

> A central part of being a great leader is cultivating leadership in others.

The social system of schools and communities has long been a topic of study. Sarason, (1996) claims that schools are cultures and changing a culture is far more complicated than simply assuming that new curricula, or new pedagogical techniques, or new accountability agendas can be delivered to schools in self-contained packages that will immediately change what and how teachers teach.

The concept of the school as a learning organisation is deeply embedded in the philosophy expounded throughout the *The Primary School Curriculum* documents. They confirm the view of the school as a learning organisation in which the principal is seen as pivotal in creating a shared vision and in providing dynamic and inspirational curriculum leadership:

> The principal plays a crucial role in energising and motivating the staff, in affirming and encouraging their efforts, in fostering a lively process of communication, and in establishing a continuing process of consultation.
>
> (Primary School Curriculum, 1999, Introduction p.18).

Principals occupy a unique place in educational organisations, often negotiating multiple internal and external accountability policies while at the same time supporting and mediating with teachers, parents and outside agencies. All of these tasks present challenges and opportunities for growth, development and enriched partnership with others.

A second critical factor highlighted is the importance of collegiality within the school community:

> The school is a learning organisation involved in a continuing process of reflection, development and improvement. This occurs in the context of co-operation between the different partners in the school community in fulfilling a number of interconnecting and mutually supportive roles.
>
> (Primary School Curriculum, 1999, Introduction p.18).

While much has been written about the exponential expansion of the role of the principal in terms of school effectiveness and the radically changed context in which they now operate. Sugrue (2005, p.12) claims that school-effectiveness literature has unleashed a set of policies that "have pummelled teachers and principals'. He also claims that the varied conceptualisations of what constitutes effective leadership (e.g. instructional, transformational, distributed, participative etc.) may lead to confusion rather than providing appropriate support.

School leadership is complex in its nature (Day & Leithwood, 2007) as principals strive to ensure positive educational outcomes for all students. The OECD study *Improving School Leadership* (2008) states that the essential characteristic of school leadership is *leadership for learning*. In addition, it identifies improved student learning as the key policy lever which can improve leadership practice. In turn, it outlines the four domains of responsibility of school leaders as that of supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality; goal setting, assessment and accountability; strategic financial and human resource management and collaborating with other schools. The OECD (2008) expresses a concern that modern leadership requires skills that may not have been developed over years of teaching alone.

Leadership for learning becomes problematic in a context where the focus is predominately on accountability and value for money with schools being held accountable to the state, parents, press and the public (IPPN, 2005). While these demands are underpinned by statutory obligations placed on schools, paradoxically, they come at a time when the state adopts a more devolved role with respect to school responsibility, with increasing demands on schools to report on Literacy and Numeracy targets and to engage in the SSE process. The burden of administrative demands has resulted in principals calling for a reduction in time-consuming administrative functions in order to return to their core business of managing teaching and learning (IPPN, 2005).

Survey findings

Leadership for quality teaching and learning

Overall, principals were held in high regard with (80%) of teachers reporting that principals engage in leading teaching and learning. The majority of teachers (68%) reported that they were treated equally in the school, could discuss any problem that arose (70%) and in general that (63%) of principals *have excellent leadership skills*.

However, just over half of the respondents (56%) reported that they received support from the principal to grow professionally. In addition, (53%) reported that they received *no feedback* from the principal on their teaching, while (33%) stated that they received *some feedback*.

There was overwhelming agreement among teachers (90%) that principals should engage *in a mandatory induction programme on appointment as principal.* However, with regard to whether *principals should serve in the role as Deputy Principal prior to their appointment* to the role of principal, opinions were almost evenly divided with 40% agreeing and 39% disagreeing. Making principals responsible for a minimum number of teaching hours per week received just (51%) support, while appointing principals on fixed term contracts was not supported by the majority (45%).

Less than half of all respondents (45%) felt that principals should be appointed on a fixed term contract, however, an overwhelming (95%) believed that *school leadership and management teams should be restored so as to provide promotional opportunities for teachers*. In addition, there was strong agreement with the idea of devolved responsibility with (78%) of respondents stating that all schools should *have an in-school leadership team to whom the principal could delegate leadership roles and responsibilities*.

Continuous professional development (CPD)

The majority of teachers (73%) regard CPD as an integral part of being a teacher while (92%) claim that teachers should engage in CPD at least once a year. While there was overall agreement that the professional responsibility for securing CPD should rest at the level of the individual teacher (82%), there is a call for more opportunities for teachers to engage in CPD by (74%) of the respondents. While some teachers expressed a difficulty in engaging in CPD (60%), and a further (62%) expressed a view that CPD should take place during school hours, there was overwhelming support (97%) for CPD being available regardless of location. The need for continuous professional development (CPD) for all principals was strongly supported by (90%) of teachers.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) that focuses on supporting effective communicating and collaborating was cited by 90% of teachers as being of significant importance, while 62% of teachers report that teachers' wellbeing is inadequately addressed in CPD. There was a specific call for more CPD in relation to Assessment for Learning (AfL) (62%) and in relation to supporting vulnerable and/or challenging pupils (61%).

The administrative burden on principals was well-recognised with a call by 89% of teachers for additional administrative staff to be appointed to all schools. More time is needed to allow principals to engage in instructional leadership and to facilitate this, 81% of teachers expressed a view that teaching principals should be given one day release time per week to engage in instructional leadership practices.

Collaboration and Collegiality

> Vital though the school principal is, school leadership does not begin and end with the person in the principal's office.
>
> (Spillane, 2006, p.5)

One of the most consistent findings from studies of effective school leadership is that authority to lead need not be located in the principal but can be dispersed within the

school between teachers and among other personnel. A collaborative, reflective and co-operative team approach is advocated in order to evaluate, develop and, more importantly, to sustain improvement. Sustaining school improvement requires the leadership capability of the *many* rather than the few. This shared leadership is often complex and difficult to foster, maintain and develop. School improvement is a contested issue – what constitutes school improvement and how is it measured?

Hargreaves and Fink (2003) suggest that 'sustainable leadership' is cultivated through shared responsibility for leadership and argue that improvement is not measured by isolated tests or by strategic planning, formulated in legislation or guidance from the state. Hargreaves and Fink (2004, p.272) sum up the position thus: 'Most leaders want to do things that matter, to inspire others to do it with them and to leave a legacy once they have gone. Mainly it is not leaders who let their schools down, but the systems in which they lead'.

Collaboration and collegiality is an important factor in support of quality teaching and learning where teachers can work in an atmosphere where they feel that they can discuss and share ideas and expertise with colleagues. In relation to support from colleagues, 89% of respondents stated that they work collaboratively with colleagues *on targets for school improvement;* can discuss *any professional problem with a colleague* (88%) and readily *discuss their class work with colleagues* (80%). While 62% claim that there are opportunities to collaborate, 87% expressed the need for more time to engage in these collaborative exchanges.

Teacher stress and well–being

International research literature shows that the extent to which teachers are satisfied with their jobs and working conditions is likely to have significant consequences not only for the retention of teachers within the profession and their capacity to engage with colleagues, but also on the quality of their teaching and on the pupils' learning outcomes, (Crossman & Harris, 2006; Chaplain, 1995).

According to Kyriacou (2001, p.28) 'teacher stress may be defined as the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher'. Kyriacou lists the main sources of stress that impact on teachers as relating to poor pupil motivation, class discipline, time pressures and workload, external evaluation, relating to colleagues, self-esteem and status, administration and management, role conflict and ambiguity and poor working conditions (Ibid, p.29).

In a recent report by Morgan (2015), 90% of teachers claim that teaching has become much more 'stressful, demanding, challenging and hectic". The factors that have made teaching more challenging in the last five years relate to greater demands for documentation, school policies and improvement plans and demands on schools to solve wider societal problems. In addition, meeting the individual needs of pupils and dealing with challenging behaviour difficulties also significantly contributed to teachers' stress levels.

In this survey, while teachers (69%) feel that they are professionally trusted by the general public to do a good job, this is not reflected at all levels with 75% expressing a significant lack of appreciation from political representatives. In addition, the view that *The Department of Education is very supportive of teachers' work* was rejected by 69% of respondents. Just over half of all respondents (53%) believed that if parents offered

more support they could do a better job, while 54% stated that competition among schools serves to impact negatively on provision.

At a personal level, 75% of teachers find it hard to overcome negative instances that occur in school, while negative reporting on teachers in the media impacts negatively on 80% of teachers.

Planning and Reporting

The Whole School Evaluation (WSE) first introduced in the years 2003-2004 was designed 'to monitor and assess the quality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system provided in the state by recognised schools and centres for education' (Education Act 1998, Section 7 (2) (b). As part of the process of WSE, schools were advised to examine practices and policies in relation to the quality of school management; school planning; curriculum planning; learning and teaching and support for students.

Findings from the report on WSE carried out by INTO (INTO, 2009) raised questions about the appropriateness of the WSE process as a means of enhancing quality teaching and learning in schools and as a mechanism for demonstrating school and teacher accountability. The belief was that it trampled on teachers' creativity and professionalism, led to a narrowing of the curriculum, and was heavily laden with bureaucratic or administrative requirements which served to undermine professional efforts to improve schools and to support quality teaching and learning (O'Neill, 2002).

In this survey, there was little support for the view that *whole school evaluation (WSE) had served to increase standards in* schools with only 38% of teachers agreeing. Likewise, the view *that support from the inspectorate helps maintain high quality education for all pupils* was equally shared and rejected by 37% of all respondents. Less than half of all respondents (41%) believed that *school development planning contributes to improving quality teaching and learning*.

The move away from the (WSE) to a more self-evaluative model namely School Self Evaluation (SSE), defined by the DES as a collaborative, reflective process of internal school review to help schools and teachers improve outcomes for learners, is one where 'the principal and teachers collaborate in a focussed way to improve how they teach and assess pupils' learning' (DES, 2012, p.3). This move from an external evaluation of school performance as in the WSE to an internal one, SSE, reflects the "prioritisation by many governments of two key goals namely school autonomy and school accountability" McNamara and O'Hara (2008, p.173). In this way schools are required to take on greater responsibility for budgets, planning, self-evaluation and professional development.

Findings from this survey indicate that while 50% of schools responded positively to engaging in the School Self- Evaluation (SSE) process less than half (40%) believed that SSE would increase standards in schools. While 62% agree that taking part in the SSE process helps to improve teaching and learning, 46% believed that *guidelines supplied by the DES constrain planning at school level.* In addition, 59% agreed that the purpose of the SSE was to increase the level of *accountability of schools to the Department of Education and Skills.* Almost all teachers (98%) confirmed that *the number of reports that teachers have to complete is taking significant time away from quality teaching and learning*.

The respondents in this study (85%) report that they engage in planning at staff level and in setting targets for school improvement with 72% reporting that these are

reviewed at regular intervals. Time constraints are again cited, with 45% teachers reporting that they have inadequate time to plan.

At school level, preparation of yearly plans was supported by 80%, while the necessity of having weekly and fortnightly plans was well supported by 83% of respondents. A large majority (80%) of teachers agreed that monthly reports should be submitted to the principal teacher. While there was a strong belief expressed by 76% that regular standardised testing in reading and mathematics should be used and reported on, 57% believed that pupils' social and emotional development was inadequately reported.

The majority of teachers (81%) claim that they report to parents with ease, while an overwhelming majority (93%) believed in the importance of annually reporting to parents.

While 67% believed it important to *report results from standardised tests (in aggregated form) to Boards of Management,* 59% felt that it is equally important that other aspects of pupils' development - social, emotional and physical skills - be reported also. It is interesting to note that reporting to the board of managment is seen as more important than reporting to the DES (in aggregated form) with only 47% of teachers agreeing with this practice.

Assessment

Assessment in education is about gathering, interpreting and using information about the processes and outcomes of learning. It takes different forms and can be used in a variety of ways, such as to test and certify achievement, to determine the appropriate route for pupils to take through a differentiated curriculum or to identify specific areas of difficulty or strength for a given student (NCCA, 2007, p.7).

Assessment is used to monitor the learning processes, to ascertain achievement in each area of the curriculum and to prioritise learning needs. It enables teachers to make critical decisions about the effectiveness of particular instructional strategies, and the need to provide differentiated curriculum content. Assessment also helps identify pupils who have special or additional needs so that the nature of the support and assistance can be ascertained and appropriate strategies and programmes put in place (NCCA, 2007):

> Assessment is about building a picture over time of a child's progress and/or achievement in learning across the *Primary School Curriculum*. Information about how the child learns (the learning process) as well as what the child learns (the products of learning) shapes the picture. The teacher uses this information to identify and celebrate the child's current learning, and to provide him/her with appropriate support for future learning.
>
> (NCCA, 2007, p.8).

Assessment assists communication about pupils' progress and development between teacher and pupil, between teacher and parent, and between teacher and teacher. The closer the connection between the educational assessment and instruction, the more effective the assessment-teaching process will be (Lerner, 2003).

Assessment for Learning (AfL)

The recent emphasis in education on *Assessment for Learning* (AfL) reflects a move away from a deficit-based model of assessment, which focused exclusively on the learner, to a more holistic approach, which takes into account how difficulties in

learning can be influenced by a range of interacting factors, including teaching styles and the wider learning environment (Griffin & Shevlin, 2007). Assessment for learning focuses on learning processes and outcomes and seeks to identify not only gaps or difficulties but more importantly, strengths and emerging competencies which can be built upon (Tilstone et al., 2000).

Assessment for learning (AfL) also referred to as *formative assessment,* is intended to form, guide or shape the next steps in learning. Black and Wiliam (1998) define assessment for learning as all those activities undertaken by teachers and/or by the students themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities.

Research studies have shown substantial gains in academic achievement in classrooms where teachers use formative assessment to give effective feedback to students and this approach is of particular benefit to those with learning difficulties (Black et al., 2003). Likewise, in order for effective learning to occur, students must be actively involved in using the feedback themselves. Teachers, too, must be committed to critically reviewing and adapting their teaching in the light of assessment results.

Summative assessment (AoL)

Assessment of learning (AoL) involves assessing pupils' learning at the end of a given period, at the end of a unit of work, a week, a term, or a year. The emphasis in AoL is on measuring a child's cumulative progress towards curriculum objectives. A grade or a score is often the only feedback a child receives. AoL also helps the teacher to plan future work, to set new targets, and to provide feedback and information for end-of-year assessment. While these results are useful to the teacher they can be of limited value to the pupil unless the teacher identifies the essential information they provide and communicates this to the pupil.

The NCCA Assessment Guidelines (2007) provide information on eight assessment methods and shows how these methods can be used for both AfL and AoL approaches.

The majority of teachers in this study (75%) expressed confidence in using a wide range of assessment tools in support of quality teaching and learning. Teacher observation was the assessment approach which teachers found the most useful (89%), followed by teacher questioning (65%). Standardised tests were reported to *be very useful* by 41%, but fewer teachers cited self-assessment as being useful (33%). Portfolio assessment was found to be useful by 56% of the teachers surveyed, however, teachers reported that they lacked knowledge in relation to using conferencing (32%) and concept mapping (30%) as assessment tools.

