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Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

Workload, Stress and Resilience of Primary Teachers:

Report of a Survey of INTO members

Final Report: September, 2015

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Acknowledgements

Overview

The relevant background research and the main findings of the survey on workload stress are presented below. In Section 1, the background literature on stress and resilience of teachers is examined, while the second section describes the consultation with INTO members and the education committee which resulted in the specific features contained in the questionnaire. The process of administration of the questionnaire is set out in the third section. Section 4 outlines the main results while the fifth section of this report looks at the main conclusions and implications. Finally, section 6 puts forward recommendations based on the findings of the research.

Terms of Reference of Research

The terms of reference of the research reported below are based on a resolution adopted at Congress, 2014, which called on the Central Executive Committee of the INTO, to carry out research as follows:

> 'To research and survey the membership on all aspects of workload, expectations and work-related stress and report back to Congress 2015 with the findings'

> 'Explore in the context of this research whether, given the ever-increasing performance demands for the planning and teaching of all curricular subjects, the time has come for a radical changes in the number of subjects a primary teacher is expected to assume responsibility for'.

1. Background and international research

The focus of the review of the relevant background work is on the following questions: What is known about the prevalence of stress among teachers? What are the main causes of stress experienced by teachers? What are the consequences of stress? How can resilience be promoted?

1.1 Prevalence of Stress

Kyriacou (2001) reviewed the available literature on teacher stress and concluded that about one quarter of teachers conceded that teaching was 'very or extremely stressful', it remains the case that the precise figure is dependent on the framing of the question, on the age/gender of the teachers and on the stage of their careers. Furthermore, as will be evident from an overview of research, there are a great many potentially stressful

events in any day in teaching including what would normally be categorised as 'little things' (Kitching et al., 2009).

A particularly valuable insight emerges from the work of Huberman (1993) who studied Swiss teachers with different lengths of experience. His work showed that teachers at each stage developed worries and self-doubt. What was crucial was whether and how they resolved these tensions. The implication of Huberman's work is that rather than identifying a particular group of teachers who are overwhelmed, it is more appropriate to examine the conditions that give rise to stress with a view to identifying the particular features that are especially problematic.

1.2   Effects of Stress

Research evidence suggests that pupils of teachers with high job satisfaction and lower stress are more likely to perform better academically than their peers whose teachers are not able to sustain their commitment (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, & Gu, 2007). This finding is in line with outcomes of several studies that have shown that a positive classroom atmosphere not only influences social and emotional development of children but also enhances achievement. A meta-analysis of 213 evaluations by Durlak et al., (2011) showed that students in classrooms with positive atmosphere demonstrated substantially higher social and emotional skills, positive social behaviours and also showed lower conduct problems and lower levels of emotional distress, than was the case in classrooms with a less positive atmosphere. Furthermore the academic performance of these children was also improved as a result of the positive classroom atmosphere. In fact, the impact was as great as might be expected if academic skills was the sole target. There is also evidence that teachers experiencing high job satisfaction and lower stress levels create a climate that is conducive to the development and maintenance of a safe, supportive learning environment where children feel cared for and respected. This in turn results in high performance expectations, commitment to the academic success of all students, and openness to parental and community-involvement (Greenberg, 2006).

There is substantial evidence on how teacher stress influences factors associated with school achievement. A major feature centres on instructional time and specifically how stressful events can result in interference and requires extra work on behalf of teachers. There is also evidence that teacher work stress can impact on children's liking for school; in turn the research strongly indicates that the extent to which children like school is critical for their success. The effect of children's liking for school and especially their liking for teachers has been demonstrated in a meta-analysis which showed a strong effect even after controlling for social background. Roorda et al., (2011) used a meta-analytic approach to explore the association between affective dimensions of the teacher-student relationship and student engagement as well as achievement in almost

100 studies with students from preschool to high school, involving over 130,000 students. The results of the analysis led the authors to conclude that liking for school and teachers had a strong beneficial effect on engagement with school and also had a positive impact on achievement. It was also of interest that the effect of the relationship was relatively stronger in the case of students with learning difficulties. 3

1.3 Causes of Stress

In looking at the causes of stress among teachers, it seems appropriate to examine different levels of influence. Some influences are international in scope, some are national, others are local in the sense that they arise from the school community and finally some influences are immediate in the sense that they concern classrooms and pupils.

Some of the influences of teachers' lives (and by implication in stress) are **international** in the sense that they relate to movements and policies that are similar in many countries. For example, the drive for standards and accountability across countries is partly due to international comparisons deriving from PISA and TIMMS and has a profound impact on teachers in all countries involved in these studies. The problem is that teachers can be caught in the conflict of trying to serve in an emotionally challenging context which is driven by the policy demands of results-driven agendas. Specifically, a major problem comes about because the success of an education system and the success of teachers in each country are measured by the relative position of that country on these international comparisons.

In addition, **national** policies are a major influence on the work experiences of teachers. These policies demand higher standards and increased levels of accountability, requiring schools to have ever increasing higher standards of teaching, learning and achievement. Frequent national policy changes are also among the challenges with which teachers are confronted (Day & Gu, 2014). At a macro level, the extent to which policy changes and demands causes stress and anxiety in teachers' lives has long been the focus of study. In a study exploring teacher stress in primary schools, it emerged that over one quarter of the teachers reported that the main source of stress identified was the changing education policies of the government (Kyricacou & Chien, 2004). Other studies show that teacher dissatisfaction was especially associated with aspects of national policies (e.g., Ololube, 2005).

Several studies on teacher stress focus on **school** factors. Some work has shown that different kinds of school (privately managed vs public schools) has an impact on stress levels. There is also evidence which suggests that the school socio-economic location and environment affect teachers' stress in their working lives (Stoll & Louis, 2007). It is

especially noteworthy that some interventions to improve school climate and teacher–student relations in schools, particularly larger schools in disadvantaged communities, were found to reduce stress levels and to increase teachers' job satisfaction (OECD, 2009).

In addition to school type and location, workplace conditions such as administrative control, teaching competence and organisational culture have an impact on teacher stress (Ma & MacMillan, 1999). Administrative support and teacher autonomy (their sense of control over school policies and procedures) were identified by Perie and Baker (1997) as critical in job satisfaction and teachers' stress reduction; the more favourable the working conditions were, the higher were the satisfaction scores. Similarly a study of primary teachers examined the effects of teachers' perception of the school context, especially supervisory support, time pressure, relations with parents, and autonomy on stressful outcomes including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2009). They found that that teachers' lack of job satisfaction in the school context was directly related to emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment. Other research has shown that school conditions are likely to have significant consequences for the retention of teachers (Crossman & Harris, 2006). There is also evidence that school conditions that support and enable teachers to manage the interactions between work and life, contribute to teacher retention (Day et al., 2007).

The immediate effects of **classroom experiences** are a major factor in workload stress**.** The increasing challenge of pupils' disruptive classroom behaviour is an influence in such experience. In a survey of teachers in England, nearly 40% of teachers of the 1,000 questioned had considered leaving the profession because of disruptive pupil behaviour. The impact of what has been called the 'screen culture' of children and young people has resulted in changes in the social dynamics of the teacher–learner relationship in the classroom (Greenway et al., 2003). Teaching in England in the twenty-first century has been rated as one of the most stressful professions. The problem is especially pressing among beginning teachers, with an estimated 30–50% dropout rates among teachers within five years of qualification in England (Burghes et al., 2009).

The research suggests that a major factor in workload stress is the problematic nature of **time and time shortage** (Brunetti, 2006). This is especially the case when a variety of factors interfere with the time that is intended for teaching. Among the factors emerging as important are discipline problems, interruptions, extracurricular activities and excessive paperwork. A further problem is that there is no simple strategy to balance the various demands so that teachers are left to make their own decisions on how to cope – a situation that can in turn increase workload stress (Castro et al., 2010).

1.4 How does workload stress lead to burnout?

Burnout is important because it has been shown to be associated with a range of psychological outcomes including lower productivity, withdrawal, negative attitudes and lowering of (decreasing) well-being in a variety of occupations. The question arises as to what are the precursors of burnout among teachers and which factors are especially important in linking workload stress and burnout. In the extant research a major influence is the accumulation of workload-related stressful experiences (Day et al., 2007). When there is no opportunity to 'bounce back' and where there is a constant build-up of adverse events, burnout is more likely.

There is also evidence that the fit between the stressed individual and the experiences that he/she encounters is a more potent factor in accounting for the onset of burnout than is either in isolation (Rubino et al., 2009). In other words, the interplay between the person and the environment or the misfit or level of congruence between the two is important in predicting burnout.

There is also evidence that role ambiguity is likely to be associated with burnout. Role ambiguity is a multi-dimensional concept involving performance criteria (How will my work be judged?), method of working (how am I supposed to complete the job assigned to me?), and time scheduling (how much time should I spend on these tasks and in what order should they be completed?). There are a variety of ways in which role ambiguity might be associated with burnout. For example, if teachers do not understand their role, they are likely to spend time and energy seeking this and the subsequent frustration may lead to emotional exhaustion (Fernet et al., 2008).

1.5 What is the Importance of Resilience in Workload Stress?

The concept of resilience came to prominence in the field of developmental psychology in an effort to understand high-risk populations, especially at risk children and youth who managed to thrive despite adverse conditions (Goldstein & Brooks, 2006). In recent times, research has focused on teacher resilience in order to understand teachers' job satisfaction and motivation (Kitching, Morgan, & O'Leary, 2009) and teacher burnout and stress (e.g. Howard & Johnson, 2004). Teacher resilience was originally conceived as relying on personal attributes only, which reflected an ability 'to bounce back' from an adverse situation. However, current research points to the dynamic nature of resilience (Day et al., 2007) and suggests that resilience itself results from the interaction between psychological, behavioural and cognitive aspects of functioning as well as emotional regulation. There is now a consensus that the processes involved in resilience are far more complex than specific internal traits or assets.

A number of recent studies have examined the factors that discriminate between resilient teachers and those who quit teaching. For example, Hong's (2012) study explored factors such as values, self-efficacy, beliefs and emotional factors to ascertain differences between leavers and stayers. Findings from the study reveal that despite similar interest in working as a teacher, leavers showed weaker self-efficacy beliefs than stayers, when presented with challenging circumstances. In addition, leavers held beliefs that imposed heavy burdens on themselves with respect to student achievement which may have created stress and emotional burnout. Unlike leavers, stayers often reported on effective strategies - such as setting boundaries in their relationships with students - that they had developed to prevent them from being burned out (Hong, 2012).

2. Development of Questionnaire

A steering group consisting of a member from each of the INTO National Committees was established to plan and oversee the research project. Five formal planning meetings were held between September and November 2014, to plan the research project. One of these meetings involved a discussion at the joint national committee meeting in Belfast in September 2014. A meeting was also held during the INTO Education conference in Armagh in November 2014. These meetings were guided by the Congress motion and focused on issues related to workload, work-related stress and a range of factors that impinge on workload including expectations, curricular change and demands of planning and policy changes.

In each meeting, the chairperson and researcher explained that the purpose of the meeting was to explore the views of members relating to the issues that were central to the Congress motion. For four of the sessions an early draft had been prepared and a brief overview of the extant research, including international research on teacher stress, was presented. The participants at the meetings were then invited to suggest possible areas to be included in the questionnaire and to indicate whether there were particular groups of teachers for whom the issue of workload stress was especially pertinent. An overview of some of the issues that were raised is presented below. These are not presented in detail since the views expressed were incorporated into the final versions of the questionnaire.

2.1 Topics and Issues Emerging

The following are among the most important of the topics raised in these planning meetings:

- **Changes in curriculum, policy and practice**
  A general theme emerging in all of the discussions was that while change in some respects may be necessary, the implications are almost always an increased workload for teachers. While changes may be spelled out the actual implementation is the responsibility of teachers, a responsibility that includes planning and monitoring the extent to which the relevant changes have taken place.

- **Greater demands on a variety of matters**
  The changes that have been required are not only in curricular areas (literacy and numeracy) but also include yard-duty, results of standardised tests and demands to solve problems of concern in society.

- **Uncertainty is a major issue**
  Changes in curriculum policy and practice are required to happen sometimes but without adequate supports or professional development. This lack of support leaves a major gap and creates an uncertainty that is not only unhelpful from an organisational viewpoint but is also stressful for teachers.

- **Demands are being made at a time when conditions are more difficult**
  These conditions include less job mobility as well as the challenge for many teachers of finding regular employment.

- **Rapid implementation of initiatives**
  Various initiatives launched in recent years have been followed by further initiatives (sometimes similar to one in place and sometimes not) so that there is little time for teachers to adjust to the situation created by the original ideas.

- **Relationships of schools with community and agencies**
  Schools are not isolated organisations today and are required to liaise with various organisations in the community or in the state/semi-state sector. While cultivating such relationships may be desirable, the demands on teachers' time and effort are quite considerable.

- **Requirements of Policies**
  One of the most demanding areas for teachers is the requirement to develop policies in relation to a variety of matters (e.g. child protection, bullying, special educational provision). In many cases, the expectation to develop policies is accompanied by an expectation to record and monitor the implementation of the drafted policies.

- **General issue of administration**
  One of the challenges arising from new policies is the requirement to develop detailed policies and to record and keep details of their impact and implementation. Thus, new policies and initiatives created major additional administrative demands on the school and especially on the principal teacher.

- **Management of specific issues and developments**
  A number of specific matters have come to the fore in recent times requiring teachers' attention. These matters include planning for school buildings, administrative issues associated with the redeployment panel and the Droichead programme to cater for newly qualified teachers.

- **Involvement with other Professionals**
  There is an increased involvement of other professionals in primary schools with consequent demands. For example, school psychologists devise plans for behaviour modification in the case of children with emotional-behavioural difficulties, resulting in a major commitment of time, effort and expertise for those teachers who will implement the programme.

- **Differences in required forms of implementation**
  The implementation of the practices and policies that are required are the responsibility of the class teachers and the principal teachers at school level. The overall monitoring of policies and practices at system level is the responsibility the local inspector. However, of concern to teachers are the individual differences between inspectors in relation to the detail required and the form in which the evidence for implementation is sought.

- **Portrayal of schools in research and media**
  Teachers have concerns regarding the way in which schools are portrayed in research findings and especially the way in which some media accounts exaggerated features of such research findings.

- **Effects of workplace stress on some groups**
  While it was acknowledged that all teachers were affected by the changes discussed above, there was particular concern about some teachers, notably principal teachers and newly qualified teachers.

2.2. Questionnaire in Final Format

A draft of the questionnaire was circulated to the organizing committee for comment and a second version was then distributed to members based on their comments and feedback. A final version, which is outlined in Appendix 1, was then drafted.

The questionnaire consisted of nine sections. Sections one, two and three were concerned with the teacher (respondent's) profile (section 1), with the school profile (section 2) and the class profile (section 3). The next section asked about changes in teaching, specifically the extent to which teaching has become more stressful, trying, hectic and/or enjoyable over the recent years, while the fifth section was concerned with various factors that may have made teaching more or less challenging. These included the issues discussed above - curriculum changes, organizational influences and changes relating to employment such as job mobility.

Section six of the questionnaire focused on the perceived changes around the climate of teaching. Included here were additional administrative duties, declining promotional opportunities and increasing micro-management by the DES. In the next section, the respondents were asked about the impact of research reports (including international studies) that address issues about standards in Irish schools and how they impact on morale. These included reports on standards of literacy, on teaching performance in schools and media coverage of research reports.

The final two sections of the questionnaire were concerned with ways of enhancing job satisfaction in schools. One of the sections focused on national issues like less requirement to document certain school activities, more help with planning in school and enhanced policies to protect teacher welfare. The participants were also asked finally, about ways in which job satisfaction might be enhanced at local level. Included was a suggestion that schools might be able to prioritize policies, better funding for classroom resources and better support for children with special needs.

All sections of the questionnaire were in a structured format that required the respondent to 'tick' the appropriate choice. Sections four to nine involved a five choice option for each item, of which two were positive, two were negative and one was a mid-point neutral option. Sections five to nine also included an open-ended invitation for respondents to comment on any of the issues featured in the section that were relevant to them or on any other issues besides those addressed.

3.   Results

3.1   How Stressful has Teaching Become?

In the first substantive section of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked how their work had changed in the last five years (or since they began to teaching) with respect to nine features, including both challenging aspects (stressful, demanding) and positive aspects (enjoyable, worthwhile). As can be seen in Table 1, about 90% of the teachers took the view that teaching had become more/much more stressful, demanding, challenging and hectic. The results with regard to the positive aspects of teaching are interesting in the sense that around half the teachers thought their work had remained about the same with respect to being satisfying, enjoyable, rewarding and worthwhile.

This pattern of results suggests that without doubt the dominant view is that teaching has become more stressful in the last few years. It is especially noteworthy that the 'demanding' dimension got the very highest endorsement. Not even one respondent said that the job was less demanding than in earlier times. However, it is interesting that for most teachers these features do not detract from their job satisfaction and their view that teaching is worthwhile.

Table 1: How Teaching has Changed

	More/Much More	About the same	Less/much Less
Stressful	87.9	10.9	1.2
Demanding	93.4	6.6	0.0
Challenging	88.2	10.6	1.2
Hectic	91.5	7.3	1.2
Trying	77.1	19.9	3.0
Satisfying	19.2	46.4	34.4
Enjoyable	17.5	45.0	37.5
Rewarding	20.9	47.0	32.1
Worthwhile	22.5	56.1	21.4

Additional comments

Just twenty of the participants made comments regarding stress and/or job satisfaction in the open-ended section following these ratings. The most frequent comments

concerned the ways in which the teachers were experiencing problems in maintaining the expected high standard while being required to take on additional areas of learning and responsibility. One observation was: *'the additional educational initiatives put forward in recent years are not consistent with all that is required in the classroom and the problem of fitting all into a day's work, while at the same time maintaining high standards. The new initiatives are not replacing others but are additional to what is already there'*

Some contributions emphasized how new ideas have caused a loss of focus together with the way that teachers feel they have little choice. *'The biggest problem is that teaching has become dominantly an administrative role. The result is a loss of focus on what is central to teaching. Acts and circulars are coming our way including some that are very important like inclusion and equality but without proper inservice, remuneration or reduced class size. There is substantial space for unhappiness and stress and for mistakes to be made. We are in a very dangerous line of fire and there is no way for us to move'*.