In this survey, while 76% report using AfL with their pupils, 74% expressed a need for more professional development in this area. Even though 84% reported they use assessment to inform the teaching and learning process, only 55% of teachers *include pupils in the assessment process*. A significant majority (76%) believe that standardised testing in reading and in mathematics should be used and reported; however, half of all respondents (57%) claim that there is inadequate reporting on pupils' social and emotional development.

The most significant problem highlighted with regard to assessment related to time, with 79% of teachers claiming that they *struggle to find time to regularly assess my pupils*. These time constraints may explain why teachers' opinions were almost divided equally with 46% agreeing with the statement *I find it difficult to report negative*

assessment results to parents with 48% claiming that they experience no difficulties. Reporting standardised results to the board of management (BOM) was considered important by 67% of respondents, however, only 44% considered it appropriate that additional teachers would be allocated to schools to support pupils with special education needs based on the outcome of the aggregated data from the standardised test results.

The challenge of inclusion

Inclusive education is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal issue on how some learners can be integrated in mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners.

Inclusive education is concerned with meeting the diverse needs of *all* students through the provision of quality education. It is underpinned by accurate assessment of pupils' requirements, identification of priority learning needs, and collaborative planning and monitoring to effectively achieve such progress.

While Ireland was aware of the major inclusive policy changes sweeping across the USA, UK and Europe, as evidenced in *The White Paper on Education* (1980), *The Programme for Action* (1984-1987), and *The Guidelines on Remedial Education* (1987), change in practice was initiated at a slower pace than in most European counties. The *White Paper on Education* (1980) argued that the issue of integration was a very complex one which could not be fully addressed due to demographic and geographical factors, which inhibited progress in the provision of a high quality service for all pupils with special needs in integrated settings. In general the Irish response has been described as "a very cautious, pragmatic one which tried to balance economic considerations with educational principles" (MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007, p.289).

The rapidity of change following the publication of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) Report (1993) together with the announcement by the Minister for Education and Science, Mícheál Martin TD, of the concept of automatic entitlement to support for those children with special educational needs, irrespective of their geographical location or general learning disability (Department of Education and Science, 1998) marked a turning point in special educational provision in the Irish context. The next decade saw the publication of a whole raft of legislation and Circulars detailing how inclusive educational provision would be managed and supported to include *Charting our educational future: White paper on education (1995); Education Act* (1998) and the *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act* (2004).

In the past decade schools and classrooms have undergone significant change in terms of pupil diversity (Conway & Sloane, 2005; INTO, 2004a; NCCA, 1999a). There has been a large increase of the number of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools and a decline in the population of special schools (Ware et al., 2009; Stevens & O'Moore, 2009). Coupled with this, the rapidly changing social and cultural context in Ireland created more demands to address the language and communication needs of a much wider cohort than in previous times. O'Donnell (2009, p.15) claims that the creation of inclusive schools is a complex endeavour demanding significant changes in teachers' attitudes and beliefs in relation to the ideology of inclusive education.

Meeting the diversity of needs

In recent times, the research focus has examined the extent to which principals feel they are prepared to manage effectively the diversity of needs in an inclusive school setting.

While Hargreaves and Fink (2003, p.695) claim that a fundamental requirement for successful inclusion depends on the leader developing and nurturing the vision of inclusion for the school, Travers et al., (2014) point to the importance of a collective approach to implementing inclusive policies and practices in that inclusion is best fostered by the combined power of the principal and leadership-oriented coordinators working to continuously support and drive inclusive policies and practices. These relationships were characterised by effective communication, mutual support and a spirit of inquiry which resulted in innovation and evaluation of new ways to address challenges at school and community level. However, nurturing and maintaining these effective relationships is often a complex endeavour with many competing agendas taking place which run contrary to inclusive ideology.

Findings from a study by Gardner and Forbes (2013) suggest that principals lack knowledge with regard to the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs with only 18.2% feeling that they had a good understanding or competency in the area of special education. In addition, the findings suggest that while some school leaders are able to respond effectively to the challenges and opportunities of inclusive education, there are others for whom the task appears to be a major source of tension. This tension reflects the state of affairs internationally, with school leaders in many countries struggling to synthesise inclusion and student achievement. In an era when school performance data and international comparisons are highly visible, school principals can be caught between apparently conflicting requirements as noted by Lunt and Norwich (1999).

In this survey, the majority of teachers (75%) support the right of pupils with special educational to be included in mainstream classes. It is interesting to note that despite the claim by 71% of teachers that they were ill-prepared at initial teacher education to meet the demands of the diversity of learning needs in the classroom, 85% believe that they *have the knowledge, skills and competencies to allow my pupils to experience a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum,* with 62% stating that inclusive education is well-supported at class level.

It emerged that teachers express confidence (69%) to plan at an individual level (IEPs), however, 58% *find it difficult to differentiate lesson plans in response to the diverse learning needs in the classroom*. Overall, 73% of teachers pointed to the challenge of supporting the diversity of pupils' learning needs, while 81% claimed that they endeavoured to nurture the unique talents of each individual pupil and 69% reporting that they feel competent that they support the social and emotional needs of all pupils. A large majority (86%) reported that *if class numbers were reduced they could engage in more effective teaching*. With regard to supporting the learning needs of EAL learners, less than half the teachers (49%) expressed confidence in their ability to address the needs of these pupils.

The importance of literacy and numeracy is highlighted in many legislative and policy documents. Just over half of all teachers surveyed (56%) expressed confidence in their ability to integrate literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Managing behaviour is an issue that constantly presents itself in research. Teachers in this survey (54%) expressed a view that they can *effectively manage behavioural*

difficulties that arise in my class. Inculcating a civic spirit and helping pupils develop as responsible citizens was well within the remit of (89%) teachers. The importance of the role of the SNA in supporting inclusive practices is valued by (76%) teachers.

The findings from this survey reflect many of the key findings in the Travers et al., study *Addressing the Challenges and Barriers to Inclusive Education* (2014), in that teachers in this study likewise expressed a view that they lacked training and expertise to deal with the diversity of pupils' needs, and that there was inadequate time to accommodate the diverse needs of all students. Another major challenge *'was the difficulty teachers appeared to have in differentiating planning and teaching to take account of the diversity of their students'* (NCSE, 2014, p.19).

Parents

The role of parents in the education process increasingly emphasises active involvement and partnership (Hess et al., 2006). Legislative and policy statements firmly endorse the value and importance of collaboration between parents and professionals and recognise effective collaboration as best practice for all schools and all children (DES, 2000). The Education Act (Ireland, 1998) details how the education system is accountable to students, their parents and the State. Primary schools are also now required to administer standardised tests in literacy and numeracy to all children in second, fourth and sixth classes, and to communicate the results of these tests. The role of parents in the education process increasingly emphasises active involvement and partnership (Hess et al., 2006). Legislative and policy statements firmly endorse the value and importance of collaboration between parents and professionals and recognise effective collaboration as best practice for all schools and all children (DES, 2000). It is the responsibility of teachers to explain tests to parents in respect of their own children (Department of Education and Science (DES) Circular 0138/2006).

Reporting to parents is an important part of the work of the school. It is essential not only because schools are accountable to parents, but because effective reporting enables parents to be involved in their child's learning:

> Reporting may be defined primarily as the gathering, interpreting, recording and communicating of information on children's progress in school to their parents.
>
> (NCCA, 2007. p.31).

There is compelling research evidence that involvement of parents in children's education is a crucial determinant of successful educational outcomes (Hall et al, 2008). The *Primary School Curriculum* (DES, 1999) points to the two-way benefits of the school/parent partnership in that as well as parents receiving the report information, teachers can benefit from the knowledge that parents have about their own children.

For pupils with special educational needs, parental involvement in assessment, and in the planning of individual education plans (IEPs) and the review of interventions are emphasised as key principles of effective practice (DES, 2007). The EPSEN Act (2004) lays down minimum requirements for the involvement of parents in the identification and assessment process and in the development and implementation of IEPs. But legislation does not necessarily guarantee partnership and there is the danger that while schools may follow 'the letter of the law', the real purpose and potential benefits of collaboration will be lost and forgotten in the effort to ensure compliance with the law (Griffin & Shevlin, 2007).

Communication with parents

Parents should be given every opportunity to contribute as fully as possible to their child's educational programme. This requires positive attitudes by all, proactive attempts to accommodate and engage families and, in some circumstances, additional measures to ensure effective and open channels of communication (DES, 2007). Mutual understanding and trust between the school and parents builds a sense of shared purpose among all involved in helping the student learn and achieve (Quinn, 2004). Communication is crucial to effective collaboration. The school's policy on inclusion should address the methods used to communicate with parents and this should also form part of the whole-school policy on parental partnership.

An important consideration for all teachers is how to communicate evaluation or assessment information sensitively. Care is needed so that the information is conveyed in meaningful and relatively jargon-free language to ensure that parents understand the context and meaning of assessment results. In addition, the challenge of communicating to parents whose first language is not English, as well as with those parents who for physical, socio-economic, cultural or other reasons have difficulty in accessing information as it is currently presented is yet another issue for teachers.

Parents: Survey findings

In this survey, the majority of teachers (85%) report no difficulty in reporting to parents and maintaining frequent and regular communication with parents/carers is considered by 96% of teachers to be highly important. However, the outcome from other questions in relation to parents communicate a less positive story with only 55% of teachers believing that it is good practice to meet with parents collectively at the beginning of the year to explain what and how the teaching and learning will take place with respect to their son/daughter. In addition, some aspects of this communication are difficult for teachers for example, just over half of all respondents (51%) report difficulties explaining pupils' special educational needs to parents while 54% of teachers claim that parents are aware of *their child's progress in all areas – academically, socially, emotionally and physically*. Involving parents in planning the Individual Education Plans (IEP) is critically important, however, just over half (55%) of respondents report that they find no difficulty in including parents in this process.

Survey findings suggest that most teachers (59%) believe that parents value homework. However, 74% of respondents believe that parents struggle to understand standardised test scores while only 41% believe that *parents are aware of the curriculum content that we teach*. Teachers (51%) *worry that parents feel that they are not doing a good job* while reporting negative assessment results to parents was reported as *not difficult* for 49% but *difficult* for 46% of respondents.

The majority of teachers (74%) report that the Parents' Association supports the work of the school with 67% reporting that their school has a policy detailing how they communicate with parents. In addition, 61% reported that their school provides opportunities for parents to engage in school/class activities. Putting in place a scheme where all schools have the services of a Home School Liaison teacher to help connect more with parents was considered important by 65% of teachers.

Concluding Comments

While the survey outcomes provide rich data on many factors that impact on quality teaching and learning, they suggest some areas that require a more priority focused approach. These are discussed under the theme headings.

Leadership for Quality Teaching and Learning
While principals are held in high regard, teachers report that they receive little support from the principal 'to grow professionally' in that the majority of teachers stated that they receive a low level of feedback from principals on their work. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to address effective communication and collaboration is cited as significantly important by almost all teachers. In addition, the need for CPD in AfL and in teaching and managing vulnerable and/or challenging pupils is highlighted.

Teacher Stress and Well–Being
The survey points to the importance of teachers' resilience in order to deal with negative occurrences in school and negative reporting in the media - which serve to add to teachers' stress.

Planning and Reporting
While the School Self- Evaluation (SSE) process was viewed as a positive development by some, others believed that its main focus was to increase the level of accountability of schools to the Department of Education and Skills. Teachers expressed a view that the increased level of accompanying paperwork negatively impacted on the time available to engage in quality teaching and learning. The importance of taking a more holistic approach to reporting on pupils' development is recommended.

Assessment
In relation to the area of assessment, the survey outcomes point to the urgent need for more CPD for teachers in the use of a wider range of assessment tools in support of AfL and to support more pupil engagement in the assessment process.

Challenge of Inclusion
Supporting inclusive practices requires that teachers have the necessary skills to differentiate teaching and learning in response to pupils' diverse needs. The survey findings highlight the need for more CPD for teachers in relation to differentiation; IEP planning; managing behaviour; addressing the learning needs of EAL learners and integrating literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Parents
The survey outcomes point to the need for more parental awareness in relation to curriculum content and in interpreting and understanding standardised test scores. The findings also point to the need for CPD for teachers on how best to involve parents in the IEP planning process. The extension of the Home School Liaison teacher scheme in support of better overall connectivity and communication with parents is suggested.

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Part 3

Proceedings of the Consultative Conference on Education

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3

Presentations

Dympna Mulkerrins, Cathaoirleach, Education Committee

A Chairde agus a Chomhmhúinteoirí, I would like to add a few words of welcome to our guests and delegates here today. The INTO Education Committee was set up to advise the CEC on educational matters. Its members are the President, Vice President and one representative elected by the members of each of the 16 districts. The general aims of the Education Committee include:

- To be the leading voice in education policy development
- To anticipate and be prepared for emerging trends in education
- To determine and lead major movements / trends in education
- To be to the fore in progressing education issues
- To respond to both national and international research
- To be aware of broader developments in Education

I am giving this summary as the Education Committee is elected for a term of three years. A new term will begin at Congress 2015, and we would like to encourage members to consider putting their name forward.

Another facet of the work of the Education Committee is the organisation of the annual Consultative Conference on Education. The Education Conference plays an important role in the work of the INTO. It is at this conference that we get to discuss and hear the views of teachers on many education issues.

This year we are considering the topic of Quality in Education – teacher accountability and responsibility. Where is the pressure for increased accountability coming from?

One of the many external pressures is the increasing number of cross-national comparative studies such as PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA. These studies draw attention to how countries achieve in comparison to each other. When countries don't do well, policies are often introduced to improve educational achievement. The introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy is a case in point. The results of PISA 2009 saw a drop in Ireland's performance in comparison to previous PISA tests. Those PISA results and reports from the inspectorate on the teaching of English and Maths in primary schools which showed some weakness, signalled a 'crisis', leading to the publication of a Strategy to Improve literacy and numeracy in our education system. Needless to say, there was no crisis, as subsequent results from PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS showed. (By the way Ireland is participating in TIMSS again in 2015.)

There are many definitions and interpretations of what accountability means and there are tensions between being professionally responsible and being held accountable.

To prepare for this conference, as the President mentioned, the INTO drew up a questionnaire on this topic that was circulated - via email - to approximately 1,000 INTO members.

Through this questionnaire, the INTO sought the views of members on a number of issues related to the theme of quality education. In an era of increased accountability in schools, this questionnaire explored teachers' perceptions on the following issues:

- what constitutes quality teaching and learning
- inclusive education
- support and collaboration
- accountability
- planning and reporting
- parents
- assessment
- continuing professional development (CPD), and
- leadership.

The aim is to use this information to build a clearer picture of how the changing nature of accountability and responsibility impacts on teachers, and, by extension, on the quality of education. I am going to look briefly at just one of the themes that was explored in the survey - that of teacher professionalism in relation to collegiality and collaboration.