Some teachers mentioned their efforts to maintain their job satisfaction in the face of the demands, *'While each day brings something good to come away with, the amount of pressure from admin work makes it very difficult to teach all of the curriculum given the demands that are made on us'*.

Responses of different groups of teachers

Table 1a shows the different pattern of responses regarding stress related to position in school, experience of teaching and teaching in a multi-grade class. A breakdown of gender differences is also shown. In each case the percentage is shown for those who endorsed that teaching has become 'much more stressful' or 'much more demanding'.

There are quite large differences between the respondents that were related to their position in schools. Just half of the class teachers thought that teaching had become much more stressful while nearly three-quarters of principals took that view. A greater number of learning support/resource teachers reported that teaching had become more stressful than had class teachers but a lesser number than principal teachers. The pattern of results in relation to teaching becoming much more demanding are similar, while taking into account the much higher overall percentage of respondents who endorsed this view. It is especially striking that 87.9% of principals took the view that teaching had become much more demanding in the last five years; in fact not one principal thought that the job was about the same or less demanding.

An interesting pattern emerges in relation to stress and years of teaching experience. For the specific items on stress and changed demands the picture is similar. In each

case, teachers who were relatively new to the system tended to be less inclined to report that teaching had more demanding or stressful in the last five years. Furthermore, there was a slight decline in the percentage who thought teaching had become more demanding/stressful for those with 25 years or more experience. However, what is especially noteworthy is that teachers with 16-25 years experience were more likely than other group to take the view that the job had come more stressful/demanding. As can be seen from the table, 90% of the respondents in this category expressed the view that teaching had become much more demanding over the last five years.

Table 1a also shows a comparison between respondents who taught in multi-grade classes and those who taught in conventional single grade classes. Those teachers in multi-grade classes were more likely to indicate that their work had become much more stressful and demanding than was the case with teachers in a single-grade situation. This was especially the case with regard to stress.

Table 1a: How Teaching has Change for Different Groups
% Increase

	Class Teacher	Principal	Learning Support / Resource
Stressful	50.0	72.7	58.0
Demanding	60.1	87.9	73.9
Challenging	88.2	10.6	1.2

From Table 1 it was evident that the majority of teachers took the view that teaching was still rewarding/worthwhile for them. In fact, over 20% of respondents took the view that teaching had become more rewarding over the recent years and close to half of the respondents took the view that the job 'remained the same' on these dimensions. It is important to see whether these indicators of job satisfaction are different for people in different positions in schools and also for teachers with differing length of experience.

Table 1b shows the percentage of teachers in different positions and with varying experience who indicated that teaching had become less rewarding as well as those who thought that their work had become less worthwhile. What is striking about the results emerging in this table is that respondents' position in school is related to their views on job satisfaction while there is no clear pattern with regard to their length of experience. Just 43.9% of principals thought that their work had become less/much less rewarding while for class teachers and learning support/resource teachers the number is

substantially lower than this. In the case of respondents' perceptions of teaching becoming less worthwhile, the overall numbers are lower (as implied in Table 1) but the difference between principals and the other two groups of teachers is quite substantial. While there are some differences associated with length of experience, the differences between the respondent groups are not substantial and no clear pattern emerges.

Table 1b: Changes in Job Satisfaction
(Rewarding: Percentage Indicating Less / Much Less Rewarding)

	Class Teacher	Principal	Learning Support / Resource
	30.1	43.9	31.5
Experience <6	**6-15 Years**	**16-25 years**	**<25 years**
35.0	29.6	32.8	32.6

(Worthwhile: Percent Indicating Less/Much Less Worthwhile)

	Class Teacher	Principal	Learning Support / Resource
	19.3	33.5	17.5
Experience <6	**6-15 Years**	**16-25 years**	**<25 years**
12.7	21.7	30.4	23.0

Implications for Stress and Job Satisfaction

With regard to the main research question at the outset, there is absolutely no doubt that in the perception and experiences of these teacher-respondents, teaching has indeed become more stressful over the recent years. One of the themes emerging in the additional comments is that the additional requirements for teachers resulted in a tension between the effort to satisfy new demands and the critical importance of maintaining high standards.

It is also clear that for the majority of teachers, job satisfaction remains relatively high. Furthermore, it is evident that teachers take the view that it is crucial to find teaching worthwhile and rewarding – an outcome that may reflect their original motivation in becoming a teacher. What is of concern is the finding that so many principals take the

view that teaching has become less rewarding or much less rewarding over the last five years. The difference between principals and teachers in other roles is quite striking. This issue will be examined below in relation to the causes of stress.

3.2   Factors making teaching more challenging

When teachers were asked to identify the factors that have made teaching more challenging in the last five years or since they began teaching, it is interesting that two administrative issues are rated as contributing most to this change. These issues included the greater need for documentation related to policies and practices and the related matter of the demand for school improvement plans. It is also noteworthy that the demands on schools to solve problems that were of concern to society was thought by more 90% of respondents to have made teaching more challenging.

The requirement of teachers to cater for individual differences was thought also to be a major change that made teaching more challenging with nearly 94% of respondents taking that view. Consistent with this finding, more than 82% of the teachers were of the view that the number of children with behaviour difficulties was a factor. Furthermore, the same percentage of respondents took the view that there were difficulties relating to the number of agencies with which schools had to deal.

It is also worth giving attention to the factors that were not thought to have made teaching more challenging and stressful. Less job mobility and the difficulty of finding regular employment were not regarded as nearly as important as those just mentioned, though perhaps these were not issues for the cohort of teachers responding to the questionnaire. Furthermore, the matter of reporting on the results of standardised tests was thought by just over half of the respondents to be a factor causing increased stress.

Overall, the factors seen as causing the greatest problems, leaving aside coping with individual differences are those that involve administration and dealing with issues that are perceived as significant in society. Based on the open-ended comments of the teachers, these matters are not seen as core issues in their work.

Table 2: Factors making Teaching More or less Challenging

	More / Much More	Neutral	Less / much Less
Number of school subjects	75.4	23.4	1.2
The primary school curriculum	67.1	31.3	1.6
New emphasis on literacy and numeracy	77.3	16.6	6.1
Opportunities to engage in professional development	41.7	40.1	18.2
Greater demands by DES inspectors	81.6	17.5	0.9
Reporting on results of standardised tests to parents	55.0	36.6	8.4
Making provision for individual differences	93.8	4.7	1.5
Pressure to engage in CPD relevant to initiatives	71.6	22.4	6.0
Requirements for documentation relating to policies and practices	96.0	3.7	0.3
Unreasonable demands of some parents	73.2	20.3	6.5
Greater diversity among pupils	74.2	20.5	5.3
Changes in regulations on sick leave	67.1	27.9	5.0
Difficulty in getting information on issues	50.1	40.0	8.9
Number of children with behaviour difficulties	82.5	13.3	2.1
The variety of agencies with which schools have to deal	82.4	16.6	1.0
Obligations to do yard-duty	57.0	36.8	6.2
Less job mobility in teaching	57.2	36.8	6.2
Demand for school improvement plans	88.0	10.3	1.7
Demand on school to solve problems of concern in society	91.3	8.4	0.3
Challenge in finding regular employment	34.9	49.7	15.4

Additional comments

When the respondents were asked to make additional comments, over 170 did so (over half of the sample) – an outcome that can of itself be taken to indicate the very strong responses that these items elicited. As might be expected many of the comments elaborated on the items in the structured part of the questionnaire.