We all know that the support of a good staff and great colleagues is very important in so many ways – personally and professionally. While 80% of respondents agreed they discussed *work in class* with colleagues, this must be seen separately from quality time to plan and share resources. It emerged from this survey that 50% of respondents noted that they did not have time to plan, work or share resources with colleagues at school. Almost 90% of respondents agreed that they would like 'more time to collaborate with my colleagues'. The same strong agreement (almost 90%) was given to the statement that 'I am able to discuss any professional problem with a colleague'. So, the findings of this survey would suggest that while teachers are happy to engage in collaboration and collegiality, the system does not facilitate this easily.

This was a comprehensive survey and more of the findings will be looked at and debated in your discussion groups.

Our thanks are due to all those teachers who took the time to complete the on-line questionnaire and give us their views. We absolutely need the voice of the teacher to shape debate and policy.

I hope you enjoy the conference and hope that the discussion groups and workshops give you food for thought. I also hope that some of you may go away from this conference and give consideration to putting your name forward for the INTO Education Committee. We would be delighted to hear from you.

Deirbhile Nic Craith, Senior Official

Good afternoon delegates. Tá fáilte romhaibh anseo tráthnóna chun ábhar atá an-tráthúil ar an dá thaobh den teorainn a phlé.

I propose in my introduction to the conference topic to refer to three issues:

- The emerging accountability agenda
- Professional responsibility as a form of accountability
- The role of data.

I will also present some further findings from our survey which Dympna has already referred to.

Calls for more accountability across society are common. Indeed we ourselves demand accountability from politicians, bankers, public servants and other professionals.

Accountability in education is not new. Teachers have always been accountable. What has changed is the context of accountability and the technologies available to the system to measure accountability.

Globally, there is pressure on states to improve their education systems. Cross-national comparative studies such as PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA draw attention to how countries achieve in comparison to each other. When countries don't do well, policies are often introduced to improve educational outcomes. The introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy is a case in point.

Linked to policies of school improvement is a focus on accountability. Pressure to do well economically leads to a focus on education as a means of ensuring a better economic performance. Hence, the increasing references to quality and excellence in education – concepts that are difficult to define or explain. What is quality education? What is excellence? What we do see is greater attention being given to teachers, teaching and learning, and accountability.

DES Policy

In its 'Overview of service delivery and reform for Ireland's education and training sector', the Department of Education and Skills identifies the improvement of Quality and Accountability as one of its priorities for action:

> We want to deliver high quality education and training experiences for everyone and improve accountability for educational outcomes across the system including reporting to parents and the school community.
>
> (DES, 2014, p. 11)

Some of the ways in which this will be done include:

- Reforming **initial teacher education** courses for all new teachers
- Developing all **teachers as professionals**
- Implementing **new models of inspection** in all schools
- Introducing **School Self-Evaluation** to all schools
- Improving the **assessment and reporting of students' progress**

We have seen developments in all of these areas in recent years.

Policy

The Secretary of the DES recently stated in *Intouch* that all schools will be 'more open and accountable to their local communities … principals and teachers will increasingly work together to foster continuous improvement at school level and there will be a greater focus on improving learning outcomes particularly in the area of literacy and numeracy' (Intouch June 2014, p. 28).

In contrast, in 2003, the focus was on school development with a model of quality assurance based on school development planning, school review and self-evaluation:

> Ireland is adopting a model of quality assurance that emphasises school development planning through internal school-review and self-evaluation, with the support of external evaluation carried out by the inspectorate
>
> (DES, 2003, p. 3)

The move from school development to school improvement reflects the stronger focus on accountability for educational outcomes.

Our background paper provides a brief overview of the rise of the accountability agenda and how this agenda impacts on our work as teachers. The language associated with New Public Management (NPM) with its focus on target setting, outcomes, performance management systems and performance indicators, facilitates accountability. Schools can be held accountable for improving the learning of their pupils by external measurement and comparisons. These ideas are of course contested, and you will hear some of this contestation from various speakers during the conference.

As public servants, teachers are accountable for what they do. Teachers are expected to provide a good education to their pupils. Of course, we could have a long debate about a good education is. For example, are teachers accountable for 'delivering' the curriculum – or for mediating the curriculum in a manner that meets the individual needs of pupils in different school contexts?

Our background paper also considers accountability in the context of professional responsibility. Professional responsibility infers trustworthiness. Where teachers are well-qualified, trusted, and committed to act in the interests of others, the system supports teacher autonomy and freedom, and teachers are expected to act morally, responsibly and with integrity. Where there is less trust, the emphasis is on teachers' duty to account for their actions, often through an audit approach to accountability, hence the focus on paperwork and reporting, reflecting a culture of control. The background document outlines the key features of professional responsibility and professional accountability.

O'Neill (2002) argues for intelligent accountability – an understanding of accountability that is less concerned about control and micro-management, implies trust in professionals, does not distort the purpose of schooling and encourages the holistic development of all pupils. This type of accountability is evident in Scotland and Finland – two countries where teachers and the education system are respected.

So what do we have in Ireland? Do we have an external accountability system underpinned by performance management? Or do we have an accountability system rooted in teacher professional responsibility which supports quality teaching and learning? We look forward to hearing your views on these issues in your discussion groups.

There is no doubt that there is a stronger focus on quality assurance and learning outcomes than was the case when I started teaching. For example, the revised language curriculum due next year will be presented in the form of learning outcomes – a new departure for primary education.

Accountability has also become associated with paperwork, documentation and gathering of data. A word about data - inspectors gather data during evaluations and schools are encouraged to gather information to support their self-evaluation processes. It is easy today in an era of technology to gather data. Schools are using technology to analyse standardised test results and to forward their results to the DES. Technology is a great facilitator of number crunching. We gather data because we can. Data can be a valuable source of influence and power. But data has to be interpreted and can be manipulated. Who has access to data? Who understands the data? Information and data can be used selectively to tell a story. Policy-makers can create data systems to better monitor performance, the achievement of outcomes and to hold people accountable. Systems like data. Systems need data. Technology makes the gathering and analysis of data easier.

But data is useful to promote better policy. It's a question of what data, whose data and what kinds of data? Data can be used for negotiation, argument, judgment and ultimately democracy[1]. Indeed the INTO used data on class size as a central aspect of our *Room to Bloom* campaign. It's not enough for teachers to know how to use, gather or interpret data – teachers also need to understand the politics of data.

Survey

Dympna referred to our survey earlier. I wish to present you with some of the findings in relation to bureaucracy, leadership, and professionalism.

Bureaucracy

Ireland does not have a problem retaining teachers in the profession – and may that always be the case. Teacher retention is a problem in some countries and among reasons given for teachers leaving the profession are poor working conditions, a lack of autonomy, a lack of respect for the profession and increasing amounts of bureaucracy[2]. The challenge for us is to ensure that the teaching profession in Ireland retains its respect, its autonomy, good working conditions - though there has been some erosion since the recession - and avoids the burden of unnecessary bureaucracy.

According to respondents to our survey:

- 82% of teachers find it difficult to meet the demands of paperwork and reporting,

[1] Henig, 2012
[2] Hadley Dunn and Durrance, 2014

- More than four in five teachers (85%) say the number of reports that teachers have to complete is having a negative effect in classrooms taking time away from quality teaching and learning,

And teachers (96%) want to see an end to the moratorium on promotion in schools which has been in place since 2008. This is a key issue for the INTO.

Leadership

Principals play a crucial role in promoting accountability and teacher responsibility. The OECD report on *Improving School Leadership* (OECD 2008) outlines four areas of responsibility for school leaders:

- Supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality
- Goal setting, assessment and accountability
- Strategic financial and human resource management
- Collaborating with other schools.

The OECD acknowledges that principal teachers are unlikely to gain the knowledge and skills they need to be school leaders from their teaching experience alone. It is interesting therefore, that 91% of respondents in our survey agree that it is important that principals participate in a mandatory induction programme on appointment as principal. Only 2% disagree and 7% are unsure.

In relation to supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality, respondents agree that the majority of principals (81%) are involved in leading teaching and learning in their schools.

However, only 34% of respondents agreed that the principal in their school gives feedback to teachers regarding their teaching, while 53% disagreed. 14% were unsure.

The situation is different in Northern Ireland where principals give feedback to teachers as part of the Performance Review and Staff Development scheme which has been negotiated with the INTO – though this system is not without its challenges.

Teacher appraisal is the term used in many countries when referring to judgments on the work of professionals at school level. According to the OECD, teaching standards or competency frameworks are important elements in any teacher appraisal system, as they provide a clear common reference to make judgments about teacher performance. To date, the Teaching Council has focused on developing standards for teaching across the continuum of teacher education. The General Teaching Council in Northern Ireland has already developed a competency framework which is used for the evaluation of teachers' work.

Professionalism

Society views professionals differently now. The public is more aware of the weaknesses of professionals. Professionals are not infallible. Decisions made by professionals are more likely to be questioned.

Professionals need to re-define their profession in the context of NPM if they are to retain the trust and respect of the public. Professionals can benefit from insights from

other stakeholders. In the new climate of public management and accountability, teachers, more than ever, need to include pupils and parents in the education process.

It is very positive, therefore, that,

- According to our survey, almost all respondents (97%) maintain frequent and regular communication with parents / carers as necessary. Only 14% of respondents find it difficult to report to parents on pupils' progress.
- A small majority of respondents (56%) consider it good practice to meet parents collectively, at the beginning of the year, to inform them of what their son or daughter will learn.

Conclusion

You will have an opportunity to discuss these findings and other issues during the conference. Our keynote speakers, our workshop presenters and the discussion groups will provoke and stimulate debate and discussion on the various interpretations and understandings of quality in education – teacher accountability and responsibility, through the lenses of professionalism, leadership, learning and inclusion. Our keynote today will focus on promoting quality teaching and nourishing teacher quality. Our keynote tomorrow will focus on de-testing accountability. I leave you with a question to think about as you talk and listen this afternoon and tomorrow.

What is quality education in Ireland of the 21st Century?

Bainigí sult agus tairbhe as an gcomhdháil.

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Quality in Education – GERM Theory and Professional Vaccination

Dr Carmel Gallagher, General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

One of the most interesting educational acronyms ever created – GERM- was coined by Pasi Sahlberg, the last Chief Inspector of Schools of Finland, to refer to the Global Education Reform Movement. The acronym aptly characterises the Global Education Reform Movement as a set of politically driven educational accountability policies which, have spread like 'germs' across the world since the 1980s. The intention behind these generally unquestioned policies is to 'fix' the apparent problems in public education systems by introducing a range of politically driven interventions and performance-based accountability measures borrowed from business in the unproven belief that setting high performance standards for schools, teachers and students will improve the quality of expected outcomes.

'GERM-like' educational accountability policies tend to involve interventions such as: a move towards centrally prescribed 'national' curricula; an emphasis on basic student skills in literacy and numeracy and STEM subjects at the expense of others; the setting of performance targets and high-stakes tests to measure pre-determined standards in these prioritised subjects; an emphasis on external evaluation/inspection to evaluate how well these targets have been attained; and international student assessment surveys, such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS, to then compare how countries are performing against each other in international league tables.

As a result of these policies measures in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy have become a proxy for perceived pupil, teacher, school and system success or failure at the expense of other areas of the curriculum. External inspection and evaluation devote undue attention to limited aspects of schooling and international league tables, hyped by the media, have become a crude, politically sensitive measure for national success or failure.

The effect of GERM policies on teaching and learning in schools is to narrow teachers' focus on areas that will be measured, which in turn encourages transmission styles of teaching and rote styles of learning to maximise test performance. The higher the test-result stakes, the lower the degree of classroom experimentation and risk-taking for learning. The result is that young people are drilled for measurable success and come to fear failure. They absorb the subliminal message that the main purpose of education is extrinsic individual competitiveness measured by exam results. The twenty-first century message, that education should be about fostering intrinsic motivation, creative problem-solving, collaborative teamwork and perseverance in the face of failure, is drowned out.

The question for Ireland's teachers and policy makers is to what extent has the GERM policy virus begun to replicate itself within the cells of our education systems North and South and what might we, as professionals, do to vaccinate ourselves against its potentially destructive effect with a view to developing systemic immunity? To torture the biological metaphor further, what good bacteria can we develop in our professional gut – the equivalent of educational probiotics – to fight off the micro-organisms of GERM policies which could ultimately seriously damage our individual classrooms and our whole education systems.

In scientific terms a vaccine is a biological preparation that provides acquired immunity to a particular disease. The vaccine typically contains an agent that resembles the disease-causing micro-organism - often made from weakened forms of the microbe's

toxins or one of its surface proteins. The agent stimulates the immune system to recognize the agent as a threat, destroys it but keeps a record of it, so that the immune system builds up internal protection against similar micro-organisms it may encounter in the future.

To torture the analogy even further, the challenge for us as professionals is to develop an Irish vaccine against GERM, by identifying those professional agents (or agency) that will stimulate our educational immune system to recognise the threat from GERM in order to nurture some form of professional immunity to its worst effects. I believe the central agents that we need to nurture is our own innate professionalism, (or 'professional agency' as researchers term it), those elements of vocation that brought us into the profession in the first place. After all, we all know we did not come into the profession for the money!

The criteria that defines us a profession, similar to that which defines doctors, dentists, accountants and other groupings as a profession, include: our academic and professional preparation; our theoretical knowledge and skills which we apply in practice; our code of professional conduct / ethics; our membership of a professional body – such as the General Teaching Council in Northern Ireland and the Irish Teaching Council and our willingness to pay professional fees to these organisations to facilitate self -regulation by the profession of the profession; our public service commitment and altruism; our professional autonomy; and our commitment to continuous professional development to enhance our 'personalised' skills. All of these things combine to give us collective authority and legitimacy as a profession. However, not only does teaching qualify as a profession, it is also one of the few professions that can claim also to be a vocation in the sense that teachers have: a sense of idealism and passion for a cause, a set of values dedicated to public service and individual needs, a sense of personal discipline, emotional commitment and motivation to offer constant support to improve the lives of others and a commitment to fostering positive relationships and to research and reflective judgement.

In order to ward off the impact of narrow accountability associated with GERM we need to develop a vaccine that builds on our professional and vocational gut instincts. Instead of being data-driven by narrow targets and monitored and directed by the primacy of numerical outcomes we need to be data informed and professionally trusted. As professionals we need to lobby continuously to keep our curricula broad; to keep our pedagogy varied and creative; to nurture skills as well as content; and to embrace assessment for learning as well as assessment of learning. We need to empower young people to be successful, not through transmission teaching and rote learning, but by giving young people the skills, confidence and creativity to become autonomous learners, who are encouraged to take risks for learning and who learn to value error and failure as the one of the greatest learning opportunities of all.

Above all the best vaccine that we can nurture to ward off GERM is our own commitment to our continuous professional learning and development and to embrace aspects of accountability that are uplifting and empowering of our professionalism as teachers.

De-Testing Accountability?

Dr Eugene Wall, Mary Immaculate College

Good afternoon to you all, and I would like start with extending a warm thanks to the Education Committee of the INTO for inviting me here today. It is a great pleasure to be here, especially being among so many familiar faces, even though there are some more years showing on them than the last time we met.