A great many remarks (over one third) underlined the effects of administrative work with a particular focus on documentation. One comment was: *'the amount of paperwork is killing us. Sometimes you feel it is more important than actual teaching. On some occasions, I spend more time on completing forms than on the application of the relevant policy in the school. There is a total imbalance'.* Another comment linked the additional administrative work to the changing school population: *'No end to paperwork, documentation and writing up policies. This does not help to make teaching more relevant. The diversity and additional needs of a changing pupil population has changed what is required and in addition requires more admin work'.*

Other teachers mentioned the additional burden on schools in response to various problems that are perceived to be relevant. As one teacher said: *'Every challenging aspect of society is placed on the shoulders of schools. It feels that we are producing children as a commodity for the demands of the time and not prioritizing a child-centred education'.* Another comment linked the demands with the ever-expanding *curriculum: 'When a new societal issue arises, the question is always about [what] schools should do. But the curriculum is already too broad with too much to do and not enough time. This means that some basic skills may not get the attention they deserve'.* Another related point was raised by some respondents regarding the responsibilities that extend very broadly, *'teachers and schools are now expected to deal with issues arising solely in the home environment ... these are matters that are the responsibility of parents and the frustration of teachers in making inroads on these is a major factor in contributing to stress'.* Another comment summed up the new demands, *'schools are now expected to solve all ills in society'.*

The overcrowded curriculum was a major issue, sometimes linked with the need to cope with individual differences. Indeed some comments linked administration, the curriculum and the needs to cater for differences: *'As well as new subjects/topics, we have to cater for a greater variety of differences among pupils. As a teaching principal the burden of all of this is logistically impossible and something has to suffer depending on which I give priority at any given time. The cascade model of disseminating information on new initiatives is a huge burden on top of all this'.*

Responses of different groups of teachers

Table 2a shows a breakdown of the different responses for teachers in various school positions and also in relation to teaching experience. The entries are percentages and refer in each case to the highest change in level of challenge ('much more challenging'). With regard to the requirements for documentation, there are substantial differences associated with position and experience (while taking into account that as shown in Table 2, this requirement was regarded by virtually all respondents as becoming more challenging than in earlier times). What is noteworthy is that a greater number of learning support/resource teachers have indicated that this requirement has become 'much more challenging'. It is also the case that a high percentage of principals endorse this view as well. In other words, while it is the case that the increase in demand for documentation has an impact on the system as whole, some members, specifically principals and learning support/resource teachers, are more affected than are some others. The open-ended comments also suggested that teaching principals were especially affected by the requirement for more documentation.

With regard to the association with length of experience, those respondents who have taught the longest (more than 25 years) notice this change greatest while beginning teachers were substantially less likely to see this requirement as having become a greater challenge. This finding may be due to the fact that the demand for documentation has become greater in the last decade and any changes may be more striking for teachers who have spent a relatively longer time in the system.

The breakdown in relation to the perception of changes in the demands of DES inspectors is also shown in Table 2a. Overall, there are no substantial differences with regard to position in school; very similar percentages of class teachers, principals and learning support teachers thought that the demands of the inspectors had become more challenging, with just over 40% taking this view for each group. There are differences associated with length of experience; for teachers with 15 years experience or less (including those with less than 6 years), a substantially greater number took the view that the demands had become more challenging in comparison with those who had more than 16 years or indeed more than 25 years of experience. It could be that the requirements of the inspectors are more relevant for relatively newer teachers.

With regard to the perceived impact of greater diversity, it is noteworthy that the group who found this development more challenging were learning support/resource teachers. While this outcome might be expected due to the nature of their work, the actual percentage that indicated that this feature had made their work more challenging is very high (54.5%) – a figure which is substantially greater than for class teachers and for principals.

Table 2a: Factors Making Teaching More Challenging for Different Groups

Requirements for Documentation - Percent Indicating Much More challenging

	Class Teacher	Principal	Learning Support / Resource
	54.9	75.4	83.1
Experience <6	**6-15 Years**	**16-25 years**	**<25 years**
45.2	59.2	61.2	78.6

Greater Demands of DES inspectors: Percent Indicating Much More challenging

	Class Teacher	Principal	Learning Support / Resource
	41.1	41.5	43.8
Experience <6	**6-15 Years**	**16-25 years**	**<25 years**
45.9	45.6	34.7	37.1

Greater Diversity Among Pupils Attending School: Percent Indicating Much More challenging

	Class Teacher	Principal	Learning Support / Resource
	28.7	32.3	54.5
Experience <6	6-15 Years	16-25 years	<25 years
28.6	36.0	37.5	38.4

Implications of Factors Making Teaching More Challenging

It is noteworthy that two major administrative issues are rated as contributing most to making teaching more challenging over the last five years. The greater need for documentation related to policies and practices and the demand for school improvement plans were regarded as highly significant. Furthermore, the perceived

need for schools to solve problems that were of concern to society was regarded as having made teaching more challenging. In addition, the greater need for schools to cater for individual differences was thought also to be a major influence in making teaching more challenging.

It is important to note that most of the factors that were identified as more challenging were not inherently related to the practice of good teaching. This is especially the case with the additional administrative burden which was regarded by teachers as not being especially relevant to their 'real work'. It is significant that the dissatisfaction with the greater demands for documentation was based on the perception that the additional work did not contribute significantly to pupils' learning but rather took from the time and energy available for teaching.

The difference between different groups is especially noteworthy. The findings with regard to the need for additional documentation are striking. Principals and learning support teachers were more likely to indicate that this was a factor in their work in comparison to classroom teachers. The implication is that changes in requirements need to be considered not only in the context of the overall work of the school but also in relation to the particular groups of teachers on which the initiative will have the greatest impact.

3.3   Changes in the Climate of Teaching

The teachers were asked about changes in the last five years with regard to what might be called the 'climate of teaching'. Included were several features that may have changed over recent years including promotional opportunities, competition between schools and changes in the nature of teachers' work. For each feature, the respondents were asked to indicate whether the matter in question was in evidence 'to a great extent' to 'not at all' (on a five point scale). The results are shown in Table 3. Consistent with the results set out in Table 2 above, there was a strong consensus regarding additional administration and documentation. In the case of each of these, over 95% of respondents said that these were evident to a great extent/some extent in the last five years. In line with these views, a high percentage (over 86%) were of the opinion that schools had become more bureaucratic.

Another theme emerging, as evident in Table 3, concerns the demand for greater accountability, with almost 93% of the respondents taking the view that this demand is more in evidence than it was five years ago. Consistent with this perception, only 41% of the sample took the view that there was greater autonomy at school level and 82% were of the opinion that there was now less reliance on teachers' own professional standards.

Overall, the findings on accountability link with the pattern on documentation and administration; part of the reason for the requirement of more documentation may be the perception that this makes teachers more accountable.

It is worth noting that not all of the responses are strongly opposed to any changes that may have happened or that are sometimes talked about. For example, the issue of greater competition between schools was thought by just over half of the respondents to have become more of an issue while the remainder thought that this was not the case.

Table 3: Changes in Climate of Teaching

	More/Much More	Neutral	Less/much Less
Additional administrative duties in addition to teaching	95.0	2.5	2.5
More emphasis on documentation than on actual practice	96.0	1.6	2.4
Less reliance on teachers' own professional standards	82.6	11.2	6.2
Schools becoming more bureaucratic	86.1	13.0	0.9
Promotional opportunities declining	79.2	15.2	6.6
Greater autonomy at school level	40.7	42.0	17.3
Increasing demands from other agencies	82.6	12.8	4.6
Teaching becoming more challenging	93.2	5.9	0.9
Teaching becoming less attractive as a career	72.3	19.5	8.2
Demands for greater accountability	92.8	4.7	2.5
The boundaries of the Pastoral role in teaching being extended	77.5	17.3	5.2
School becoming more confident in the decisions they make	36.8	37.4	25.2
Competition between schools becoming greater	53.4	31.9	14.6
Increasing micro-management by DES	73.2	22.6	4.1
Increasing demand involving other adults (parents, SNAs)	86.3	9.7	5.0

Additional comments

When the respondents were asked to make additional comments, over 100 offered comments with regards to changes in the climate of teaching. Many of the comments centred on the requirements for documentation and the more general matter of the increase in administration. One teacher said *'teaching had now changed into ticking boxes and teachers are blindly going in that direction. Let me teach instead of writing about it'*. In line with this comment many teachers thought that the demands were part of an international movement but which were not helpful: *'Why are we following in the footsteps of countries who don't have a successful educational system? I always thought of the Irish system, especially at primary level as being an example … was I fooling myself?'*

A number of comments from teaching principals illustrate the challenges they encounter: *'I feel very aggrieved at the expectations regarding teaching principals. I am required to have documentation on policies and supporting material on a level that is similar to my peers who are administrative principals. The days which I get for this work are totally inadequate'*.

The complications arising from the changes in the role of learning support teachers, especially the need to engage with other professionals and the need to monitor progress of different groups of children was evident in a number of comments. One comment was*: 'the increased expectation to liaise with other professionals in your own time, and to implement the complex plans for different groups, as well as well as to report on progress on a monthly/bimonthly basis … makes it difficult to make progress with all children'*.

Responses of different groups of teachers

Table 3a shows how different groups of teachers perceived themselves as being affected by aspects of changes in the climate of teaching. With regard to additional administrative duties, there are major differences between the views of class teachers on the one hand and principals and learning support/resource teachers on the other; the latter two groups were more likely to indicate that additional administrative duties had increased 'to a great extent' in recent years. It is also of interest to note that the same pattern emerges with respect to the demands of other agencies. While less than one-third of class teachers took the view that demands from other agencies had increased to a great extent, almost half of the principals thought it had and indeed more than half of the learning support/resource teachers took this view.

As noted above, there were some differences between teachers in multi-grade classes and those who were in single classes. As can be seen from Table 3a, there were

differences with respect to the perception of additional administrative duties with staff in the multi-grade situation being more likely to take the view that administrative duties had increased to a great extent. However, there was no significant difference with respect to the additional demands of other agencies.