The title of my talk is intended to be somewhat provocative and this is reflected in the deliberate play on words in the title of the talk. It is a recognition of the fact that accountability, and more especially the imposition of accountability, is typically unwelcome, hence, the reference to detesting accountability. But, it also reflects the overall message that I want to convey today, which is that the use of test-based accountability, or more specifically the use of test scores as a way of creating accountability for schools and teachers, is not appropriate. In this sense, it is a call for the de-testing of accountability.

I am going to try and answer some key questions and there are six of them there in all, as shown the following slide.

Some Key Questions

- What is test-based accountability?
- Do we have high-stakes test accountability in Ireland?
- If not, why not?
- Is it likely to be coming soon to a school near you?
- Is high-stakes necessary to raise educational standards?
- What challenges do we face in addressing the accountability agenda?

The 2014 mid-term elections have just taken place in the United States - on the 4th November last. A few days afterwards, I was reading an article in an education publication which was examining the implications of what had taken place in the elections for education policy in the United States. I was particularly struck by an amendment (No. 3) which was being proposed to the constitution of the state of Missouri. You will of course be aware that it is not the norm in this country for there to be amendments to the constitution in relation to educational issues. This was what was proposed to be included in the Missouri Constitution:

- Require **teachers to be evaluated** by a standards based performance evaluation system for which each local school district must receive state approval to continue receiving state and local funding;
- Require teachers to be dismissed, retained, demoted, promoted and paid primarily using **quantifiable student performance data** as part of the evaluation system;
- Require teachers to enter into **contracts of three years or fewer** with public school districts; and
- Prohibit teachers from organizing or collectively bargaining regarding the design and implementation of the teacher evaluation system?

Specifically, proposition 3(f) would require 'that local districts shall develop a standards-based performance evaluation system and that the majority of such evaluation system shall be based upon the quantifiable student performance data'. As indicated in the following slide, it specifies that such data would be used in decisions about the retention, promotion and dismissal of teachers. That is the application of test-based accountability in its fullest and most extensive form. I would draw your attention to the specific details of the proposal around the limitations to the tenure of the teachers; a maximum of 3-year contracts is proposed.

Missouri Teacher Performance Evaluation
Amendment 3 (2014)

Section 3(f). Effective beginning July 1, 2014, and notwithstanding any provision of this constitution, any school district receiving any state funding or local tax revenue shall develop and implement a standards based performance evaluation system approved by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The majority of such evaluation system shall be based upon quantifiable student performance data as measured by objective criteria and such evaluation system shall be used in (1) retaining, promoting, demoting, dismissing, removing, discharging and setting compensation for certificated staff; (2) modifying or terminating any contracts with certificated staff; and (3) placing on leave of absence any certificated staff because of a decrease in pupil enrollment, school district reorganization or the financial condition or the school district.

I should point out that the actual amendment was defeated by a majority of three to one. Judging by your reaction, I sense an element of surprise and relief. However, lest you derive undue satisfaction from that particular outcome, I should say to you that at present virtually all 50 states in the United States of America have embarked on the development of school and teacher evaluation systems which will have an explicit link to performance elements, such as pay and tenure, and the use of student test data is an integral part of that approach. Within the United States, the dominant approach to education reform is being driven by the *Race to the Top* programme. This is the Obama administration's follow through to the *No Child Left Behind* legislation that was put in place in the early years of the last decade by the Bush administration.

There is huge federal funding backing the implementation of Race to Top; between 2009 and 2012 a total of $5.05 billion of federal funding was made available. Although states can apply to opt in or out of this as they choose, there is clearly enormous financial incentive for states to do so. The following slide shows which states were successful in the Phase 1 and Phase 2 funding rounds, and how much they each received.

In order to qualify and be successful, states were required to fulfil a number of criteria, some of which related directly to teacher evaluation. The following criteria, against which states' applications would be judged, were set out in the guidance documentation:

1. Establish clear approaches to measuring student achievement growth for individual students.
2. Design and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers.
3. Differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take student achievement growth into account as a significant factor and are designed with teacher involvement.
4. Conduct annual evaluations that include timely and constructive feedback and provide teachers with data on student achievement growth for their students, classes, and schools.
5. Use evaluations to inform decisions about staff development, compensation, promotion, tenure, certification, and removal of ineffective teachers.

(Source: http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED544794.pdf)

More widely, and separate from Race to the Top, a growing number of states have moved to adopt approaches which explicitly link test-based student outcome measures to a range of high-stakes consequences. A number of the slides illustrate the range of consequences for schools and individual teachers that are tied to students' test scores.

RACE TO THE TOP

The program contains these key elements:

- Teachers will be evaluated in relation to their students' test scores.
- Schools that continue to get low test scores will be closed or turned into charter schools or handed over to private management.
- In low-performing schools, principals will be fired, and all or half of the staff will be fired.
- States are encouraged to create many more privately managed charter schools.

Ravitch, D. (2010)

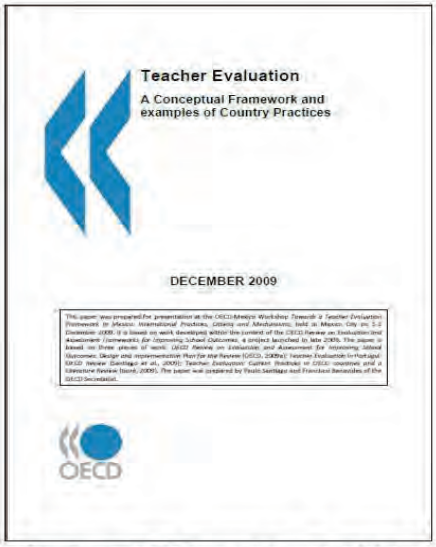
RACE TO THE TOP

With $297 million in the Teacher Incentive Fund, states and districts will create or expand effective performance pay and teacher advancement models to reward teachers and principals for increases in student achievement and boost the number of effective educators working with poor, minority, and disadvantaged students and teaching hard-to-staff subjects.

With $315 million from the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems program, states will expand their data systems to track students' achievement from preschool through college and link their achievement to teachers and principals. Applications for these funds are being posted today.

These include performance-related pay for teachers, removal of tenure, firing of staff, and the closure of schools that continue to get low test scores. In some cases, so called "failing schools" will be closed or turned into charter schools or handed over to private management. Without labouring the point further, these are the hallmarks of a high-stakes test-based accountability system.

Although the US is to the forefront of the test-based accountability reform movement, other countries have increasingly adopted similar approaches. Santiago and Benevides (2009) have examined the use of student test data in many different countries as a means of evaluating teachers' performance. They also document, as the next slide indicates, how teacher evaluation results are used in various countries to make decisions about career advancement, decisions about performance rewards and also sanctions for ineffective teachers.



Santiago, P. & Benevides, F. (2009)

Four summative approaches to the use of teacher evaluation results are listed:

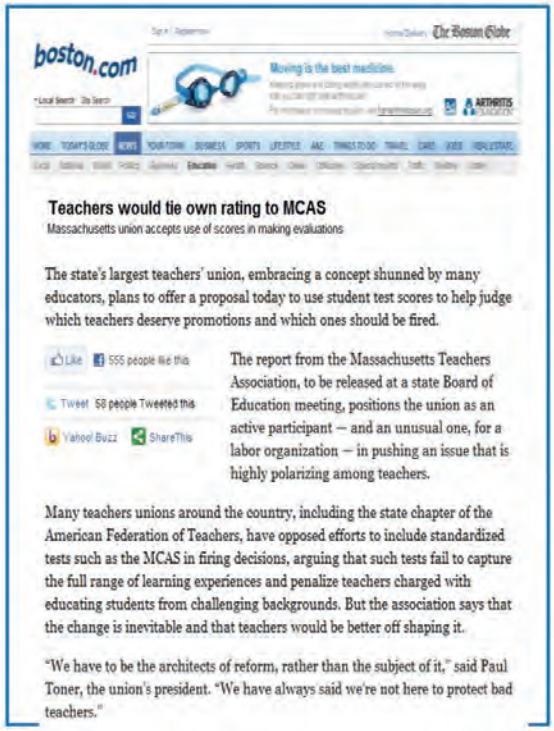
- Career Advancement
- Decisions at Key Points in Career
- Performance Rewards
- Sanctions for Ineffective Teachers

Thus far, I have not mentioned league tables, but what is readily available in the United States are sets of league tables for schools in virtually all states. It is possible to find the relative ranking of any school in any state, and the rankings are based on the results of one or more standardised tests. The next slide illustrates what is happening in Los Angeles. For the last two years, the Los Angeles Times have published the individual ratings of 11,500 LA teachers across 470 elementary schools, and these ratings can be accessed by typing in the name of the teacher or the school.

As the slide shows, the data on any particular school can be obtained by typing in the name. This is truly high-stakes accountability. The meaning of term 'high-stakes' should be perfectly clear. It means that there are important consequences that attach to the results of the test data. If you don't have serious consequences associated with the outcomes, then you do not have a high-stakes testing system. It is for that particular

reason that I would maintain that, notwithstanding the fact that there have been increases in the demands around the uses to which test data is being put in this country, we are, at the point in time, nowhere close in Ireland to what is understood internationally as high-stakes testing. While it is appropriate to raise the question about whether we are heading in that particular direction, it is both alarmist and naïve to claim that we currently operate such a system.

The shared view of many educationalists in the United States is that they find this approach quite repugnant, they find it conceptually objectionable and they disagree in many instances with the tenets of this particular approach. However, you might find it surprising and incongruous if you were to look at some of those who support the idea of merit pay linked to test scores or "payment-by-results" as it was historically known in this country. If you look at the next slide, taken from the Boston Globe two years ago, it reports that the state's (Massachusetts) largest teacher union is supporting this idea. And, the reason that they are doing so, is explained in the last paragraph: "we have to be the architects of reform, rather than the subject of it". This is their reason for acceding to the use of test scores to make decisions as to whether teachers should be hired or fired.



boston.com

The Boston Globe

Teachers would tie own rating to MCAS

Massachusetts union accepts use of scores in making evaluations

The state's largest teachers' union, embracing a concept shunned by many educators, plans to offer a proposal today to use student test scores to help judge which teachers deserve promotions and which ones should be fired.

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Yahoo! Buzz ShareThis

The report from the Massachusetts Teachers Association, to be released at a state Board of Education meeting, positions the union as an active participant — and an unusual one, for a labor organization — in pushing an issue that is highly polarizing among teachers.

Many teachers unions around the country, including the state chapter of the American Federation of Teachers, have opposed efforts to include standardized tests such as the MCAS in firing decisions, arguing that such tests fail to capture the full range of learning experiences and penalize teachers charged with educating students from challenging backgrounds. But the association says that the change is inevitable and that teachers would be better off shaping it.

"We have to be the architects of reform, rather than the subject of it," said Paul Toner, the union's president. "We have always said we're not here to protect bad teachers."

In concluding this particular section, it is worth noting what Koretz and Béguin wrote in 2010:

> In recent decades, test-based accountability (TBA) has become the cornerstone of U.S. education policy. Pressure on educators to raise scores has increased from one wave of reforms to the next. TBA, well-established for some time in the U.S. and England, is now appearing in many other nations as well.

In terms of a theory of action, in others words, in terms of a set of beliefs regarding what is going to improve educational standards in the US, test-based accountability has come to be regarded by many policy makers as a panacea or magic bullet. To refer back to what the General Secretary, Sheila Nunan, said yesterday about quality, there is a risk of

the agenda for improving educational quality collapsing down into an agenda about accountability, and I believe that such a reductionist approach would be a mistake. Contrary to a core assumption of test-based accountability, pressurising educators to raise scores does not necessarily translate into raising the quality of education, in part, but not solely, because educational quality is about much more than test scores.

Test based accountability has been well established for some time in the US and England and is now appearing in many other nations as well. I was lecturing to some of my students on this topic two years ago and I was documenting the extent to which this was becoming a world-wide phenomenon. Coincidentally, the following day I saw this report on the BBC website about Mexico City where student teachers and police were clashing over school reforms. Significantly, it is pointed out that the violence came after two weeks of protest by teachers against mandatory evaluations of their performance.

At this stage of my talk, I would like to take stock and to caution against the idea of equating quality in schooling with the whole issue of accountability. The two are not the same; it is very possible to increase accountability and, in the process, to counter-productively jeopardise the quality of education because of the detrimental and harmful effects which a high stakes policy might engender.

The OECD produced a report (OECD Economic Surveys IRELAND, October 2011) back in October 2011 that noted, 'the Irish school system is characterised by comparatively limited accountability mechanisms' (OECD, p.122). The report went on to flesh out in the remainder of the excerpt why there is, in their view, so little accountability within the Irish school system.

Following this, they then proceed to advocate more extensive and comprehensive accountability-driven reforms. While they are aware of the existence of school self-evaluation as a policy approach in Ireland, they press the argument for high-stakes accountability, as follows:

OECD Economic Surveys: Ireland 2011

Alongside this required self-evaluation, the authorities should set up external evaluation mechanisms to systematically assess teachers' and schools' performance, and make the latter public once adjusted for socio-economic background. Evaluation results should have implications for career progression, and inform any needed corrective action in relevant areas.

(p. 122)

It would be facile to conclude that this will inevitably happen in Ireland because it has been recommended by the OECD. For reasons that I will elaborate on later in my talk, the evidence does not suggest that this is imminent. However, before turning to address this issue, I would like to deal briefly with some of the problems of using test scores as proxy measures of teachers' competence and of basing incentives and sanctions on such measures.