Table 3a: Changes in Climate of Teaching for Different Groups

(Additional Administrative Duties: Percent Indicating 'To a Great Extent)

Class Teacher	Principal	Learning Support / Resource	Multi-grade Class	Single-grade Class
65.3	83.1	86.6	77.9	66.5

(Additional Demands from Other Agencies: Percent Indicating 'To a Great Extent)

Class Teacher	Principal	Learning Support / Resource	Multi-grade Class	Single-grade Class
31.8	47.6	56.7	38.4	36.5

3.4   Reports on Teaching and Education

The next section of the questionnaire was concerned with research and international studies that relate to standards in Irish schools as well as other matters. The respondents were asked to say whether each of the listed items had a positive, a neutral or negative effect on teachers' morale. As can be seen in Table 4, the items included results of research reports as well as commentaries in the media and elsewhere, which impinge on teaching and perhaps on the morale of teachers.

The strongest effect concerned the general criticisms of the public service which was perceived by more than 85% of respondents as having a negative effect on teachers' morale. Another avenue of comment that was thought to have a major impact was the demand on schools to solve societal problems; more than 77% of respondents thought that this expectation had a negative impact on morale. It is especially interesting that these two themes are not directly relevant to teachers' work. The reports of research studies involving international comparisons were not regarded by the majority of teachers as having negative effects on morale, with 38% taking this view, while over 46% thought that these reports were neutral in their effects. This is despite the fact that at

least one study involving such comparisons has been used as an example of how 'standards were in decline'. Indeed media reports of research in general were not regarded by the majority of the respondents as negative but were perceived by 54% of respondents as neutral in their impact on morale.

Obviously some reports in the media have the capacity to enhance morale among teachers. Just over half of the teachers took the view that reports of high standards of entry to teaching had a positive impact on morale and roughly the same percentage of respondents regarded reports of achievement in arts and sports as increasing such good feelings. It should be mentioned that the study was carried out before the results on the major improvements in reading scores in the National Assessments, were available.

Table 4: Effect of Reports on Teachers' Morale

	Positive Effect	Neutral	Negative Effect
Research reports on comparisons of scores in different countries	15.1	46.6	38.3
Reports on standards of literacy	27.6	22.2	50.2
Reports of poor job prospects for teachers	5.6	19.5	76.0
Reports of bullying in schools	12.9	22.9	64.2
Reports of new topics being taught in schools	24.9	41.5	33.6
Reports of high standards of entry to teaching	50.4	37.2	12.4
General criticisms of the public service	6.2	8.6	85.2
Reports on teaching performance in schools	11.0	24.7	64.3
Demands to solve societal problems	7.8	14.9	77.3
Lack of science teaching in schools	8.4	36.8	53.8
Reports that highlight achievement in arts and sports	5.7	41.1	8.2
Media coverage of research reports	13.0	54.3	41.7

Additional comments

When the respondents were asked to make additional comments, about 180 did so with regard to reports on 'Teaching and Education'. Many of these comments echoed the results of the structured component of the questionnaire; several comments were concerned with criticisms of the public service and also on the demand for schools to solve societal problems. Several respondents drew attention to the ways in which research reports can be biased and thereby undermine morale.

With regard to the public service, one teacher said: *'the criticism of the public sector in the media has left teachers totally disillusioned about the integrity of our profession. Some media coverage of research reports deepen this dismay as it fails to take into account the great work in schools throughout the country ... never before had we to justify our profession to this extent'*. Another said that, '*I refuse to read a certain major newspaper as they insist on extremely negative reporting of public service workers and especially teachers'*.

More generally many commented on the portrayal of research results which, '*can have a demoralising effect'*. A principal teacher made the point that '*the research that gets most attention is the bad news with virtually nothing about all the evidence on the very high standards in Irish primary schools'*. Some others argued that there was a counterproductive side to some of the research reports, as they are interpreted in the subsequent debate. One teacher said, *'New initiatives were being implemented carefully and with enthusiasm until the Minister reacted quickly and inappropriately to one round of PISA scores'*. Another comment was that: *'It is very disheartening to be listening to media commentators constantly allowing IBEC and similar organisations to drive their own vested interests on the airwaves. Far too often they like to blame teachers and public servants for the woes and mistakes of the business class and they chose to scapegoat teachers.'*

The point was made in nearly 90 comments that only negative aspects of reports get attention. As one respondent said: *'I am sure that negative outcomes get massive attention. It is worth noting that the PISA report included a range of valuable information including information on children with special needs and the increase in non-English speaking students. However, the worst interpretation was given to one aspect of the results and now we are back to basics ... it makes no sense'*. Another said: '*media reports are often taken out of context and are reported in a negative manner. The results should be presented in a proper context'*.

Several comments were concerned with the demands to solve problems in society: *'the demand to solve societal problems is quite inappropriate since they are not our responsibility. Above all parents need to take responsibility for raising their children'*.

Another respondent commented that, *'it is fine to ask us to take on additional duties if these involve more work and really are not within the educational sphere … but such additional work which arises from issues that are of concern to the general public need to be supported with additional resources and personnel'.*

Responses of different groups of teachers

Table 4a shows how different groups of teachers perceived the effects of various kinds of reports on teachers' morale. The table also shows the extent to which they were similar to each other in their views. As regards reports that involved criticisms of the public service, virtually all of the teachers took the view that such reports had negative effects; indeed the very high percentage taking this view is remarkable by comparison with surveys in general. In the case of reports of standards of literacy, there were only small differences between the groups of teachers with a slightly greater percentage of learning support/teachers seeing such reports as having negative effects. However, the comparison of the absolute percentage in each case with the previous item regarding the public service is noteworthy.

With regard to reports of bullying in school, a rather different picture emerged; close to two-thirds of class teachers and learning support teachers thought that these reports had negative effects. The corresponding figure for principal teachers is somewhat lower.

Table 4a: Effect of Reports on Teachers' Morale for Different Groups
(Percent Perceived Negative effect)

	Class Teacher	Principal	Learning Support / Resource
General criticisms of the public service	86.1	84.1	84.6
Reports on Standards of Literacy	47.9	50.7	52.4
Reports of bullying in School	67.2	56.2	68.7

3.5   Making Teaching Less Stressful (National Initiatives)

In the last two sections of the questionnaire, the teachers were asked about changes that would increase job satisfaction and make teaching less stressful. One section (shown in Table 5) was concerned with possible interventions at national level, while the second part focused on local and school-level initiatives.

The pattern of results in Table 5, reinforce the findings emerging in earlier parts of the questionnaire. For example, 91% of respondents took the view that a lesser requirement to document certain school activities would help greatly. In addition, a reduction in curriculum overload was perceived to make a helpful contribution by 93% of respondents, as would the re-instatement of promotional positions.

An important theme emerging in the results is the need for dedicated time for planning at school level. There was a high level of agreement that there should be more reliance on teachers' own professional standards and more time for staff collaboration in school with each of these being endorsed by close to 90% of the respondents. Similarly, there was agreement on having a dedicated time for school planning during the school day.

It is also striking that there is a strong recognition of the need for catering for the well-being of teachers as well as their students. Respondents strongly support the need for recognising the importance of teachers' well-being for pupils' success and well-being, with over 93% of respondents taking the view that this would help to make teaching more rewarding. Similarly, 85% of respondents were of the view that there was a need to develop policies that would enhance the well-being of teachers.

The confidence in these views where there was strong endorsement is strengthened by looking at other items where there is a contrasting picture. In the case of 'giving less importance to standardized tests', nearly two-thirds (over 65%) thought that this suggestion might help and while this is a substantial number, the number endorsing this suggestion fell far short of some the other possible changes considered here. A similar percentage thought it would be helpful if principals were given the option of stepping down.

Table 5: Factors to Make Teaching More Satisfying and Less Stressful (National Level)

	Help	Hard to say	Not help
Less requirement to document certain school activities	91.0	4.1	4.9
Salary increase	90.4	3.8	5.8
Reinstatement of promotional positions	93.0	4.8	2.2
Dedicated time for planning in school day	88.3	7.6	4.1
Reduction in curriculum overload	93.1	3.8	3.1
Fewer new initiatives	84.5	9.8	5.7
Greater follow-up on existing initiatives	83.1	12.1	4.8
Broadening role of SNAs to pedagogical functions	65.0	18.1	16.9
More help with planning in school (eg. PDST	76.5	14.9	8.6
More opportunity for professional development in school	83.1	11.8	5.1
More time for staff collaboration in school	89.2	7.3	3.5
Less importance given to Standardised tests	65.8	19.3	14.9
Greater reliance on teachers' own professional standards	89.4	8.6	1.8
Opportunities for principals to step down	65.4	27.9	6.6
Development of policies to enhance teachers' well-being	85.3	10.5	4.2
Recognising the importance of teachers' well-being for pupils' success and well-being	93.4	4.7	1.9
Opportunities for Sabbatical leave	79.1	17.7	3.1
Enhanced policies to protect teachers' welfare	91.9	5.7	2.4

Additional comments

When the respondents were asked to make additional comments, nearly 200 did so with regard to ways of enhancing job satisfaction through national initiatives. As might be expected given the results of the structured questions, many of the comments were concerned with documentation and policy development. As one respondent said: *'there*

should be less requirements for documentation and instead have a dedicated time for planning in the school day as well as fewer initiatives'. In line with this comment another teacher said that: *'teachers spend far too much time worrying about planning, both short and long-term planning. Teaching should be about children and not planning that will merely satisfy inspectors'.* There was also a call for no more policies.

There were several comments about ways in which the well-being of teachers could be enhanced. Furthermore, there were mentions of the benefits of well-being for all. As one teacher said: *'there is a real need to recognize that teachers' well-being is crucial not only for their own professional development but also the success and well-being of the children'.* Another point made in relation to well-being was the need to recognize the diligence of teachers and the time they spend on planning and preparation. One comment was: *'Teachers work far beyond what is expected and there are no bonuses or time in lieu. Furthermore, there is a need to acknowledge the very tense relationships that can sometimes build up with parents.*

Responses of different groups of teachers.

Table 5a shows how different groups of teachers perceived the kinds of initiatives at national level that would make teaching more satisfying for different groups. Given the consistency of the responses in various sections of the questionnaire it is hardly surprising that about 90% of class teachers, learning support teachers and principal teachers were of the view that lesser requirements in documenting activities would be helpful. There are however, some differences with regard to the other two items set out in Table 5a. While there is general agreement that a reduction in curriculum overload would be helpful, a relatively greater number of principals and learning support teachers took this view in comparison to class teachers.

An interesting pattern also emerged in relation to having more time for staff collaboration. Again there was a broad consensus that having such time would be helpful. Furthermore, an even higher percentage of both principals and learning support teachers took the view that having time for staff collaboration would be helpful. It may be that their particular roles in school give them an insight into ways in which opportunities for staff collaboration can be especially valuable.

Table 5a: Factors Perceived to Make Teaching More Satisfying for Different Groups (National Level)

(Percentage perceived helpful)

	Class Teacher	Principal	LS / Resource	Multi-grade class	Single-grade class
Less requirement to document activities	91.2	91.0	89.9	94.1	89.7
Reduction in Curriculum Overload	89.0	96.1	97.0	95.8	87.7
More time for Staff Collaboration	88.0	87.2	94.0	88.1	89.0

A comparison of teachers working in multi-grade schools and those within a single class situation is also shown in Table 5a. As in some earlier comparisons, there are differences associated with these contrasting situations. Teachers who taught in multi-grade schools were more likely to take the view that a reduction in the need for documentation would be helpful and a similar difference emerged in relation to curriculum overload. It may be that the additional requirements for both of these have a relatively greater impact in a multi-grade context as opposed to a single class situation. With regard to having more time for staff collaboration, no difference emerged between the teachers in the two contrasting situations.

3.6   Making Teaching Less Stressful (Local Initiatives)

The final section of the questionnaire was concerned with possible changes at local level and at school level, which might make the work of a teacher more satisfying and less stressful. It is noteworthy, as shown in Table 6, that there was a very high level of agreement (nearly 99%) for better support services for children with special needs. In fact, there was a stronger endorsement of this item than of any of those listed in the questionnaire. There was also strong support for the physical resources necessary for the efficient running of a school.

In line with earlier parts of the questionnaire, having greater administrative support for schools was thought by over 92% of the respondents to be of help. Similarly, over 90% of respondents took the view that more time for planning at school level would help. Generally, there was a consensus regarding the value of control and planning within the school and especially that greater collaboration between teachers should be encouraged. Over 87% of respondents thought it helpful if teachers had more time to share practice.

It is especially interesting to notice what was NOT given major priority. In particular and in line with earlier findings in the questionnaire, less than 40% thought that a lesser emphasis on literacy and numeracy would help and substantially more took the opposite view.

Table 6: Factors to Makes Teaching More Satisfying and Less Stressful (local level)

	Help	Hard to say	Not help
More time for planning at school level	90.4	4.8	4.8
Better understanding by Board of Management and parents of challenged faced by teachers	87.7	6.0	6.3
Less importance being attached to standardised tests	70.0	14.2	15.8
Schools being able to prioritise policies	82.5	10.6	6.9
Schools being concerned only with educational issues	64.2	16.9	18.9
Better support services for children with special needs	98.8	1.6	0.6
Greater focus in schools on holistic development of children	89.0	8.6	2.4
Less emphasis in schools on literacy and numeracy	38.8	13.9	47.3
More parental interest in children' learning	78.0	14.0	8.0
More admin support for schools	92.4	6.0	1.6
Teachers having more time to share practice	87.7	7.9	4.4
More opportunity for collaborative teaching	83.0	12.0	5.0
Opportunity to receive feedback on my teaching	53.6	27.2	19.2
Teachers having opportunities to observe colleagues teaching	56.0	22.4	21.6
Adequate funding for classroom resources	97.4	1.6	1.0
Having suitable school buildings and environment	96.2	2.2	1.6
Having adequate funding for running schools	98.0	1.6	0.4

Additional comments

When the respondents were invited to make additional comments over 100 did so with regard to ways of enhancing job satisfaction and reducing stress through local initiatives. Some respondents made very detailed comments. What is interesting is that the comments covered a wide range of issues including many that were endorsed in the structured sections of the questionnaire. Many of the comments referred to the challenge of coping with individual differences especially given large classes. As one respondent said: *'With more children now presenting with symptoms of autism, other special needs as well as non-national language issues ... we need less children in classes and more resource hours, as well as psychological assessments to cope with the ever-increasing requirements for differentiated programmes for almost everyone in the class'*.

Many respondents referred to the various distractions that get in the way of teaching. One comment was: *'I just want to get on with my job and teacher. The endless paperwork is a major problem. As a teacher in a small school, there are issues of class size in a multi-class situation and the needless red tape is not top of my list'*. Along the same lines another teacher commented on the need for collaboration with colleagues: *'A lot of time is taken up in schools in noncore and non-educational activities like fundraising. I'd love to have time to plan and collaborate with colleagues ... I'd love just to be able to teach'*.

There were a number of comments on issues to do with the funding of schools. One respondent commented that *'The funding for running schools and maintaining a suitable standard of accommodation is a major issue*. Other comments were concerned with the requirement of schools to be involved in activities to raise funds: *'Schools are running on empty financially. It is dreadful that we need to raise money through Christmas raffles in order to pay for the heating'*.

The comments of one teacher brought together many of the problems and possible solutions, *'maintenance of IT equipment within the school is important. The level of bureaucratization of schools and the degree to which teaching has become governed by policies is soul-destroying. Teacher discretion, teacher autonomy and teacher professional experiences are now being increasingly suspended in favour of policies and box ticking. Back off and let us teach!'*

Responses of different groups of teachers.

Table 6a shows how different groups of teachers perceived some of these initiatives that at local level, would make teaching more satisfying. What emerges is that there are differences with respects to some factors and not in relation to others. Two examples are given in Table 6a.

With regard to more time for planning at school level, there were differences related to respondents' position in school with learning-support teachers being most enthusiastic, principals less so and class teachers more enthusiastic than principal teachers but not as enthusiastic as learning-support teachers. It may be that learning-support teachers by nature of their work become more aware of the need for planning and co-ordination, particularly in relation to children with special needs. However, it should be stressed that while there were differences associated with respondents' position in school, there was a strong consensus among teachers as a whole.

The picture that emerges with regard to adequate funding for classroom resources is somewhat different in the sense that the differences were minimal and teachers in all positions were almost unanimous in their agreement on the importance of such funding. It was noteworthy that in open-ended comments, many participants mentioned the loss of funding for various projects in recent times.

Table 6A also shows differences and similarities with regard to teachers in multi-grade and single classes situations. As regards 'more time for planning', a somewhat higher percentage of the teachers in multi-grade classes took the view that more time for planning would be helpful, than those teaching a single class. In contrast, with regard to funding both groups of teachers were of the view that more funding would be helpful.

Table 6A: Factors to Makes Teaching More Satisfying and Less Stressful (local level)
for Different Groups
(Percentage perceived helpful)

	Class Teacher	Principal	LS / Resource	Multi-grade class	Single-grade class
More time for planning at school level	89.0	84.9	96.1	90.4	85.8
Adequate funding for classroom resources	97.2	96.5	96.3	96.1	97.2
More time for Staff Collaboration	88.0	87.2	94.0	88.1	89.0

4.   Conclusions and Implications

Based on the terms of reference of the research and informed by the extant literature on teachers' workload stress, a questionnaire was devised to establish the level of stress, the developments in recent years that have contributed to making teachers' work more stressful and the changes that might alleviate these experiences and enhance job satisfaction. The devising and piloting of the questionnaire as well as the drafting of this report was carried out by Professor Mark Morgan with the help and guidance of a steering group, chaired by Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith.