I attended a conference just over two years ago in Vancouver on interpersonal relationships in education. One of the keynote speakers was David Berliner, an internationally renowned educational psychologist. Interestingly, but unexpectedly given the theme of the conference, Berliner opened his keynote address on the topic of using test data to evaluate teachers. He anecdotally referred to a teacher he had met who had three phases in her career, ranging from being a bad teacher to an excellent teacher. There were no serious life changing events that had occurred which had brought about these three distinct phases in her career. In short, what had happened was that at different points in her career she had taught very different cohorts of students and, not surprisingly, this was reflected in the evaluations of her competence as a teacher. The thrust of Berliner's argument is that, even making allowances for the background characteristics of the students, you cannot validly use test data as a proxy for evaluating either the effectiveness of teachers or the effectiveness of schools. Berliner elaborated on the fundamental problem that is inherent in using test scores, even test scores that have been adjusted to take account of student background, in an article in the Teachers College Record, entitled '*Fatal Flaws in Using Pupil Achievement as a Proxy for Teacher Competence: Implications for Teachers and Teacher Educators*':

> I conclude that because of the effects of countless exogenous variables on student classroom achievement, value-added assessments do not now and may never be stable enough from class to class or year to year to be used in evaluating teachers. The hope is that with three or more years of value-added data, the identification of extremely good and bad teachers might be possible; but, that goal is not assured, and empirical results suggest that it really is quite hard to reliably identify extremely good and extremely bad groups of teachers. In fact, when picking extremes among teachers, both luck and

> regression to the mean will combine with the interactions of many variables to produce instability in the value-added scores that are obtained. Examination of the apparently simple policy goal of identifying the best and worst teachers in a school system reveals a morally problematic and psychometrically inadequate base for those policies. In fact, the belief that there are thousands of consistently inadequate teachers may be like the search for welfare queens and disability scam artists—more sensationalism than it is reality.
>
> Source: https://eric.ed.gov/?q=regression+(autism+OR+autistic)+-descriptor%3A%22regression+analysis%22+-descriptor%3A%22regression+(statistics)%22+descriptor%3Aautism&ff1=souTeachers+College+Record&id=EJ1020233

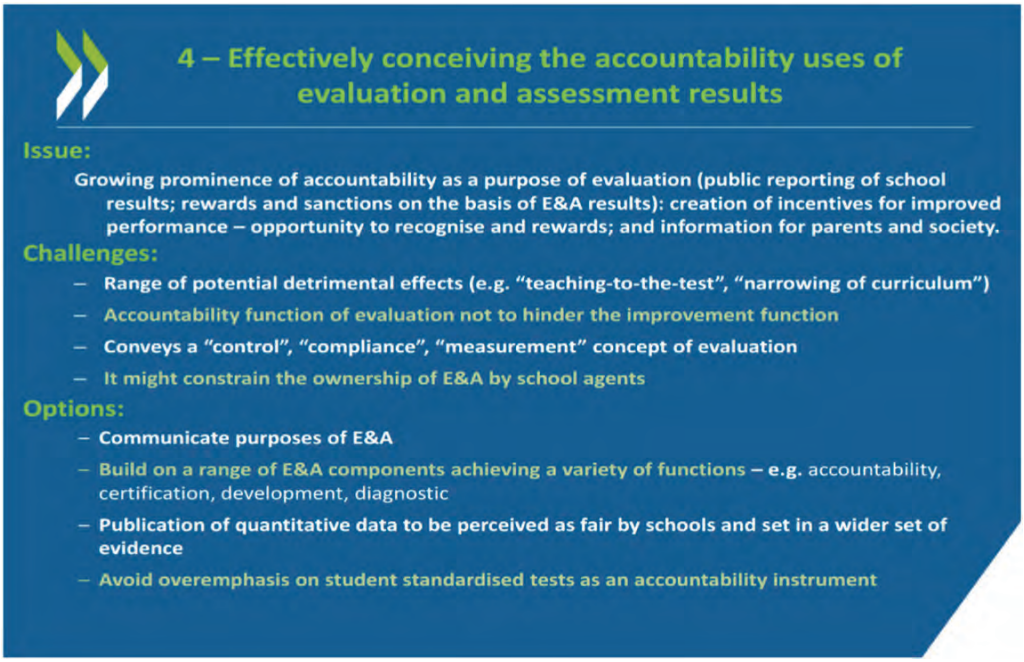
Given the high-stakes that now attach to these evaluations in the US, and the issues surrounding their reliability, it was entirely predictable that, in time, a legal challenge would happen. Just last week, the *Washington Post* published a report on such a challenge. Titled, '*High-achieving teacher sues state over evaluation labelling her 'ineffective*", the article recounts the case of a teacher who was classified on the basis of test scores as 'ineffective' and yet the local superintendent (schools inspector) and the principal of the school have written testimonials stating that she is an excellent teacher. This points to the serious limitations in the capacity of test scores to capture accurately the effectiveness of teachers and schools.

Before proceeding further, I need to touch upon the reason why test scores are regarded by some as an appropriate way of measuring quality and, more especially, why they have become the prime lever in driving educational reform in the United States. The underlying rationale, to which Berliner has alluded, is the determined belief held by politicians, policymakers and a section of the general public in the United States that there is a serious problem in the country with educational standards and the quality of its teachers. Hence, Berliner's critical reference to "the belief that there are thousands of consistently inadequate teachers". Those who subscribe strongly to the view that there is an endemic problem of low educational standards, which is caused by underperforming teachers, often favour a reform strategy that is based on heightened accountability and "flushing out" the underperformers. I will return to this topic later.

But, even in the United States, which is the heartland of support for test-based accountability, there are some signs at this stage that the ardour for test-based accountability is waning. Undoubtedly, you'll appreciate the irony of a test developer standing here showing you the next slide. It is a composite of images of a range of protests against the use of standardised tests in the United States. There is a coalition of interests that are represented in the various photographs, including teachers, parents and pupils. The focus of opposition from parents is typically related to what they regard as the disproportionate amount of time that is spent taking, and preparing for, the high-stakes tests.* In the face of hardening opposition from individual state legislatures, even the Obama administration has recently softened its line.

*Since this talk was given, a study conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools (2015) has found that students in Grades 3 – 8 spend on average more than 20 hours per year taking mandated formal tests.

It is not just in the United States where the original certitude in the power of high-stakes accountability has faltered. Earlier, I showed a slide in which the OECD was exhorting the Irish government to implement reforms in keeping with this approach. That Report was published in October 2011. In March 2013, the Irish government hosted an EU conference on assessment in Dublin Castle. One of the keynote speakers, Paolo Santiago, representing the OECD, delivered a very fine address, outlining the findings of the OECD's recently published international study, entitled "*Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Assessment and Evaluation*". This is a document that is infinitely more nuanced and sophisticated in its analysis of the complexities associated with assessment, evaluation and accountability. This is reflected in the next slide, which is taken from the presentation by Santiago at the Dublin Conference. It should be noted that not just the present slide but the entire presentation is infused with a deeper understanding of the potential and difficulties associated with the use of data for evaluation purposes.



Source: https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Conferences/Ireland-s-Presidency-of-the-EU/Conference-19-20-Mar-2013/Paulo_Santiago_Keynote-address_OECD-Review-on-Evaluation-and-Assessment-Frameworks-for-Improving-School-Outcomes.pdf

In particular, there is a recognition that there is a range of potential detrimental side-effects, such as teaching-to-the-test and narrowing of curriculum - which is something that many educational commentators have been saying for years. The accountability function of evaluation should not undermine the improvement function and there needs to be a judicious balance between these functions. The slide also draws attention to two other important downsides of over-emphasising accountability:

- Conveys a control, compliance and measurement concept of evaluation
- It might constrain the ownership of evaluation and accountability by school agents

The final caveat, "avoid overemphasis on student standardised tests as an accountability instrument", is a welcome, if belated, repudiation of the misguided dogma that misled policymakers in a number of education systems.

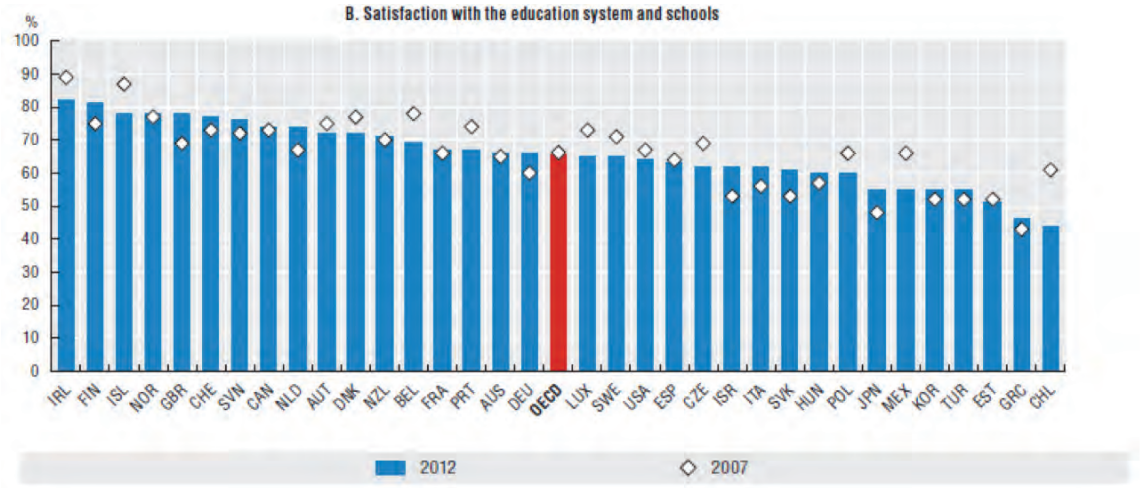
So, the question that I wish to address at this stage is, "is test-based accountability coming to Ireland?" There can be little doubt that accountability pressures have risen inexorably in Ireland over the past 20 years - across all sectors of society, but particularly the public sector. Realistically, it is definitely not going to go away; it shows no signs of abating, indeed, it likely to increase in the future. As Deirbhile Nic Craith rightly observed yesterday, accountability has been an omnipresent aspect of concern in Irish education over the years. I would also add that any balanced analysis shows that, unlike in several other countries, in Ireland it has been a subsidiary concern and not the dominant concern.

Notwithstanding recent policy trends, in my view, Ireland has not gone the way of the USA, or of other countries that have gone down the high-stakes testing route. It is my personal view that, as a nation, we are not likely to attempt to emulate the US reform agenda any time soon. I don't think that I'm being Pollyanna-ish about this or that I have an unduly starry-eyed view about the future. I think there are particular reasons why the policy climate in this country is not receptive to, or is not fertile for, the introduction of the sort of reform that has occurred in the United States. And I do not believe that, despite the growing use of test scores, there is genuine cause for concern about the imminent introduction of test-based accountability in this country.

In the past, test-based accountability has rarely been proposed in this country as an approach that should be adopted and, whenever it has been proposed, it has singularly failed to gain any traction. It has featured only sporadically in the media - although that is the place that you are likely to find the greatest support for it. It appears to me that test-based accountability has not gained traction with the DES or the NCCA either. On the contrary, their consistent positions over recent years have been far closer to the enlightened approach recently adopted by the OECD.

So, why might Ireland be different to what has happened in many other countries? In the first place, I think that it is important to recognise, as evidenced by the OECD report, that there is a growing awareness internationally of the pitfalls of high-stakes accountability. Secondly, both the policy climate and policy dynamics are very different in Ireland from what obtains in many other countries, especially the United States. Unfortunately, time will not permit me to go into all the details as to why I think Ireland is decisively different from the situation in the United States. Nonetheless, I reject the simplistic view that I have heard propounded on many occasions that this is a global phenomenon and the equally facile belief that, whatever happens in the United States, it is only a matter of time before it drifts across the North Atlantic for imitation and

uptake. In my view, this view stems from a profound failure to understand the cultural situatedness of trans-national policy borrowing and the dynamics of policy implementation. National context matters greatly and this is precisely why, despite years of apocalyptic predictions by educational futurologists, Ireland has not experienced the global educational reform movement (GERM). The reform agenda in the US, which stretches back more than 25 years, first originated in deep-seated concerns that were activated by the "*A Nation at Risk*" report in 1984. Since that time there has been in the USA varying levels of discontent, widely spread among different audiences, regarding the quality of the American education system. Even though, according to a recent Gallop poll, perceptions of the quality of American education are showing improvement, concerns regarding educational standards and underperformance have been an ongoing catalyst in driving reform and in carving the agenda for high-stakes accountability. Sustained political and/or public dissatisfaction are some of the key ingredients in generating the momentum for radical reform. The next two slides, especially the first one, illustrate quite convincingly the lack of public concern in Ireland regarding the quality of the education system. Out of the 34 OECD countries shown, Ireland scored highest, both in 2007 and 2012, in terms of public satisfaction with the education system. Satisfaction levels exceeded 80% in both years. It's not that we are undemanding as a nation or easily pleased, as the next slide reveals. The perception of the Irish population regarding the health system in Ireland is distinctly less favourable. We rank below the OECD average, in 25th place between Hungary and Turkey.



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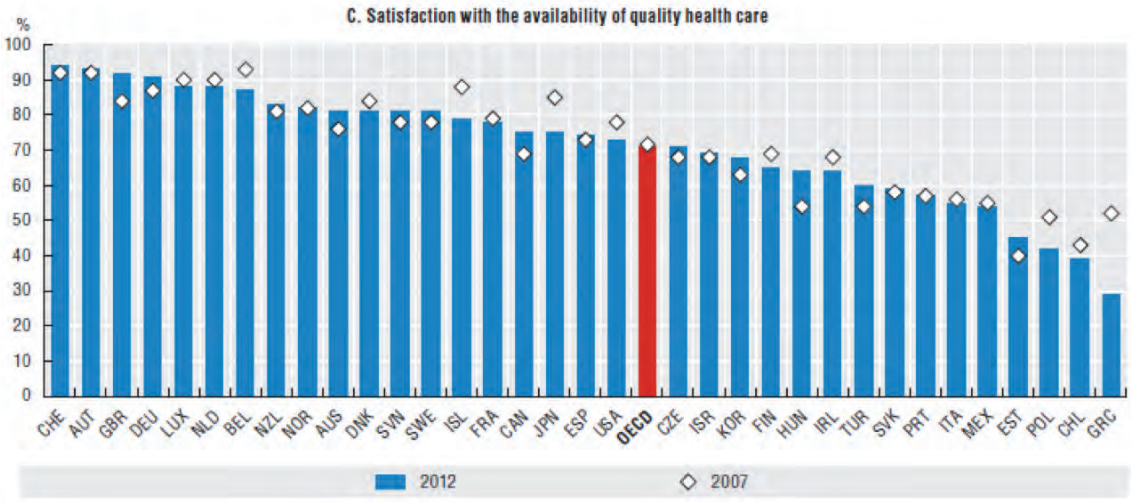

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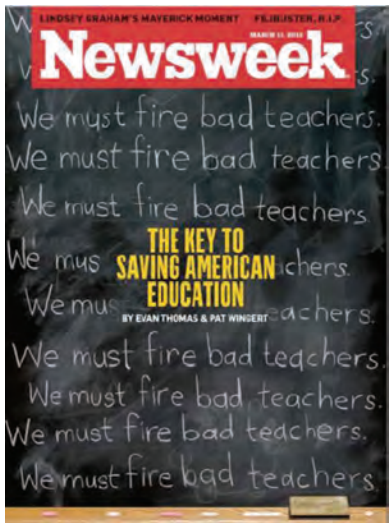
Even where dissatisfaction exists, a further crucial issue relates to what is perceived to be the focus or the foci of the problem – and by implication, the preferred remedies for the problem. Strong accountability measures are much more likely to be the solution of choice within an education system where the problem is deemed to be caused by underperforming schools or underperforming teachers. The view of the Bush Administration, enshrined in the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, was that students were underperforming on account of failing schools and the way to rectify this problem was to strengthen accountability and impose sanctions on schools which did not attain the required improvement targets.

The sentiments in the Newsweek cover (2010), *The Key to Saving American Education*, touches a raw nerve, squarely blaming what it regards as American educational underperformance on poor quality teaching, and excoriating the unions who protect the incompetent teachers.



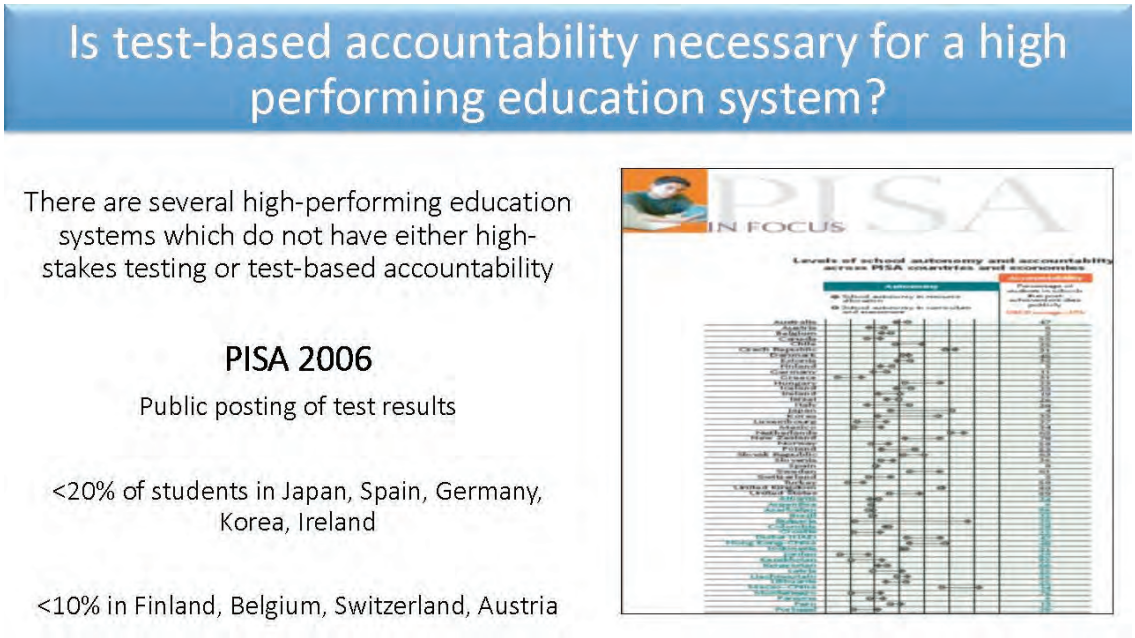
Two years prior to that, I was in New York attending the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. I took this photograph of a banner, which was approximately 70 feet tall, and was mounted prominently on a building in Times Square, presumably for the benefit of the attendees who were passing up and down to the conference.

These two images are emblematic of the very different attitudes towards teachers that exist in this country and in the United States. Without labouring the point, or exploring the causes further, I am not aware of any constituency of educational or political opinion that maintains that there is a 'standards' crisis in Irish education, caused by incompetent teaching, that demands rigorous accountability and is linked to severe sanctions. Such an extreme view has not guided educational policy-making in Ireland over the past 20 years, nor has it shaped the direction of educational reform. I have not heard it urged in any quarter as a prescription for tackling the problems of the Irish education system. Which is not to say that the situation can't or won't change; it is just that, scaremongering aside, there's no reasoned evidence to suggest that this is about to happen.

So, let me ask the question, is test-based accountability necessary for a high performing education system? I do not believe so! You may be surprised that I actually came this far in my talk without mentioning Finland; but that is about to change. Pasi Sahlberg, the noted Finnish educationalist, who was also the leading advisor in the Government-commissioned review of teacher education in Ireland, observed in relation to test-based accountability that "the concept does not feature in educational discourse in Finland". That is what is called an existence proof; in other words, if there is a country that can have high quality, and if it doesn't have high stakes accountability, then, patently, high stakes accountability cannot be an essential pre-requisite for a high performing education system.

You may also have been wondering if it would be possible for me to avoid any mention of PISA. Indeed, I am not going to look at the PISA results for Ireland; what the PISA general findings do show is that there are several high performing education systems that don't have either high-stakes testing or test-based accountability. As the next slide indicates (OECD, 2007), a number of countries that perform well in PISA do not

publicly post test results at all or only in a limited way. These countries include Japan, Korea and Finland and Belgium.



https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/pisainfocus/48910490.pdf

One delegate at the EU Conference in Dublin Castle back in March 2013 made the observation that in his view, high-stakes testing is effective in raising educational standards and that, given this, it doesn't matter whether or not there are negative side effects associated with it. There are actually two separate points here, and, given the time limitations, I will concentrate on addressing the first. The scientific evidence on whether high-stakes testing is causally related to higher achievement is at best inconclusive. And there are well-documented side-effects that can be seriously damaging.

The next slide refers to a report entitled '*Incentives and Test-Based Accountability in Education*' (Hout and Elliott, 2011), which was commissioned by the Committee on Incentives and Test-Based Accountability in Public Education. This is a committee of the National Research Council in the United States. I would draw your attention to Conclusion 1 in their report:

Incentives and Test-Based Accountability in Education

Michael Hout and Stuart W. Elliott (2011)

Committee on Incentives and Test-Based Accountability in Public Education; National Research Council. NAS Press

Conclusion 1: Test-based incentive programs, as designed and implemented in the programs that have been carefully studied, have not increased student achievement enough to bring the United States close to the levels of the highest achieving countries. When evaluated using relevant low-stakes tests, which are less likely to be inflated by the incentives themselves, the overall effects on achievement tend to be small and are effectively zero for a number of programs. Even when evaluated using the tests attached to the incentives, a number of programs show only small effects.

Before concluding, I would like to recall some well-known lines from Robert Frost's poem, *The Road Not Taken*. These same lines were mentioned at an NCCA conference that I attended two days ago.

> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
> I took the one less travelled by,
> And that has made all the difference.

Ryan and Feller (2009) have pointed out that there exists two dominant paradigms associated with how educational accountability operates globally. According to them, the two approaches are (a) outcomes-based educational accountability and, (b) school self-evaluation. As is clear from what I have said, the United States has gone far down one particular road, and we in Ireland have gone down the other road. Ireland is not unique in that regard; this other road is the road that tends to be more favoured by other European countries.

A number of years ago, I was giving a paper at the American Educational Research Association on the subject of assessment practices in Ireland. I described how high-stakes accountability is not a feature of the educational landscape in Ireland, unlike in the US. So ingrained was the belief in the power of high-stakes accountability and the way that it is conducted in the United States, that the Discussant for the session expressed incredulity at my account and was adamant that there must be serious quality problems within the system as a result. Within his worldview, it was inconceivable that you could maintain high levels of performance without having high levels of accountability within the system. He was entirely oblivious to the fact that many countries do in fact achieve high quality and engage in systematic school improvement. In response, I countered that my fundamental problem with test-based accountability is that it reduces the multifarious and multitudinous dimensions of quality within a school down to a single index - a measure on a standardised test of certain limited aspects of achievement. This one single measure does not take into account all of the other dimensions of pupils' learning and development beyond what is measured by standardised tests nor the factors that contribute to the test scores. The level of a school's effectiveness cannot and should not be gauged on the basis of its test scores but should be done holistically.

Herein lies an important dilemma and an inescapable choice. Nevo (2009) has commented that "In many educational systems, everybody seems to hate external evaluation while nobody trusts internal evaluation." To have, or not to have, accountability - that is not the question. As I have already mentioned, rising public expectations regarding accountability in all aspects of Irish society are unlikely to diminish, even if they are attenuated by continuing public confidence in the quality of our education system. Nonetheless, the mechanisms of accountability that operate within an education system, have to be sufficiently rigorous that they actually satisfy the public's legitimate appetite for proper accountability.

In conclusion, I would say that the challenge ahead is about carefully fashioning our system of accountability in a way that has to be, in my view, responsive to increasing accountability demands. While for some, this may be unpalatable, it is the pragmatic choice; a blanket resistance to accountability will ultimately make us more vulnerable to more extreme demands for the more exacting forms of accountability. But, the right of the public to know, and to be assured about the quality of our education system, has got to be accomplished through a system of accountability that is not harmful or damaging. We should continue to eschew the deleterious side effects of test-based accountability. The system of accountability must respect and enhance teacher professionalism. It must promote genuine educational quality, as distinct from simply raising educational standards; educational quality is much more encompassing than the legitimate concern for educational standards.

So with those remarks, I would just like to conclude by thanking you for your attention and for being here. I hope it has given you something to think about.

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Vote for the Worst Unionized Teachers (who can't be fired) http://www.teachersunionexposed.com

4

Reports from Discussion Groups

Introduction

Delegates were assigned to different discussion groups to facilitate closer examination of some of the issues that arose from the conference documentation and presentations. Each one of the six discussion groups was given a number of findings from the survey that had been previously conducted among INTO members (see Part Two) and a related list of questions to focus on. Members of the INTO Education Committee acted as facilitators and rapporteurs. The collated responses of the participants are outlined below.

Principals and Leadership

Delegates were given the following results from the INTO survey:

> According to our survey respondents agree that the majority of principals (81%) are involved in leading teaching and learning in their schools -14% disagree.
>
> 41%of respondents agree that all principals should have experience in the role of deputy principal prior to appointment as principal, while 40% disagree. 19% are unsure.
>
> Perhaps not surprisingly, 96% of respondents agree that in-school leadership and management teams should be restored so as to provide promotional opportunities for teachers, while 79% agreed that all schools should have in-school leadership teams to whom the principal could delegate leadership roles and responsibilities.
>
> Only 34% of respondents agreed that the principal in their school gives feedback to teachers regarding their teaching, while 53% disagreed. 14% were unsure.

The following questions were then considered by the discussion group:

- What role should principals have in giving feedback to teachers on their teaching?
- What role do teachers have in giving feedback to their principals?
- What is the best from of preparation for principalship?
- What is the best form of in-school leadership and management for our schools?

Opinions varied on the role of the principal in providing feedback. It was felt generally that the role of the principal is very wide with endless demands from every side of the school community along with increasing paperwork. Teaching principals are fulfilling two roles and it is difficult to give 100% to both jobs.

Whilst it was noted by some teachers that a principal's duty is inclusive of providing feedback to teachers, encouragement, praise and support must be central to this. A principal must be mindful of the feedback that (s)he is providing and also of the manner in which (s)he is doing so. The relationship between the principal and the teacher is important here and it can be difficult to develop and maintain a working relationship if the principal is overly critical. Feedback needs to be depersonalised and should focus on children's learning. Respect and trust should remain at the centre of discussion. Communicating with the community and disciplining children were also noted as part of the role of the principal. Delegation can be a positive exercise within schools but staff agreement is important. Whilst *Cuntais Míosúla* inform the principal of educational progression in the school, they do not encapsulate the full picture of school life. Teachers stated that in-school management teams are beneficial in this regard however, one group highlighted the erosion of middle management within our schools. Administration posts need to be remunerated. One group highlighted that the current goodwill of teachers may not be as forthcoming if monetary incentives are not re-established.

However, it was noted that principal teachers need to hear feedback from their teachers also. When teachers provide a principal with feedback it is usually done in a more informal manner, such as a discussion in the staff room and it focuses on what is needed in the school. It was noted that positive feedback and respect must work both ways.

Furthermore, one group contested principal feedback claiming that it was supportive of the top-down model. Many participants commented on the difference between the role of the principal and the role of the inspector and that there can be no cross over between the two. There was agreement that teachers and principals do not want a 'performance management system' to develop within schools. Additionally, it was stated that a principal is not, and should never be, an 'internal inspector'.

A principal's prior experience was also commented on. It was agreed that a principal should have experience teaching and lead by example. In order to do so they must be in touch with teachers and the realities of the classroom. However, several teachers pointed out that it is difficult to take advice from somebody who has been out of the classroom for a long period of time. According to the INTO survey, respondents agreed that the majority of principals (81%) are involved in leading teaching and learning in their schools. Comparisons were made with other educational systems; Finland, for example, has pulled back from Inspection because a lot of investment has gone into resourcing teaching and teachers and investing trust in teachers. This encourages

ownership of research and teaching and learning for the teacher. It also benefits the children but shows trust in teachers.

Lack of in-school management structures, poor financial incentives and workload were cited as impediments to career development. To many, the role of the principal teacher looks overwhelming. Perhaps not surprisingly, the majority of survey respondents (96%) agree that in-school leadership and management teams should be restored so as to provide promotional opportunities for teachers. Participants discussed the notion of training principals prior to appointment. Also, 41% of survey respondents agree that all principals should have experience in the role of deputy principal prior to appointment as principal. Interestingly, 40% disagree with this. Managing people is the focus of a principal and good interpersonal skills are vital. There are different forms of leadership styles adopted by principals throughout the country and it was generally agreed that approaches differ between rural and urban areas. One group noted that in smaller schools it is easier to adopt a more collaborative approach amongst staff whilst in larger schools administration can be more authoritarian.

Some participants discussed whether deputy principalships should be advertised externally or not. It was argued that teachers within a school have local knowledge and understanding of the school and its children. However, a counter argument claimed that the staff may not be able to supply a suitable person for the job and that someone from outside the school would be in a position to inject new energy and practice.

Accountability

Delegates were given the following results from the INTO survey:

> According to the INTO survey, 69% of respondents agree that, as a professional, they feel trusted by the general public to do a good job, while 21% disagree and 10% don't know.
>
> 82% of respondents find it difficult to meet the demands of paperwork and reporting.
>
> 85% of respondents agree that the number of reports that teachers have to complete is taking time away from quality teaching and learning.
>
> Only 24% agree that the board of management of their school is unaware of the work of the school.

The following questions were then considered by the discussion group:

- To whom are you accountable as a teacher or principal?
- For what are you accountable?
- How are you accountable?
- Where are the demands for paperwork and reporting coming from?
- To what extent do the current demands for paperwork and reporting contribute to the profession's accountability?

Teachers were in agreement that there is an over-emphasis on paperwork. This assertion supported the findings of the survey as 82% of respondents find it difficult to meet the demands of paperwork and reporting. Furthermore, it was reported that preparing notes and completing paperwork is seen to be more important than practice. Similarities were drawn between the education system in the UK and the Irish education system. One group claimed that, in the UK, 'if it isn't written down it didn't happen'. A growing fear amongst teachers is that the Irish education system is moving in the same direction. It was also noted that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the judgement of the teacher. A number of teachers remarked that we are accountable primarily to the pupils and the school community.

Inclusion

Delegates were given the following results from the INTO survey:

> According to the INTO survey, 76% of respondents agree that it is right that pupils with SEN are included in mainstream classes, while 9% disagree and 16% are unsure.
>
> 62% of respondents agree that inclusion is well-supported at class level, while 29% disagree.
>
> 74% of respondents agree that they find it a challenge to address the diversity of learning needs in their class, while 19% disagree. However, only 59% agree that they find it difficult to differentiate their lesson plans in response to the diverse learning needs in their classrooms, while 31% disagree.

The following questions were then considered by the discussion group:

- How can teachers be better supported in including children with SEN in their classrooms?
- What are the issues for teachers and principals in relation to responsibility and accountability for the education of children with SEN?

Participants reported that some children have needs beyond that which the mainstream classroom setting can provide. Teachers questioned a school's position in relation to refusing enrolment of pupils if there is overwhelming evidence to show that mainstream education would not be effective for the pupils in question. Furthermore, concerns were noted regarding children with severe special needs attending a mainstream primary school for eight years. Three quarters of survey respondents agree that they find it a challenge to address the diversity of learning needs in their classes. However, only 59% agree that they find it difficult to differentiate their lesson plans in response to the diverse learning needs in their classrooms. On a positive note, 62% of survey respondents agree that inclusion is well-supported at class level. Teachers were in agreement that children have the right to the best/most suitable education for their needs. Special schools can provide a very comprehensive, relevant curriculum tailored to children's needs but parents do not always make informed judgements. The new model for allocating teaching resources for students with special educational needs was also discussed. Many participants reported that they were seriously concerned about this model as it was deemed a 'cost-cutting exercise'. There was a general sense that schools would 'lose out' due to this model.

Parents

Delegates were given the following results from the INTO survey:

> According to the INTO survey, almost all respondents (97%) maintain frequent and regular communication with parents / carers as necessary. Only 14% of respondents find it difficult to report to parents on pupils' progress.
>
> A small majority of respondents (56%) consider it good practice to meet parents collectively, at the beginning of the year, to inform them of what their son/daughter will learn, while 28% disagree.
>
> Three quarters of respondents (75%) agree that their parents' association supports the work of the school, while 10% of respondents don't agree.

The following questions were then considered by the discussion group:

- How can schools reach out to all parents to include them in their children's learning?
- What role does homework have in home-school relationships?
- How can the teaching profession better engage with parents to improve the education system?
- How can schools encourage parents to become involved in the school community?

Communication with parents is vital. According to the INTO survey, an overwhelming majority (97%) of teachers maintain frequent and regular communication with parents/carers as necessary. The groups felt that schools have to keep up to date with modern communication. It was felt generally that communicating with parents now should involve use of school website, Twitter and Text-a-Parent. Caution was raised regarding use of Facebook pages due to the open nature of such a forum. Information nights/meeting, curriculum based meetings at the start of the year, Parent Teacher meetings, Parents' Associations and parent initiatives such as shared reading, maths week/science week, '*Big Book*' exposé, station teaching (such as Literacy Lift-Off) and trips to the library were also noted. These initiatives can be used to encourage parents to become more involved. *Class dojo* website was noted by one group as a forum for providing information for parents on their children's behaviour, instances of kindness etc. Where a home school liaison is in place, this can be an invaluable resource.

The general consensus was that homework serves the function of keeping parents informed of topics being covered in school. It encourages an involvement in their child's learning and progress. One group noted how homework is assigned in different countries. In Australia, homework is all given at the start of the week and children work through it at their own pace. In Holland, homework is only viewed as completion of work not finished in school. This approach could be adapted to the Irish setting. Another group noted that there is a perception that a school that has a policy of giving a lot of homework is perceived as being a 'good school'. The group also noted that homework can cause tension. Homework can also inform a teacher's understanding of a child's home life. Teachers were in agreement that children's home lives need to be taken into

account when assigning homework. Teachers need to take a child's home life into account if reprimanding the child for non-completion of homework.

In some instances, teachers need to foster increased communication with parents. Just over half (55%) of the survey respondents consider it good practice to meet with parents collectively at the beginning of the year to inform them of what their child will learn. A positive attitude to education needs to be developed. Teachers need to take into account the background of the parents that they are dealing with. Some parents may need support in helping their children with homework. 'Fraught working parents' is an issue in the current climate and teachers must be cognisant and reactive to this. The increase in parents from other countries was noted by one group. Intercultural days, food fairs etc. can be used to promote this link. The issue of Parents' Associations and fundraising was also discussed. It was largely agreed that parents should have a say in where the funds from fundraising go. The majority of survey respondents (75%) agree that their Parents' Association supports the work of the school.

It was generally felt that initiatives adopted by the school need to be tailored to the individual school. DEIS schools may need to run more curriculum workshops in order to enable parents to help their children with their school work. Where parents are in full time employment, communication and interaction need to be done in a way that most suit their lifestyle e.g. social media, text, adapting when Parent Teacher meeting are held. One group mentioned that having an open door policy in schools encourages parents to drop in but it was acknowledged that this is not suitable in every school environment. The lack of parental support in disadvantaged areas was noted.

Professionalism

Delegates were given the following results from the INTO survey:

> The Teaching Council argues that professional development is both a right and responsibility. The Teaching Council is currently developing a framework for teacher professional development.
>
> The vast majority of respondents to our survey agree that it is important that all teachers engage in professional development at least once a year (90%). The majority would also like to have more opportunities for professional development (74%), though 29% of teachers find engaging in CPD problematic for them.
>
> 87% of respondents would like more time to collaborate with their colleagues.

The following questions were then considered by the discussion group:

- What are teachers' (including principals') responsibilities in relation to professional development?
- What are their rights?
- How can the system support teacher collaboration and colleagiality?
- What should be in national framework for teacher professional development?

To encourage parental and collegial support, taking into account that the teacher is a trained professional, and parents are not necessarily in agreement with teacher observations or pupil achievement, the teacher needs access to quality CPD. 90% of survey respondents agree that it is important that all teacher should engage in professional development at least once a year, whilst 74% would like to have more opportunities for professional development. There was agreement that CPD needs to be locally available and school based. Teachers who engage in CPD should be reimbursed and provided with expenses. The Teaching Council and INTO should make a 'statement on teachers professionalism', and compare to doctors and solicitors.

Some participants felt that professional opinions of teachers often carry no weight. However, the survey results show that 69% of teachers agree that, as a professional, they feel trusted by the general public to do a good job. The use of Croke Park hours for teachers' professional development was also mentioned. According to our survey 87% of respondents would like more time to collaborate with colleagues. In relation to professional support, participants criticised the lack of external support. It was felt that there is a need for external agencies to provide teachers and principals with advice, support and guidance. One group commented that, unlike Sweden, there is no national system to support struggling teachers or principals and the PDST model is too narrow and curricular focused.

Pupil Assessment and Learning

Delegates were given the following results from the INTO survey:

> According to our survey, a small majority of teachers (54%) agree that they find it easy to include pupils in the assessment process, while 25% don't agree that it is easy.
>
> A majority of respondents (58%) agree that there is inadequate reporting on pupils' social and emotional development, while 27% disagree.
>
> 67% of respondents use Assessment for Learning (AfL) with their pupils, while 15% don't know. 75% would like more professional development in how to use AfL.
>
> 47% of respondents agree that it's important that schools send the results of standardised tests (in aggregate form) annually to the DES, 30% disagree and 23% are unsure.

The following questions were then considered by the discussion group:

- How can pupils be more involved in the assessment of their own learning?
- What are the benefits of standardised testing – at class level, at school level, at system level?
- What are the risks associated with reporting of standardised tests – to pupils, to parents, to the DES?

- How can teacher professional judgement be supported and developed?
- How easy or difficult is it to communicate to parents regarding their children's learning?

The professional responsibilities of a teacher and principal are inclusive of pupil assessment and learning. Teacher responsibility and pupil learning are inextricably linked. Teacher responsibilities in light of pupil assessment and learning include:

- Providing, in a safe environment, an ongoing continuum of experiences to assist pupils to develop into morally rounded individuals who are good/active citizens, independent learners, critical thinkers and are respectful. Interestingly, 58% of survey respondents agree that there is inadequate reporting on pupils' social and emotional development;

- Teaching in an appropriate context, taking into account child protection issues, individuality of pupil personalities and learning styles and talents, environment such as urban/rural/social deprivation, differentiation and inclusion of abilities through a continuum from academically gifted to special educational needs, under achievers, low achievers;

- Teaching a broad curriculum taking into account individual teacher competencies, expectations that each individual teacher has expertise in every aspect of the curriculum, quality teaching and learning is taking place;

- Meeting the challenges of the 21st Century, such as health issues like obesity, cyber bullying, achieving a work/life balance, managing a 'societal' environment (school) with pupils who are engaged in individualised pursuits (mobile devices) and managing religious formation in an ever increasing secular society.

In relation to pupil assessment, the survey results show that 54% of teachers find it easy to include pupils in the assessment process whilst 67% of teachers used Assessment for Learning (AfL) with their pupils. However, 75% would like more professional development in how to use AfL. Just under one third of survey respondents (30%) do not agree that it is important for schools to send in results of standardised tests whilst 47% agree with the practice.

Responsibility

Delegates were given the following results from the INTO survey:

> According to our survey, 90% of respondents are confident that through their teaching they are helping pupils to develop as responsible citizens.
>
> 86% of respondents agree that they are confident that they have the knowledge, skills and competencies to allow their pupils to experience a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum.
>
> Only 58% of respondents agree that they are confident that they support every pupil to reach his or her potential, 25% are unsure and 18% disagree.

The following questions were then considered by the discussion group:

- What are your professional responsibilities as a teacher / principal?

The principal teacher's responsibilities are underpinned by circulars and legislation. It was noted that there is no current, up-to-date job description for a principal teacher. Teachers are responsible to everybody including the principal teacher. Responsibility regarding special education is shared among the Learning Support team and does not rest solely with the mainstream class teacher. The professional responsibilities of teachers and principals were also discussed. According to the INTO survey, 90% of respondents are confident that through their teaching they are helping pupils to develop as responsible citizens. Further commentary on this topic is outlined in the previous section 'Pupil Assessment and Learning'. The role of the Board of Management was discussed and some participants felt that the twenty year system of voluntary boards needs to be overhauled. However, the survey reported that 24% of teachers agree that the board of management of their school is unaware of the work of the school.

School Evaluation

Delegates were given the following results from the INTO survey:

Teachers have mixed views on the benefits of WSE.

40% of respondents agree that taking part in WSE has served to increase standards in their school, while 33% are unsure and 27% disagree.

Respondents are more positive in relation to School Self-Evaluation (SSE), where 61% agree that taking part in SSE helps their school to improve teaching and learning. 22% disagree and 17% are unsure.

59% of respondents agree that the purpose of SSE is to increase the level of accountability of schools to the DES, though 17% disagree. 24% are unsure.

Just over half (51%) of respondents agree that teachers in their schools have responded positively to engaging in the SSE process while 27% disagree.

The following questions were then considered by the discussion group:

- What are the benefits of WSE, SSE, MLL and incidental visits from inspectors for the teacher, the pupils, the school and the system?
- How do the different forms of evaluations contribute to teacher accountability and responsibility?
- What role does data play in teaching and learning at school level?
- What role does data play at system level?

The survey results reported mixed views on the benefits of Whole School Evaluation (WSE) with 40% of respondents agreeing that taking part in WSE has served to increase standards in their school and 27% disagreeing. It was noted that WSEs encourage staff to focus on their work as individuals and as a whole staff. Planning improves in the school as a whole and WSE provides an external evaluation of the work of the school. Teachers should focus on the positives in the report. There was general agreement that "we are our own biggest critics" and that affirmation in school is quite rare. The post-WSE reflection was seen as beneficial for schools. The negatives included the feeling that WSE was very stressful for teachers. A number of delegates stated that they were 'putting on a show' for the inspectors and questioned the long-term benefits to the school. Teachers felt that there was a need for far greater consistency among the inspectors and a need for more positive feedback and advice.

Delegates felt that incidental visits gave a more realistic picture of the work of the school on a daily basis. Teachers are not put under as much pressure to put on a show and don't feel anxiety beforehand. Some teachers emphasised that inspectors must be realistic and fair in their assessment of the daily life of the school.

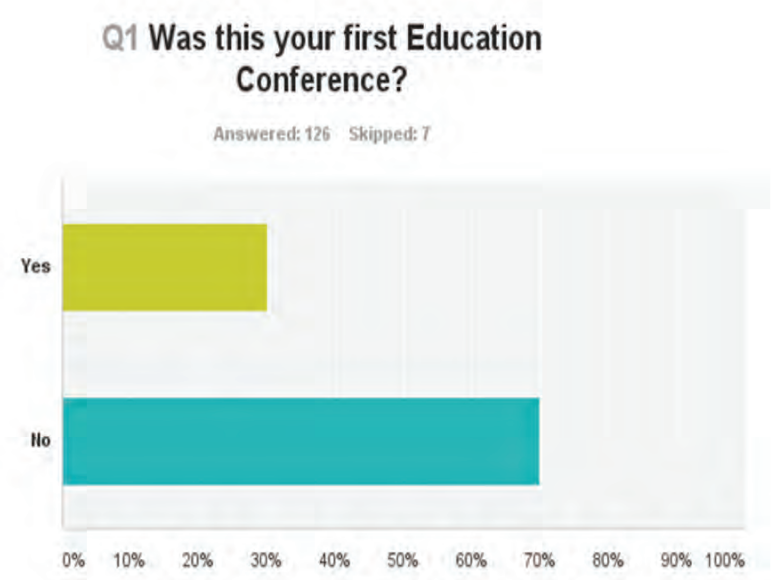
On the positive side it was felt that School Self Evaluation (SSE) gives schools a level of control over their workload and also helps schools to track their own progress. The survey results were also more positive in relation to SSE as 61% agreed that taking part in SSE helped their school to improve teaching and learning. Furthermore, 51% of respondents agreed that teachers in their schools have responded positively to engaging in the SSE process. However, it was argued that SSE results in schools 'ticking boxes' and the survey reported that teachers feel (59%) that the purpose of SSE is to increase the level of accountability of schools to the DES. The school acts as a learning community where targets are set and areas in need of improvement are identified. The focus on the whole staff encourages professional development and proper dialogue on the areas for improvement. Teacher feedback and self-reflection are seen as important aspects of SSE. One participant pointed out that self-reflection is more effective than external checking as it 'plays the long game'. This in turn leads to improved motivation in the school staff. SSE can lead to peer-group support and affirmation which help to build self confidence in staff members. On the negative side teachers complained of a lack of support in their attempts to implement SSE. One participant pointed out that they had no contact with an inspector for the last five years. Many delegates felt that the assessment tools can be complex and that CPD was necessary for all teachers for proper implementation of SSE. There was general agreement that it is very important to have concrete information on the pupils so that schools can track their own progress. It was emphasised that standardised test results should only be used for the reasons intended. One participant stated that data should inform practice but does not point to a 'quick fix'.

It was also pointed out that principals and staff must be aware that too much focus on an area of under-performance can lead to neglect of other areas of the curriculum. Many delegates questioned the notion of continued improvement. Teachers felt that the notion of continued improvement may be unrealistic when one is faced with a changing pupil cohort of varying levels of ability.

Appendix I

Conference Evaluation

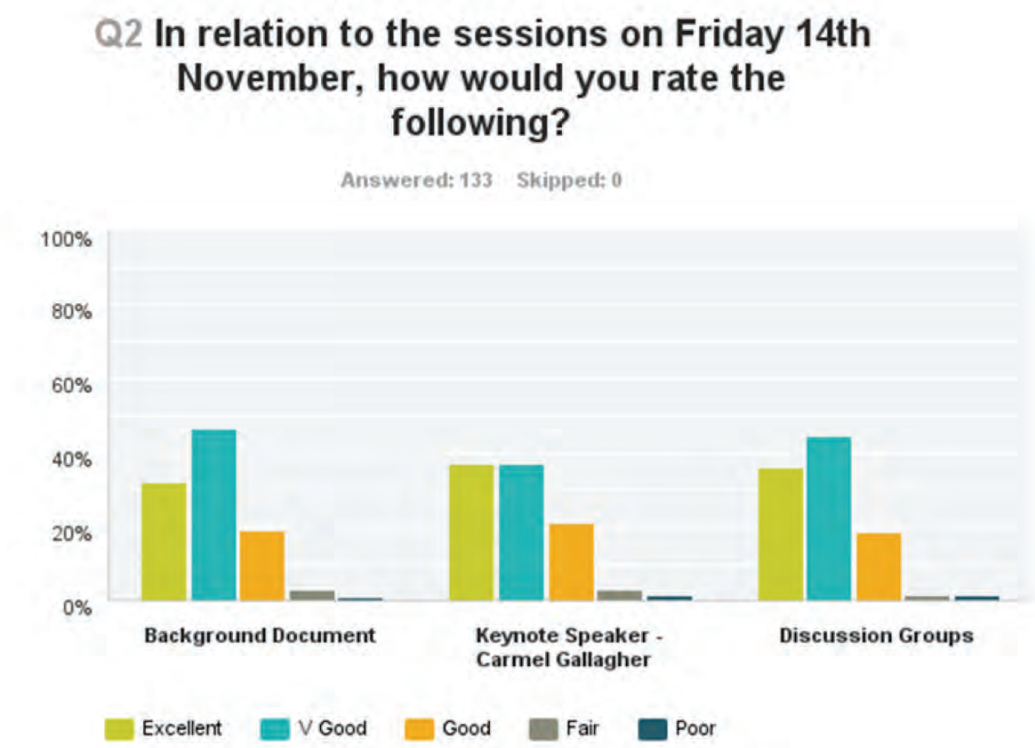
The 2014 INTO Consultative Conference on Education took place in the Armagh City Hotel, on Friday 14 and Saturday 15 November 2014. The theme of the Conference was 'Quality in Education' and there was a total of 340 attendees, which included registered delegates and national committee members. This year, evaluation forms were emailed to delegates after the conference and a total of 133 delegates logged on to complete the online survey.



Of those delegates who indicated whether they had attended an Education Conference previously, 30% were first time attendees and 70% had previously attended. The Conference had a starting time of 3.30pm which aimed to facilitate those teachers, particularly from Northern Ireland, who had to be in school that day. There is no substitute cover for delegates attending the Conference.

The Conference was opened by INTO President, Seán McMahon, who welcomed delegates and outlined the conference timetable. Dympna Mulkerrins, Chairperson of the Education Committee, then summarised the work of the Committee and encouraged all members to consider applying to be a member of the Committee, when opportunities arose. Deirbhile Nic Craith, Director of Education & Research, outlined the growth in demand for accountability in the education sector, the national and international impetus for quality through internal and external evaluation, and the proposed new model for supporting pupils with special educational needs. All speakers referred to the background document which had been circulated to all delegates prior to the conference. This document was rated as either 'excellent' or 'very good' by 79% of respondents.

Dr Carmel Gallagher, General Teaching Council Northern Ireland, made a keynote presentation on *'Promoting quality teaching; Nourishing teacher quality'*. She outlined the characteristics of being a professional; noted that professional development was an intrinsic part of this and argued that in order to address accountability, a model was needed that was informed by data, trusts professionals and focuses on capacity building, systemic empowerment and autonomous learners. This presentation was rated by 74% of delegates as being either 'excellent' or 'very good'



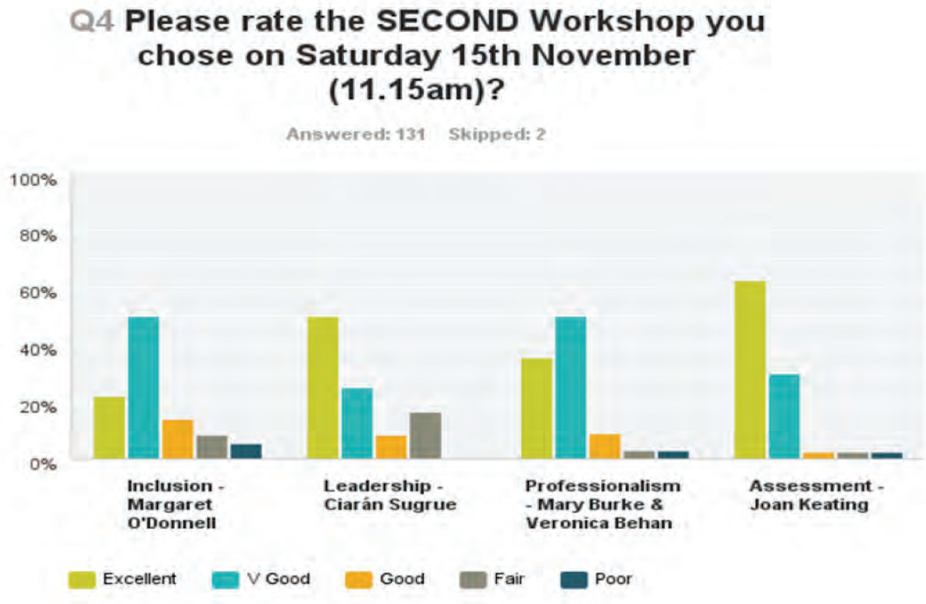
Delegates then moved to their separate discussion groups to consider a number of interesting results that had emerged from a survey that had been conducted prior to the conference on the topic of 'Quality in Education'. These groups are always lively and usually prove to be one of the most popular aspects of the conference. This year was no different, with 80% of respondents rating the opportunity for discussion as either 'excellent' or 'very good'.

Conference delegates then reconvened in the main hall for an address by General Secretary, Sheila Nunan. Sheila presented the Seamus Heaney award for poetry in both English and Irish to the two winners – Alison Bourke and Marie Whelton. Both winners read their respective poems to a very appreciative audience.

On Saturday morning delegates went to the first of their two workshops. This year, in response to requests from attendees at previous conferences, the delegates were not assigned to specific workshops prior to the conference, rather could choose which workshop they wanted to attend. This worked well, and there was good attendance at all workshops. The themes were as follows:

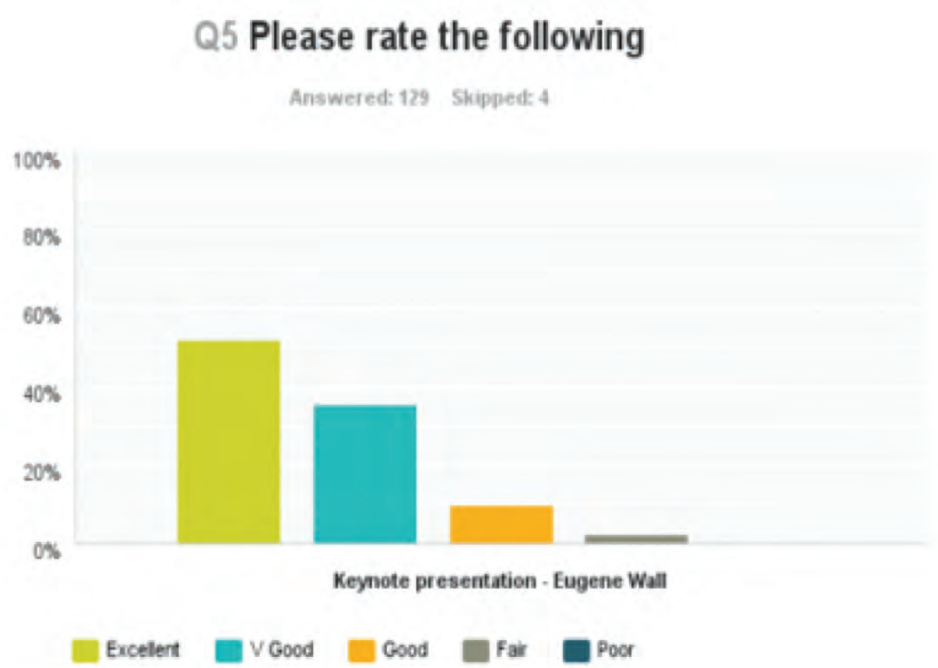
Theme of Workshop:	**Presenter:**
Inclusion	*Margaret O'Donnell (St Pats)*
Leadership	*Ciarán Sugrue (UCD)*
Pupil learning & Assessment	*Joan Keating (SALF)*
Professionalism	*Mary Burke and Veronica Behan (NIPT)*

The response to the workshop presentations was very positive (see charts below).



Final Session

The final session on Saturday was a keynote presentation by Prof. Eugene Wall, Mary Immaculate College, titled 'De-testing Accountability'. He questioned whether high-stakes testing was necessary to raise educational standards and discussed the challenges Ireland faces in addressing the accountability agenda. This presentation was very well received, with 88% of delegates rating it as either 'excellent' or 'very good.



Conclusion

Feedback from those delegates that filled out the evaluation form online suggests that the conference was very successful. The keynote speakers and workshop presenters were praised consistently.

This year the conference was held in Northern Ireland, and while the hotel itself and its conference facilities received praise from delegates, those who did not secure accommodation in the conference venue experienced a certain amount of difficulty sourcing accommodation. There was a festival taking place in Armagh the same weekend, and there was a scarcity of local accommodation.

When asked for suggestions to improve the conference, delegates were clear that active learning, group work and workshop-style presentations were the preferred option. Some complained about 'lecture-style' presentations. The change this year allowing delegates to choose their own workshops was appreciated and some suggested that a third workshop opportunity could be added. More time for discussion groups was also suggested as teachers consistently enjoy the opportunity for professional discussion and debate.

Some Comments from Delegates

- I really felt my voice was head and was noted by the facilitators. I usually go to INTO Congress, but after the Education Conference, I will give that my priority.

- I felt I could have gotten the same learning from a podcast or written document. I would like more chances for active learning opportunities that I can use to directly impact my day-to-day work.

- For me it was an excellent conference – inspirational and stimulating

- It was obvious a huge amount of work was put in behind the scenes and I was very grateful to have had the opportunity to attend.

- Don't take as long to go up North again!

- It is obvious a lot of preparatory work goes into the conference. I appreciate the work of the Education Committee in this regard.

- Great to be able to avail of the opportunity to learn and socialise – thank you to the INTO for providing that.

- Very professionally run – well done to all.

Appendix II

Discussion Group Questions

Accountability

According to our survey, 69% of respondents agree that, as a professional, they feel trusted by the general public to do a good job, while 21% disagree and 10% don't know.

82% of respondents find it difficult to meet the demands of paperwork and reporting.

85% of respondents agree that the number of reports that teachers have to complete is taking time away from quality teaching and learning.

Only 24% agree that the board of management of their school is unaware of the work of the school.

- **To whom are you accountable as a teacher or principal?**
- **For what are you accountable?**
- **How are you accountable?**
- **Where are the demands for paperwork and reporting coming from?**
- **To what extent do the current demands for paperwork and reporting contribute to the profession's accountability?**

Inclusion

According to our survey, 76% of respondents agree that it is right that pupils with SEN are included in mainstream classes, while 9% disagree and 16% are unsure.
62% of respondents agree that inclusion is well-supported at class level, while 29% disagree.
74% of respondents agree that they find it a challenge to address the diversity of learning needs in their class, while 19% disagree. However, only 59% agree that they find it difficult to differentiate their lesson plans in response to the diverse learning needs in their classrooms, while 31% disagree.

- **How can teachers be better supported in including children with SEN in their classrooms?**
- **What are the issues for teachers and principals in relation to responsibility and accountability for the education of children with SEN?**

Parents

According to our survey, almost all respondents (97%) maintain frequent and regular communication with parents / carers as necessary. Only 14% of respondents find it difficult to report to parents on pupils' progress.

A small majority of respondents (56%) consider it good practice to meet parents collectively, at the beginning of the year, to inform them of what their son/daughter will learn, while 28% disagree.

Three quarters of respondents (75%) agree that their parents' association supports the work of the school, while 10% of respondents don't agree.

- **How can schools reach out to all parents to include them in their children's learning?**
- **What role does homework have in home-school relationships?**
- **How can the teaching profession better engage with parents to improve the education system?**
- **How can schools encourage parents to become involved in the school community?**

Principals and Leadership

According to our survey respondents agree that the majority of principals (81%) are involved in leading teaching and learning in their schools -14% disagree.

41%of respondents agree that all principals should have experience in the role of deputy principal prior to appointment as principal, while 40% disagree. 19% are unsure.

Perhaps not surprisingly, 96% of respondents agree that in-school leadership and management teams should be restored so as to provide promotional opportunities for teachers, while 79% agreed that all schools should have in-school leadership teams to whom the principal could delegate leadership roles and responsibilities.

Only 34% of respondents agreed that the principal in their school gives feedback to teachers regarding their teaching, while 53% disagreed. 14% were unsure.

- **What role should principals have in giving feedback to teachers on their teaching?**
- **What role do teachers have in giving feedback to their principals?**
- **What is the best from of preparation for principalship?**
- **What is the best form of in-school leadership and management for our schools?**

Professionalism

The Teaching Council argues that professional development is both a right and responsibility. The Teaching Council is currently developing a framework for teacher professional development.

The vast majority of respondents to our survey agree that it is important that all teachers engage in professional development at least once a year (90%). The majority would also like to have more opportunities for professional development (74%), though 29% of teachers find engaging in CPD problematic for them.

87% of respondents would like more time to collaborate with their colleagues.

- **What are teachers' (including principals') responsibilities in relation to professional development?**
- **What are their rights?**
- **How can the system support teacher collaboration and colleagiality?**
- **What should be in national framework for teacher professional development?**

Pupil Assessment and Learning

According to our survey, a small majority of teachers (54%) agree that they find it easy to include pupils in the assessment process, while 25% don't agree that it is easy.

A majority of respondents (58%) agree that there is inadequate reporting on pupils' social and emotional development, while 27% disagree.

67% of respondents use Assessment for Learning (AfL) with their pupils, while 15% don't know. 75% would like more professional development in how to use AfL.

47% of respondents agree that it's important that schools send the results of standardised tests (in aggregate form) annually to the DES, 30% disagree and 23% are unsure.

- **How can pupils be more involved in the assessment of their own learning?**
- **What are the benefits of standardised testing – at class level, at school level, at system level?**
- **What are the risks associated with reporting of standardised tests – to pupils, to parents, to the DES?**
- **How can teacher professional judgement be supported and developed?**
- **How easy or difficult is it to communicate to parents regarding their children's learning?**

Responsibility

According to our survey, 90% of respondents are confident that through their teaching they are helping pupils to develop as responsible citizens.

86% of respondents agree that they are confident that they have the knowledge, skills and competencies to allow their pupils to experience a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum.

Only 58% of respondents agree that they are confident that they support every pupil to reach his or her potential, 25% are unsure and 18% disagree.

- **What are your professional responsibilities as a teacher / principal?**

School Evaluation

Teachers have mixed views on the benefits of WSE.
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Respondents are more positive in relation to School Self-Evaluation (SSE), where 61% agree that taking part in SSE helps their school to improve teaching and learning. 22% disagree and 17% are unsure.

59% of respondents agree that the purpose of SSE is to increase the level of accountability of schools to the DES, though 17% disagree. 24% are unsure.
Just over half (51%) of respondents agree that teachers in their schools have responded positively to engaging in the SSE process while 27% disagree.

- **What are the benefits of WSE, SSE, MLL and incidental visits from inspectors for the teacher, the pupils, the school and the system?**
- **How do the different forms of evaluations contribute to teacher accountability and responsibility?**
- **What role does Data play in teaching and learning at school level?**
- **What role does data play at system level?**