The questionnaire elicited responses from 332 respondents giving a response rate of 41%. It would seem that the respondents were representative of the INTO membership in terms of gender, position in school, school location and multi-grade vs single grade schools. A major strength of the study was that virtually no items were omitted by the respondents; furthermore many added detailed open-ended comments at the end of the various sections.

The vast majority took the view that teaching has become more stressful in the last five years and over 93% of respondents thought that the work had become more demanding. Of the various factors that contributed to this increase in stress, the greater need for documentation and school improvement plans were identified as major issues. Furthermore, the demand on schools to solve problems of concern in society was considered an important influence in making teaching more challenging and stressful. Catering for individual differences was also significant as was the number of children with behaviour difficulties in classrooms.

There are quite large differences in relation to the experience of stress that were related to respondents' position in schools. Just half of the class teachers thought that teaching had become much more stressful but nearly three-quarters of principals took that view. In the case of learning support/resource teachers between a half and two thirds were of the view that teaching had become more stressful. The pattern of results in relation to teaching becoming much more demanding are similar, while taking into account the much higher overall percentages who endorsed this view. It is noteworthy that a very high percentage of principals took the view that teaching had become much more demanding in the last five years; in fact no principal thought that the job was about the same or less demanding.

There was also an association between the experience of stress and teaching experience; teachers who were relatively new to the system tended to experience less stress. However, what is especially noteworthy is that teachers with 16-25 years experience were more likely than other groups to take the view that the job had come more

stressful/demanding. In fact 90% of the respondents in this category expressed the view that teaching had become much more demanding over the last years.

A comparison of respondents teaching in multi-grade classes and teachers in conventional single grade classes, show that teachers in multi-grade classes were more likely to indicate that their work had become much more stressful and demanding than was the case with teachers in a single-grade situation.

With regard to the major changes that have occurred in the last five years in the climate of teaching, additional administration and demands for documentation were regarded as the most influential factors. There was also a strong view that schools had become more bureaucratic. The demand for greater accountability was perceived as causing a major change along with a lesser reliance on teachers' own professional standards. As in earlier questions the vast majority thought that teaching had become challenging. However, while a significant percentage (72%) thought that teaching had become less attractive as a career, this was a lower percentage than the percentage indicating the importance of the additional administration and schools becoming bureaucratic as factors impacting on the climate of teaching.

When asked about reports in newspapers and other sources and specifically about their impact on teachers' morale, it emerged that general criticism of the public service was perceived to have a major impact on lowering morale as were the increased demands on schools to solve societal problems. However, reports of research studies involving international comparison were not thought by the majority of respondents to have a negative impact. Some media reports, including those indicating a high standard of entrance to teaching, were thought to have a positive effect on teacher morale.

With regard to changes at national level that would make teaching less stressful and enhance job satisfaction, the highest consensus was around a lesser requirement to document certain activities as well as a reduction in curriculum overload. There was also an agreement that teachers' own professional expertise should be developed and that time for school planning during the school day should be available. The need for a recognition of the well-being of teachers was strongly supported and especially the connection between teachers' well-being and pupils' well-being. It is noteworthy that other matters such as placing a lesser importance on standardised tests were not thought to be as important as matters relating to documentation, overload and the recognition of the importance teachers' well-being.

Finally, when asked about changes at school level that would make teaching less stressful, virtually all of the respondents said that better services for children with special needs would help. Consistent with other responses, greater administrative support was also supported as was greater collaboration between teachers in planning and sharing practice. In contrast, lesser time for literacy and numeracy was perceived to be helpful by a much smaller number.

Implications of Findings

The results considered above strongly indicate that teachers' work has indeed become more stressful in the last five years. However, they also suggest ways in which this has happened and by implication some of the changes that are not especially important. A major factor is the increased workload associated with increases in administration and by implication, suggests that a teacher's job is becoming more bureaucratic. The other major factor that has increased stress is the greater demands to solve problems that have their origin in societal concern. On the other hand, some other changes, especially policy changes, that have come about are not regarded as causing the same level of stress or, as noted above, that changing them would not help greatly to enhance job satisfaction. Examples of the latter include the literacy and numeracy policy and the use of standardised tests in schools. It is also of interest that some important features including catering for children with special needs, were judged as being especially worthy of further support.

It is striking that as a result of the changes, teachers perceived themselves to be less in control and that their professional expertise was being downplayed. The teachers were very highly motivated to be involved in planning at the level of their own school and wanted opportunities and time to make it happen.

It could be said that the main factors involved in teachers' workload stress are outside the educational realm and are determined largely by thinking which is largely socio-political in nature, regarding dealing with complex issues. In other words, the matters that emerged as stressful are not issues that are based on evidence regarding how the system is performing or even based on a value judgement about what is needed in the system but rather, they reflect a concern about greater accountability of teachers that is to be established through more detailed documentation. Similarly in looking at problems in society, it is not obvious that schools should have the primary responsibility for dealing with such issues; rather there seems that there is no other institution that might take responsibility for these complex matters.

What is significant is that the demand for increased documentation is likely to be perceived as evidence of greater accountability on behalf of teachers and a diminution of professional trust. This is in turn is likely to have a knock-on effect on morale which in turn has an effect on stress levels.

5. Recommendations

The recommendations put forward below are based on the main findings of the research and are concerned with the following: (i) Principals and school leadership, (ii) Curriculum, (iii) School support, (iv) Special education and (v) Career development.

Principals and School Leadership

It is evident from the survey that principal teachers, in particular, find that teaching has become more challenging. Demands for documentation and insufficient administrative support were key factors. In order to support principal teachers in their role the INTO recommends the following:

- The appointment of administrative staff, with qualifications in school administration, in all schools,
- One day's release time per week for all teaching principals,
- The introduction of release time for deputy principals and post-holders,
- The restoration of posts of responsibility,
- The introduction of a step-down facility for principal teachers without loss of remuneration,
- The development of the role of the deputy principal to incorporate senior leadership and management responsibilities.

Curriculum

Teachers are of the view that there are too many subjects in the curriculum and curriculum overload is an issue. The INTO Education Committee considered the topic of curriculum for the annual consultative conference on education in November 2015. The issue of curriculum overload is being addressed as part of this remit. In the interim the INTO recommends the following:

- The review of the primary school curriculum currently under way within the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment should seek to reduce curriculum overload,

- Findings of the Education Committee work should be communicated to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

School Support

The demands for planning, school improvement plans in particular, create additional workload for teachers. Planning must be purposeful and useful and not about paperwork and bureaucracy. At the same time teachers must have freedom and flexibility to plan curriculum and assessment to meet the needs of their own context. The INTO recommends the following:

- Planning time for teachers should be an integral part of teachers' worktime,
- Schools need IT support and proper access to high speed broadband. Therefore the INTO recommends:
- All schools should have access to IT technical support,
- All schools should have access to high quality high speed broadband.

Special Education

Insufficient support to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and the increasing diversity in Irish primary school classrooms are creating additional challenges for teachers. Planning for differentiation, and meeting the needs of learning and behavioural difficulties is challenging. Respondents to the survey identified additional support for children with SEN as the most important factor in reducing workload stress. In order to support teachers to address the educational needs of all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, the INTO recommends the following:

- Any new model to allocate additional teachers to schools to support the education of pupils with SEN should provide an adequate number of additional teachers to reflect the needs within the school,
- Allocations of SNAs to schools should reflect the need for care and support for learning,
- All schools should have timely access to health therapies, such as Speech and Language and occupational therapy, psychological services and other therapy services such as art and music therapy, to support children for whom such therapies are vital to enabling their access to education,
- Schools need sufficient additional teaching support to ensure that learning support / resource teachers are not overburdened with paperwork arising from

planning and record-keeping associated with teaching children with SEN. Caseloads should be reduced the more paperwork is required.

Career Development

It is noteworthy that a higher proportion of teachers with teaching experience of between 16 and 25 years identified teaching as having become more challenging. To sustain teachers throughout their careers the INTO recommends the following:

- Opportunities for professional development should be available to teachers at all stages of their career, with incentives to participate in further study, such as the refund of fees scheme and release time,
- Sabbatical leave should be available to teachers at least once throughout their career. Sabbaticals could be of one year's duration or one term:
- Incentives should be available to encourage teachers to participate in teacher exchange schemes. Incentives could include recognition of exchanges for purposes of meeting professional development requirements,
- Work-sharing arrangements, facilitating NQTs in their first year teaching, while enabling experienced teachers to mentor and reduce their working time, should be explored:

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Appendix I

Questionnaire

Teacher Workload & Work-Related Stress Survey

into
Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

This questionnaire arises from a motion at Congress 2014, requiring the organisation 'to research and survey the membership on all aspects of workload, expectations and work-related stress and report back to Congress 2015 with the findings'.

The questions focus on these features and related issues and especially on the following:
- To what extent do the demands made on teachers in recent times make their workload more stressful and/or reduce job satisfaction?
- What are the major factors that brought about these changes in the experience of teachers?
- Are there changes in the ethos of teaching?
- What is the effect of reports on teacher morale?
- How might the new challenges be addressed at national and local level?

The structured questionnaire simply asks you to tick a box for each item and should take you no longer than 15 minutes to complete. There is also an opportunity for you to give more details on your views in the open-ended sections.

Thank you.

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1. Teacher Profile

a   Please √ the appropriate box   ❑ Male   ❑ Female

b   Number of years teaching

c   What are your teaching qualifications?   ❑ B.Ed (Irl)   ❑ Post Grad. (Irl)

❑ B.Ed (out of State)   ❑ Other

❑ Post Grad (out of State)   _____

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2. School Profile

a.   Size of School (number of pupils)

b.   Size of School (numbers of teachers)

c.   Role in School   ❑ Principal   ❑ Class teacher   ❑ LS or Resource
                      ❑ HSCL   ❑ Substitute   ❑ Special Class teacher

d   **Location**   ❑ City   ❑ Suburban   ❑ Town   ❑ Rural

e   **Which County is your school located in**

f   **Type of school**   ❑ Mixed   ❑ Boys   ❑ Girls   ❑ Jnr Mixed/Girls

❑ Full Stream (Infants – 6th)   ❑ Infants/Junior   ❑ Senior

g	**Special School?**	❑ Yes	❑ No

h	**Does your school have a designated disadvantaged Status**	❑ Yes	❑ No

❑ DEIS Primary Urban 1   ❑ DEIS Primary Urban 2   ❑ DEIS Primary Rural

i	**Are you teaching through the medium of Irish?**	❑ Yes	❑ No
J	If 'YES':	❑ Gaeltacht	❑ Gaelscoil

k	**My school is under the patronage of:**	❑ Catholic Church	❑ Church of Ireland	❑ Foras Pátrúnachta
		❑ Educate Together	❑ ETB	❑ Other

3. Class

a.   How many children in your classroom?

b.   How many children in your classroom have Special Education Needs?

c.   Are you teaching in a multi-grade situation?   ❑ Yes   ❑ No

d.   If multi-grade, what classes do you teach?   _____

e.   How many SNAs in your classroom?

4. How has Teaching Changed?

Looking at your work as a teacher in the last five years or *since you began to teach*, how much would you see that your work has changed with respect to each of the following: (tick one box for each).

	Much more	Somewhat more	About the same	Somewhat less	A lot less
Stressful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Demanding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Satisfying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Enjoyable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rewarding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Challenging	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hectic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Worthwhile	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Factors Making Teaching more or less Challenging

What has been the influence of various factors in making your work as a teacher more or less challenging in the last five years or since you began to teach? (tick one box for each).

	Much more challenging	More challenging	Hard to say	Less challenging	Much less challenging
Number of school subjects	□	□	□	□	□
The primary school curriculum	□	□	□	□	□
New emphasis on literacy and numeracy	□	□	□	□	□
Opportunities to engage in professional development	□	□	□	□	□
Greater demands by DES Inspectors	□	□	□	□	□
Reporting on results of standardised tests to parents	□	□	□	□	□
Making provision for individual differences	□	□	□	□	□
Pressure to engage in CPD relevant to new initiatives	□	□	□	□	□
Requirements for documentation relating to policies and practices	□	□	□	□	□
Unreasonable demands of some parents	□	□	□	□	□
Greater diversity among pupils attending school	□	□	□	□	□
Changes in regulations on sick leave	□	□	□	□	□
Difficulty in getting information on important issues	□	□	□	□	□
Number of children with behaviour difficulties	□	□	□	□	□
The variety of agencies with which schools have to deal	□	□	□	□	□
Obligations to do yard-duty	□	□	□	□	□
Less job mobility in teaching	□	□	□	□	□
Demand for school improvement plans	□	□	□	□	□
Demand on school to solve problems of concern in society	□	□	□	□	□
Challenge in finding regular employment	□	□	□	□	□

Please comment on any of the above or any other issues that are relevant to you:

6. The Climate of Teaching

To what extent have each of the following been in evidence in your experience as a teacher over the last five years or since you began to teach? (tick one box for each).

	To a great Extent	To some Extent	Hard to Say	To a small Extent	Not at All
Additional administrative duties in addition to teaching	□	□	□	□	□
More emphasis on documentation than on actual practice	□	□	□	□	□
Less reliance on teachers' own professional standards	□	□	□	□	□
Schools becoming more bureaucratic	□	□	□	□	□
Promotional opportunities declining	□	□	□	□	□
Greater autonomy at school level	□	□	□	□	□
Increasing demands from other agencies	□	□	□	□	□
Teaching becoming more challenging	□	□	□	□	□
Teaching becoming less attractive as a career	□	□	□	□	□
Demands for greater accountability	□	□	□	□	□
The boundaries of the pastoral role in teaching being extended	□	□	□	□	□
School becoming more confident in the decisions they make	□	□	□	□	□
Competition between schools becoming greater	□	□	□	□	□
Increasing micro-management by DES	□	□	□	□	□
Increasing demands involving other adults (parents, SNAs)	□	□	□	□	□

Please comment on any of the above or any other issues that are relevant to you:

7. Reports on Teaching and Education

From time to time, there are reports on research (including international studies) that address issues about standards in Irish schools as well as other matters. In your view what kind of impact did each of the following have on teachers' morale? (Tick one box for each).

	Major positive effect	Minor positive effect	Neither positive or negative effect	Minor negative effect	Major negative effect
Research reports on comparisons of scores in different countries	□	□	□	□	□
Reports on standards of literacy	□	□	□	□	□
Reports of poor job prospects for teachers	□	□	□	□	□
Reports of bullying in schools	□	□	□	□	□
Reports of new topics being taught in schools	□	□	□	□	□
Reports of high standards of entry to teaching	□	□	□	□	□
General criticisms of the public service	□	□	□	□	□
Reports on teaching performance in schools	□	□	□	□	□
Demands to solve societal problems	□	□	□	□	□
Lack of science teaching in schools	□	□	□	□	□
Reports that highlight achievement in arts and sports	□	□	□	□	□
Media coverage of research reports	□	□	□	□	□

Please comment on any of the above or any other issues that are relevant to you:

8. Ways of Enhancing Job Satisfaction (National Level)

To what extent would each of the following help to make work as a teacher more satisfying and less stressful? (The list below refers to changes at national level). Tick one box for each.

	To a great Extent	To some Extent	Hard to Say	To a small Extent	Not at All
Less requirement to document certain school activities	□	□	□	□	□
Salary increase	□	□	□	□	□
Reinstatement of promotional positions	□	□	□	□	□
Dedicated time for planning in school day	□	□	□	□	□
Reduction in curriculum overload	□	□	□	□	□
Fewer new initiatives	□	□	□	□	□
Greater follow-up on existing initiatives	□	□	□	□	□
Broadening role of SNAs to pedagogical functions	□	□	□	□	□
More help with planning in school (e.g. PDST)	□	□	□	□	□
More opportunity for professional development in school	□	□	□	□	□
More time for staff collaboration in school	□	□	□	□	□
Less importance given to standardised tests	□	□	□	□	□
Greater reliance on teachers' own professional standards	□	□	□	□	□
Opportunities for Principals to step down	□	□	□	□	□
Development of policies to enhance teachers' well-being	□	□	□	□	□
Recognising the importance of teachers' well-being for pupils' success and well-being	□	□	□	□	□
Opportunities for sabbatical leave	□	□	□	□	□
Enhanced policies to protect teachers' welfare	□	□	□	□	□

Please comment on any of the above or any other issues that are relevant to you:

9. Ways of Enhancing Job Satisfaction (Local Level)

To what extent would each of the following help to make work as a teacher more satisfying and less stressful? (The list below refers to changes at school/local level). (Tick one box for each).

	To a great extent	To some extent	Hard to Say	To a small extent	Not at All
More time for planning at school level	□	□	□	□	□
Better understanding by Boards of Management and parents of challenges faced by teachers	□	□	□	□	□
Less importance being attached to standardised tests	□	□	□	□	□
Schools being able to prioritise policies	□	□	□	□	□
Schools being concerned only with educational issues	□	□	□	□	□
Better support services for children with special needs	□	□	□	□	□
Greater focus in schools on holistic development of children	□	□	□	□	□
Less emphasis in schools on literacy and numeracy	□	□	□	□	□
More parental interest in children's learning	□	□	□	□	□
More admin support for schools	□	□	□	□	□
Teachers having more time to share practice	□	□	□	□	□
More opportunity for collaborative teaching	□	□	□	□	□
Opportunity to receive feedback on my teaching	□	□	□	□	□
Teachers having opportunities to observe colleagues teaching	□	□	□	□	□
Adequate funding for classroom resources	□	□	□	□	□
Having suitable school buildings and environment	□	□	□	□	□
Having adequate funding for running schools	□	□	□	□	□

Please comment on any of the above or any other issues that are relevant to you:

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.
Please return it in the prepaid envelope to:
INTO Head Office, 35 Parnell Square, Dublin 1

into

Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann