Teaching in the 21st Century:
100 Years of Teaching 1916–2016

Discussion Document and Proceedings
of the Consultative Conference
on Education 2016

into

Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

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Acknowledgements

Foreword

Centenary years provide opportunities to look back at the preceding 100 years and to look forward to the next. The year 1916 was an important year in Irish history and created the context for the State's development over the next 100 years. The Government celebrated the centenary of 1916 with a series of dignified events in 2016. The INTO took the opportunity to look back on what life was like for both teachers and pupils in 1916 and to contrast the experience of 1916 with teachers' and pupils' lives and work one hundred years later.

In 1916, teachers were at the heart of their communities in a thirty-two county Ireland. The child-centred curriculum of 1900 was struggling to be implemented as designed, school facilities were poor and the inspection regime was harsh. The INTO published its visionary *Plan for Education* in 1947, making many recommendations to change the system for the better, by adapting the curriculum to meet children's needs, introducing the Arts, making changes to teacher education, improving school buildings and increasing the availability of teaching aids. The Irish primary education system in 2016 is significantly different to 1916 and 1947. All primary teachers are now qualified and have a unified salary scale. We have come a long way since the blackboard was the main teaching tool in our classrooms. Nevertheless, there are new challenges, such as a more complex role for school leaders and increasing demands being made on schools.

In this publication, the INTO considers how education has changed over the last one hundred years. It is only possible to give a snapshot of changes in teacher education, professional development, curriculum, ICT, school evaluation, early years' education, parental involvement, school leadership, special education and inclusion. The contributions from our guest speakers, Professor Brian Mac Craith, President of DCU, and Mr Séamie Ó Néill, of the Froebel Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education in NUIM, provide a deeper insight in to the life and work of the teacher in the 21st century and present many ideas for us to think about. Teachers will always play a key role in Irish society, both North and South.

I would like to record our appreciation of all contributors to the conference – our guest speakers, members of the Education Committee who facilitated the discussion groups, and our workshop presenters who engaged delegates in worthwhile and interesting activities of relevance to teachers in the 21st century. I would also like to thank the Education team in Head Office who organised the conference and prepared these proceedings for publication.

Sheila Nunan

Sheila Nunan
General Secretary
September 2017

Part 1

A Hundred Years
of Teaching
1916-2016

A Discussion Paper

EDUCATION CONFERENCE
Tullamore 2016

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Introduction

In this year of the centenary of 1916, we look back to what life was like for teachers and pupils one hundred years ago. Times were tough for both teachers and pupils. Not all teachers were qualified and not all children attended school. The child-centred programme of instruction of 1900 was struggling to be implemented as designed, the inspectorate regime was harsh, teachers were not very well paid and school facilities were poor. Primary schools, however, were at the heart of their communities in a thirty two county Ireland.

Following partition and the establishment of the Free State in 1922, education both North and South diverged. The INTO's visionary *Plan for Education* published in 1947 referred to the 26 counties, though the 1940s signalled important development in Northern Ireland also. This discussion paper devotes a chapter each to an aspect of education, such as professionalism, teacher education, curriculum, inclusion, evaluation, technology, infant education, leadership and the community. Firstly, a brief overview is provided of the situation in relation to each of these themes in 1916. The second part of each chapter describes the criticisms of the INTO that led to the plan published in 1947, and outlines the Organisation's demands to improve primary education. In the third part of each chapter, the current context is presented.

A Plan for Education, issued by the INTO in 1947, reflected the Organisation's philosophy of education and set a blueprint for development of education in the middle of the 20th century. The plan focused on education in general and did not confine itself to primary education. The plan considered the aim of education to be a preparation for complete life, focusing not only on one's economic needs, but on one's personal needs - spiritual, mental, physical — and for children's needs as members of a community and as citizens of the State. The plan called for reform and acknowledged reforms in Northern Ireland, which followed developments in the UK in the 1940s.

The plan was critical of many aspects of education. For example, the plan criticised the lack of equality of opportunity. The majority of pupils at the time could only avail of primary education. The curriculum was academically biased and therefore, did not respond to all children's needs. The INTO called for more arts, music and drama. The system was examination-focused and education seen as something that could be imparted by instruction and tested by written examinations. The Primary Certificate Examination was in existence at the time. The plan was critical of the lack of continuity and co-ordination within a 'collection of systems', which included primary, secondary, vocational, and university, all differently administered and financed. The INTO was of the view that policy-makers had little practical contact with education. The plan was also

critical of the lack of research to inform education policy and practice. In looking ahead, however, the plan was quite forward thinking. It called for a Council of Education, involving interested parties, to advise the Minister and the Department of Education, and made recommendations on teacher education, curriculum, teaching aids, school buildings, wellbeing and inspection, some of which are referred to in the paper.

The life of teachers and pupils is very different today in comparison to 1916 or 1947. We have modern school buildings for the most part. The Primary School Curriculum is child-centred and relatively well-resourced. All teachers are qualified, with a degree now a requisite for teaching. Professional development and collaboration are expected. School leadership is far more complex than it was in 1916 or in 1947. It is no longer simply *primus inter pares*- first among equals. Schools have boards of managements as opposed to single clerical managers. Schools have more autonomy. Teachers have more autonomy. Teaching is a desirable profession. Early years' education is receiving more attention both in relation to the infant classes in primary schools but also in relation to pre-school education for children. Technology is a feature of education. Class sizes are smaller and teachers are better paid. Nevertheless, the INTO continues to campaign on core issues such as class size and teachers' salaries.

Teaching in Ireland in the 21st Century is very much influenced by global trends. We are living in a globalised world, in a world of technology, with free movement of peoples, increasing diversity and greater economic interdependency. Ireland participates in international studies and evaluations and engages with education policy and development with OECD and the EU. Schools in Ireland, North and South, are far more diverse than they were in 1916. Families are different. Employment and careers have changed. The place of religion in schools and society is being debated. Market forces dominate much thinking in education across the globe. More is expected of schools as life becomes more complex for everybody. The world of teaching is changing. Global trends don't stop at national borders. It is time to renew our vision for education and teaching in 21st century Ireland.

In presenting this discussion paper, the Education Committee's objective is to work towards an education plan for the 21st Century, as visionary for today as the *Plan for Education* was in 1947. The discussions at the Consultative Conference on Education on the 18th and 19th November in Tullamore will form the core of any new plan for the Organisation.

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The Teaching Profession

1916

As evidenced in the *Irish School Weekly* and Central Statistics Office data from this time, the life of a national teacher in 1916 was different in some aspects, but remarkably similar in other respects to their 2016 colleagues. Issues facing the teaching profession in 1916 included a campaign to end infrequent payment of salaries, agitating for a 'War Bonus' and increased salaries for Junior Assistant Mistresses (JAMs), campaigning for 'equal treatment all round to that which the teachers of England receive, curbing poor school attendance and the 'delimitation of the powers and duties of His Majesty's Inspectors' (INTO, 1916, p. 453). The Government had given a war bonus to many of its employees but ignored the claims of the teachers for equitable treatment. A teacher's salary was scarcely worth half what it was in pre-war days. An antiquated system of paying the teacher still existed notwithstanding vigorous agitation for monthly payment in accordance with national and modern ideas. Teachers agitated for monthly salaries because very often they had no option but to 'resort largely to credit thus falling into debt as it was impossible to budget' (p. 454). In December 1916, monthly payment of salaries was introduced, however, teachers were still required to attend at managers' residences to collect their salary cheques.

INTO argued that the teacher of 1916 was badly paid, permitted no freedom and any initiative was strangled in red tape. INTO contended that the teacher was evolving from a human to a machine. There were demands for the fetters which bound the teacher to be removed and calls were made for the restoration of the teacher's liberty. It was claimed that the most potent agent for change in a politically and economically volatile Ireland was the trainer of the nation's youth. Therefore, it was considered pertinent that the Government of Ireland ensured that the teacher was happy and contented. The INTO Congress in 1916 contended that teachers were the chief factor in educational affairs and therefore it was argued that they should be granted the opportunity to work under reasonable conditions and free from worry and anxiety. Teachers were under tremendous pressure to meet the requirements of an overloaded and poorly structured curriculum. Teachers took pride and pleasure in performing what was reasonably demanded of them but it was claimed that the programme at the time was framed in such a way as to render the teacher's task impossible.

With war raging in Europe, wages had fallen in 1916. Depending on whether you were male or female, you were paid different rates. In 1912, a male principal teacher would expect to earn 113 pounds per annum, whereas his female counterpart was earning 91 pounds per annum. These figures decreased in 1916 to 70 and 57 pounds respectively. In 1916, male assistants (i.e. class teachers) were earning 50 pounds per annum with female assistants earning 42 pounds. At Congress 1916, Miss Catherine Mahon proposed

Equal Pay for Equal Work for female teachers and it was carried unanimously. It was hoped that the adoption of the motion and the campaign for Equal Pay for Equal Work would lead to a universal demand for equality for women throughout Ireland. It is deplorable and intolerable that in 2016 teachers continue to campaign for Equal Pay for Equal Work for those teachers who entered the teaching profession since 2011 on a separate pay scale.

Salaries of Irish teachers in 1916 were considerably less in comparison with English and Scottish teachers, and yet Irish teachers had on average more children to teach. Ireland had, at this time, a larger percentage of trained teachers than England and Scotland. A teacher who from the nature of his work and responsibilities ought to be the best treated member of the community is miserably paid, denied the rights of citizenship, and subjected to an administration which seldom shows itself to him in friendly guise. So, teachers were stressed out, overworked and under paid ... sounds familiar? Maybe not, as teachers appeared happy with their status citing that they were 'very satisfied with moral, intellectual and social progress made by the profession during the past quarter of a century'.

In 1916 it is safe to say that Irish teachers were, at times, forward thinking with many hoping for 'a radically revised school curriculum for 1916/17'. Teachers were looking for a 'simplified, modest and unambitious school programme' (INTO, 1916). The era was also characterised by much contention and unrest as the INTO became increasingly vocal and militant regarding teacher's rights. The Irish National Teacher's Association was founded in 1868 'to promote education in Ireland and to elevate the social and intellectual position of teachers' (Walsh, 2012, p.24). Similar to today, the INTOs most pressing issue was the campaign for improvements and equality in pay and conditions. The demands were often met with hostility from the clerical school managers who feared the threat to the existing power structure (Walsh, 2012).

1947

The *Plan for Education* (INTO, 1947) recognised that the quality of teaching underpins the quality of an education system. The INTO argued that the most ideal curriculum could not yield the best results without the highest quality teaching. There was a sense of inferiority in the primary sector at the time. INTO called for a fusion of the divergent systems in place into one integrated system, with each of its parts equal in importance. It was essential that primary education be regarded as the foundation of the educational edifice and not the poor relation with the 'largest classes, the poorest buildings and equipment and the worst paid teachers' (INTO, 1947, p. 16). Teachers are still agitating for smaller classes in their recent *Stand Up for Primary* campaign as teachers in Ireland continue to teach in the second largest classes in Europe (INTO, 2015;2016). Teachers also felt undermined and unsupported by the Inspectors. INTO argued that the Inspectors were selected from a class hostile to national aspirations and 'looked down on the national teachers as a member of an inferior race' (p.37). Teachers were also dissatisfied with the harsh rating system inherent at the time.

Despite the challenges in the profession, students entering teacher-training colleges tended to be from the top echelon of school leavers, as measured by the Leaving Certificate Examination, and many of them were gifted with talents of an artistic, cultural or sporting type. A 'call' to teacher training held high esteem in local society. The ethos of teacher training colleges was one of strong vocational commitment to a role which held high social status.

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Teaching as a career has traditionally enjoyed high social status in Ireland and there is keen competitiveness for entry to all categories of teaching. Applicants for entry to primary teaching tend to come from the top quartile of the achieving students in the Leaving Certificate Examination, and those taking the course for graduates are also of a high calibre and often offer a diverse and enriching working experience (Coolahan, 2003). The quality of the teaching profession in Ireland is often commented on favourably (OECD, 2012). The value of high social status in the profession cannot be underestimated. 'Teachers should be accorded a high professional status in society commensurate with their professional responsibilities, qualifications and skills, and the contribution which their profession makes to the development of society' (Education International 2011 Article X1.l). In countries such as Finland, Singapore and South Korea where the teaching profession is highly valued, students learn more effectively (Burns and Darling-Hammond 2014).

The 21st century heralds an era of rapid change for education and indeed the teaching profession. It is true that teachers have in many cases, demanded, initiated and co-operated with reform and renewal of many aspects of school life aimed at improving and ensuring quality in education. Many of the changes introduced have been as the result of national initiatives while others have been implemented in individual classes and school and / or groups of schools in response to local needs or developments. Change is an integral part of the teaching profession. The problem facing teachers is to recognise its acceleration and direction and to develop new ways in which they can exert greater influence and control over their professional activities. Primary teachers have been subjected to both State and Church control since the inception of the national school system in 1831. In recent years, however, a greater professional consciousness has been developing amongst teachers at all levels within the education system. With the development of professional consciousness comes a greater realisation of the need for an appropriate institutional framework to enable teachers to assume greater control over their professional domain.

Among the many modern challenges facing the teaching profession include issues such as pluralism, a respect for diversity, inclusion, advances in technology, increased socio-economic disadvantage and varying family structures. Teachers are attempting to meet all of these challenges as they seek to improve the service offered to pupils often without the necessary supports and resources. In addition, the last few decades have witnessed unprecedented legislative change affecting the teaching profession and the provision of education. The cumulative effect of The Education Act 1998, The Education Welfare Act 2000, The EPSEN Act 2004, The Teaching Council Act 2001 (and subsequent amendments) along with primary curriculum review has presented teachers with many

professional and personal opportunities and challenges. Teachers are faced with more complex challenges and higher expectations while balancing the detrimental outcomes of a system characterized by many professional challenges, including, among others, a two-tier pay scale and an ongoing moratorium on posts of responsibility. INTO also reported that the teaching profession is also falling victim to 'initiative overload' as a result of frequent national policy changes (INTO, 2015).

The 'feminisation' of teaching has been an issue facing the profession at national and international levels in recent decades. In the 1961 census in Ireland, 63% of people who recorded their occupation as teacher were female. By 2011, this figure had risen to almost three-quarters: 74%. The gender gap was even higher at primary level. INTO membership data in 2016 indicates a gender breakdown of 86% females and 14% males. The presence of a significant proportion of women teachers - particularly in the early childhood and primary levels - is a long-standing phenomenon that characterises education systems globally. It has also been highlighted that the growing feminisation of the profession tends to correlate with a decrease in status. Worries are expressed that education loses quality and that boys lack male role models. Moreover, sociologists, educational scientists and teachers often argue that one of the consequences of feminisation is a decline in the social status of teaching. Contrastively feminisation is often perceived as a consequence of the lower status ascribed to a career in education. Moreover, many authors (Acker, 1995; Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Arnot, David & Weiner, 1999) indicate that teaching is often labelled as a women's occupation. The current profile of new teachers was predominantly female and from middle class backgrounds which is not reflective of the diversity presented in school classrooms and measures should be taken to address the issue.

The moratorium on promoted posts of responsibility is a major challenge for the teaching profession. It is widely accepted that from middle management flows the potential for devolved leadership skills and ultimately career progression. The continued imposition of this financial emergency measure is limiting career prospects for teachers, adversely affecting the leadership and management of schools and negatively impacts on the implementation of initiatives in schools. The post of responsibility structure enables increased professionalism by providing opportunities for teachers to assume responsibility in the school for instructional leadership, curriculum development, staff management, and the academic and pastoral work of the school.

The single most significant challenge for the teaching profession in Ireland in the early 21st century is the discriminatory, inequitable, separate pay scales. Gender based pay inequality was a contentious issue for our 1916 colleagues. Today, the fight for pay equality remains a critical issue for the teaching profession as it erodes goodwill and morale. Securing pay parity between entrants since 2011 and their pre-2011 colleagues is seen as a matter of urgency and will be achieved with solidarity and ceaseless commitment to the campaign of equal pay for equal work. The background to the cut for 2011 entrants was the outcome of austerity measures from the Irish Government-Troika agreement of 2010. The INTO has condemned the cuts as unfair, unequal and an attack on the teaching profession. The cuts are having detrimental implications for post-2011 graduates and they are a serious threat to the wider teaching profession.

All teachers share the need for appreciation, autonomy and affiliation during their professional careers. Teachers in Ireland have concerns about system based autonomy, however, they value and wish to retain the fair degree of professional autonomy they currently experience (INTO, 2015). Academic observers have noted that a lack of trust and respect implicitly suggested by increasing accountability have had an adverse effect on teacher morale. Hargreaves and Flutter (2013) point to the growing emphasis on accountability, often at the expense of teacher autonomy, as a factor which increases pressure on the teaching profession. Demands for accountability and evaluation in schools in Ireland have resulted in a move from the original model of inspection to a whole school self-evaluation model. Nonetheless, teachers perceive the demand for greater accountability as a major change and pressure affecting the profession (INTO, 2015). Increased accountability such as reporting standardised tests and inclusion in international comparative testing can have a negative effect by reducing the autonomy of the teaching profession as evidenced in highly-accountable systems such as England.

Despite the potential detrimental impact of increased accountability on the teaching profession, primary school teachers in Ireland continue to present themselves as having a strong sense of what it means to be a professional (O'Donovan, 2013). They demonstrate a knowledge base that can be further developed with experience and learning; they show clearly how the desire to help children to better themselves is at the core of teaching; and, while not necessarily exercising autonomy in the widest sense, there is a recognition of autonomy in teaching. Teachers' positive sense of their status is closely linked to other aspects of quality education including Continuous Professional Development (CPD), research, collaboration and involvement in decision making.

Education unions have an important function to help teachers improve their status by influencing education policies. Membership of a trade union organisation is believed to enhance the status of the teaching profession. The INTO is central to any review of the development of primary school teaching as a profession in Ireland. The INTO is the largest of the teacher trade unions in Ireland originally established as the Irish National Teachers Association following the amalgamation of various associations that had been formed to represent teachers' interests. The INTO's main stated objective is to unite and organise the teachers of Ireland, and to provide a means for the expression of their collective opinion on matters affecting the interests of education and of the teaching profession (INTO Members' Handbook). This serves as a reminder of the conditions that led to the formation of the union.

Fortunately, teacher unions in Ireland are recognised as official education stakeholders and have regular dialogue with Government on matters affecting education and the teaching profession. A greater role for unions in education policy-making can ensure that professional issues and the welfare and conditions of teachers will be addressed effectively. Teacher unions play a significant role in mobilising public opinion to give teachers greater visibility, make their role in society better understood and rally leaders of civil society to their cause. For primary school teachers, an active and involved union that represents teachers' interests and maintains a strong presence in policy making decisions, adds to the sense of being a professional. It also ensures that primary teachers' voices are heard in relation to proposed changes and initiatives.

The Teaching Council was established on the basis that self-regulation is strongly linked with enhanced teacher status and professionalism. The role of the Teaching Council is to regulate the teaching profession and the professional conduct of teachers, to establish and promote professional standards, to support the continuing professional development of teachers and to promote teaching as a profession. Its establishment in 2006 represented a milestone in the development of teaching as a profession in Ireland, and had been sought by many in the teaching profession over several decades. Today, there are almost 73,000 registered teachers in Ireland, serving education at primary, post-primary and further education levels. With more than 4,000 schools and a student population of close to a million, the contribution which the teaching profession makes to society is significant. Having a well-established tradition of service in Ireland, the profession enjoys high levels of public confidence and trust as evidenced by research undertaken by the Teaching Council in 2009.

There is an acceptance amongst teachers in Ireland that maintaining standards in teaching is part of being a professional primary school teacher (O'Donovan, 2013). This point has implications for the Teaching Council in its capacity as guardian of teaching standards. Among the many important developments initiated in recent years to strengthen and underpin teaching in Ireland was the adoption of the Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers in 2007. This was done in accordance with Section 7(2)(b) of the Teaching Council Act, 2001 which provides that the Council shall "establish, publish, review and maintain codes of professional conduct for teachers, which shall include standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence". Initiating the review in 2009, the Council took account of a number of developments in the intervening years including the publication of the Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations, 2009 and the Council's Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education. A revised Draft Code was issued in 2011 and was the subject of an extensive consultation process with education partners and stakeholders, including the general public, teachers and interested bodies. The Teaching Council has taken account of all the submissions and observations provided and has now approved the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (2nd Edition) in accordance with the requirements of the Teaching Council Act, 2001. The Teaching Council is committed to ensuring that the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers is promoted and observed in order to maintain public trust and confidence in the teaching profession.

Despite many challenges to the teaching profession over the last hundred years, the status of teaching has continued to grow from strength to strength. The *Plan for Education* (INTO, 1947) restated an enhanced vision for the profession to include demands for pay improvements for teachers and reduced class sizes. While progress has been made, both issues continue to face teachers in 21st century Ireland.

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Teacher Education

1916

Initial teacher education for primary teachers had deep roots, going back to the establishment of the national school system in the 1830s, and had evolved into a set pattern over a period of almost ninety years. The Stanley Letter contained provision for a central training college in Marlborough Street, which operated between 1834 and 1922. However, it was only in 1883 that training for teachers became general. The growth of the District Model Schools from 1843 which served as non-denominational, mixed-gender training colleges, was a source of deep-seated concern to the Catholic Church. By the late 19th century, a ban on attending Model School training colleges was imposed by the Catholic Church as the Church favoured no training for teachers as opposed to non-denominational training (Walsh, 2012). Notwithstanding the establishment of denominational training colleges, under the recommendations of the Powis Commission, half of teachers remained untrained in 1900, and this percentage was still less for Catholic teachers. Many teachers who were trained had qualifications that were out of date. Even though the colleges were full they could not turn out enough teachers to replace those leaving every year.

In 1883, the state agreed to support the teaching colleges by providing a two-year course of training in single-sex, denominational institutions, with a heavy emphasis on the socialisation of student teachers to fulfil well-defined tasks in the schools. A course of study based on the national programme was introduced in 1884. Prior to independence the colleges operated very much under the aegis of the Commissioners of National Education, with their graduates under the close scrutiny of the school inspectorate (Coolahan, 2004). INTO argued that student teachers' education should be heavily state-subsidised.

There was scant reference to career professional development in 1916 although evidence indicates teachers were assisted in the implementation of the Revised Programme through the relatively new educational journal, *The Irish School Weekly*.

1947

The *Plan for Education* was robust in its calls for better teacher education. INTO deplored the fact that there was 'no common professional standard or common professional training for teachers' (INTO, 1947, p. 23). It referred to the different training for primary, secondary and vocational teachers. It was also aspirational and aimed to ensure quality assurance by 'attracting the brightest and the best to teaching' (p.26). The INTO proposed that the first way to do this would be to have salary scales

improved so that they would compare favourably with other public servants and members of the other professions. The Plan demanded an interview process of those who had achieved high marks in the Leaving Certificate in order to ensure the quality of candidates. It was also suggested that there should be a school report to eliminate characters obviously unsuited to teaching or who were 'unfavourable in respect of character or aptitude' (p.29). Finally, candidates would be expected to achieve a high standard of oral Irish in the Leaving Certificate and 'as a general rule, every candidate should be expected to have some knowledge of music and a reasonably good ear' (p.29).

The INTO Plan called for a four-year training course and argued that three of which should be spent in a university and the fourth year devoted completely to professional training It was suggested that the first three years would lead to a pass or honours degree from university. It was argued that there would need to be close liaison work between the university and training college as some elements of training would receive attention during all four years. It is interesting to note these demands, given that degree level for initial teacher education was not introduced until 1974. INTO proposed that student teachers should gain experience in various types of schools and in addition to supervised practice, there would be continuous teaching where the student-teacher would be left in complete control of a class.

The Plan valued the principles of professional development and acknowledged that training did not end on the day a teacher left the college. It was recommended that there would be 'after training' and that teachers would have the opportunity to engage in 'periodic instalments of formal training in the form of short refresher courses' (p.30). It was clearly stated that it should be the business of the Department to provide these courses. Our 1947 colleagues were primarily attending courses in Irish at the Gaelic training colleges. The ultimate aim was the restoration of Irish as the everyday language of the people. Programmes were recast, existing teachers were afforded facilities to equip themselves for the mammoth task that lay ahead, and all future entrants were required to show a high standard of proficiency in the native language. While some provision for in-service education at a local level may have existed, there was a vacuum at policy level in relation to planning, co-ordination, resource allocation, evaluation, certification and continuity. At the time the INTO criticized the education system for being defective in its almost complete absence of provision for educational research and its failure to keep the teachers in touch with educational thought in other lands (INTO, 1947).

21st Century

It took some time before many of the recommendations in the plan regarding teacher education came to fruition. Today there is growing awareness of the position of initial teacher education on a continuum which includes induction, early career and continuing professional development. It has long been recognised that there is a need to bring greater coherence to provision at all stages of the continuum. There were many reports on educational developments and thinking in the 90's. Perhaps the most significant being the *White Paper, Charting Our Education Future* in 1995, wherein the Department of Education and Science noted that *"As with other professions, and*

because of changing social and economic circumstances, initial teacher education cannot be regarded as the final preparation for a life-time of teaching". Initial teacher education is only the beginning of a process of lifelong learning as members of the teaching process.

The topic of teacher education has been the focus of significant attention in the 21st century, both nationally and internationally, with a number of major reports, initiatives and trends. The OECD report on *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers (2005)* and the EU initiative on *Improving Education of Teachers and Trainers* provide a wider context which were generally supportive of the teaching profession. Furthermore, the accelerating pace of societal and legislative change and educational reform, coupled with the increasingly complex and demanding role of teachers, demand a thorough and fresh look at teacher education. This is essential to ensure that teachers in 21st century Ireland have the capacity to meet the challenges that they face and are life-long learners, continually adapting over the course of their careers to enable them to support their students' learning.

Initial Teacher Education

Today, every teacher must be fully qualified to teach in primary school. Initial teacher education programmes for primary teachers are facilitated through a range of concurrent (undergraduate) and consecutive (postgraduate) programmes. Following recommendations in the *Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education* Provision *in Ireland* in 2012, there were further consolidations of teacher education providers. Since September 2016, there are four state-funded Colleges of Education which offer programmes of teacher education for primary teachers through a concurrent four-year course leading to a Bachelor of Education degree. They include Marino Institute of Education, Mary Immaculate College, *Froebel* Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University and the DCU Institute of Education. The latter is the newest provider, established through the incorporation of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education, Church of Ireland College of Education and the DCU School of Education Studies. In addition to the B. Ed, the colleges offer a postgraduate pathway into teaching through the 2-year Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching). The latter is also offered by the private college, Hibernia, as an online, blended course.

Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century (2002), the report of the review body in teacher education established by the Minister for Education in 1998, produced significant recommendations on the length, content and structure of programmes and on student selection and assessment. The report has been influential in shaping thinking and developments in primary teacher education: some of its recommendations have already been addressed; others remain to be implemented. A key proposal from the report was that the B. Ed programme be extended to a four-year degree, however, the extension did not become a reality until after the publication *The National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy 2011-2020.* The extension of the programme aimed to improve teacher preparation, enhance the status of primary teachers and ensure teachers kept pace with other professionals. In order to reflect the changing times, the extended

programme of initial teacher education has allowed for increased content including modules in diversity, special education, ICT and early childhood education.

The Teaching Council has a range of functions relating to teacher education. These functions span the entire teaching career from entry to initial teacher education programmes, accreditation of such programmes, induction of newly qualified teachers into the profession and the continuing professional development of teachers throughout their careers. The Council's role in reviewing and accrediting programmes of initial teacher education will allow it to ensure that high standards of entry to the profession in Ireland are maintained. The Colleges of Education are pro-active in responding to the challenges arising from changes in Irish society, such as increased religious diversity, multi-culturalism and special educational and social inclusion. Not all primary school teachers in Ireland have completed their initial teacher education in the Republic of Ireland. Some have elected to pursue their initial training in primary teacher education outside the state. Typically, this consists of post graduate study in the United Kingdom, although some have completed undergraduate programmes as well. Teachers returning to teach in the primary sector in Ireland must then satisfy The Teaching Council that they are competent in the teaching of Irish. In addition, depending on their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) course, the Teaching Council may identify additional shortfalls.

Primary teaching in Ireland continues to attract high calibre students (Ireland, 2015). However, there are some concerns about how well membership of the teaching profession reflects society more broadly. For example, high-achieving males do not seem to be attracted into teaching especially at primary level. There is a significant gender imbalance with only 14% male primary teachers vis-à-vis 86% female teachers in the 15/16 academic year (DES, 2015; INTO, 2015). There is also some concern at the under-representation of people from disadvantaged and minority ethnic backgrounds which will need to be addressed (Conway et al, 2009).

The pedagogical or craft knowledge, as described by Sockett (1993), was perceived to be acquired through learning in the classroom situation and through observation of, and support from, more experienced teaching colleagues. In the Irish context, the term "school placement" replaces the term "teaching practice" as it more accurately reflects the range of teaching and non-teaching activities involved. It is a critical part of initial teacher education as it enables the student teacher to experience teaching and learning in a variety of contexts, and to participate in school life in a way that is structured and supported. The Teaching Council has determined that 25% of student time over the four years of undergraduate programmes and 40% of student time over the two years of post-graduate programmes should be allocated to school placement. The extended programme of school placement became a reality in 2012 as a result of recommendations set out in the *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* (2011). Under current arrangements, a student teacher will spend in the region of 24 weeks in schools during their initial teacher education. In all cases, the second half of the programme must include one 10-week block placement. During school placement, student teachers are visited and evaluated by personnel from the Colleges of Education. The new model of extended teaching placement was welcomed, however, it was also highlighted by delegates at a Joint INTO/MIC seminar on school placement (2016), that schools and

teachers are finding it challenging to accommodate the increased demands for school placement.

Induction and probation

Induction can be defined as 'formal introduction to a new job' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016). In the context of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), it is a programme of teacher education which takes place during that critical period at the beginning of the newly qualified teacher's career, usually the first year after qualifying as a teacher. It is a period of great personal and professional growth and change for new teachers. Induction is viewed as a transition period from student-teacher to full-time professional (INTO, 1995). It is the point that the difficulties of bridging theory and practice begin to emerge and thus it is an important part of the professional development of teachers. It is a career phase that should be characterised by the professional guidance of more experienced colleagues and the support of school structures and administration. The INTO argues that an occupation that calls itself a profession has a moral obligation to demand and participate in the provision of such service (INTO, 1995).

Professional development is central to the success and effectiveness of a teacher as they progress along the continuum of teacher education. Having operated as a successful pilot project since 2002, the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) was established as a starting point for that process of professional development. The introduction of an induction programme for all newly qualified teachers was a major step forward in building the continuum of teacher education in Ireland. The programme, funded by the Department of Education and Skills, is a systematic professional and personal support to the newly qualified teacher. An induction workshop programme is available, through the NIPT, and completion of that programme is a registration requirement for all NQTs who graduated with their teacher education qualification in 2012 and subsequently. The programme builds on the learning that took place during initial teacher education. It can be tailored by an NQT to his or her particular circumstances. Subject to an overall minimum of 20 hours of professional learning, NQTs may combine school-based professional learning activities with off-site workshops.

On the completion of initial teacher education, newly qualified teachers are subject to a probationary process. The quality of teaching is the central professional indicator that is evaluated by the inspectors. It is a highly influential contributor of the quality of pupils learning and to the general effectiveness of the school as a teaching and learning organisation. Therefore, the probation process is a valuable aspect of the support available to schools and NQTs. The current probationary process involves a minimum teaching service requirement (100 days) and incidental visits from a Department of Education and Skills Inspector, who will prepare a report on the suitability of the teacher. After successful completion of the probationary period teachers become eligible for full recognition to teach in Irish primary schools. The traditional probationary model involves the Inspector visiting teachers during the probationary period to monitor their progress, to provide advice and guidance and to report on their performance. Not unlike

our colleagues in 1916, the final inspectorate report provides an overall rating of the teacher's work – satisfactory or not satisfactory.

The sections of the Teaching Council Act 2001 dealing with probation were commenced in September 2012. This means that the Council has a statutory responsibility for establishing procedures and criteria for the probation of newly qualified teachers. From September 2013, the Council introduced a new enhanced model of school-based induction and probation on a pilot basis called *Droichead*. The process builds on the pilot project on induction where teachers are mentored by fellow experienced teachers. *Droichead* was designed in collaboration with the profession to reflect the importance of induction for new teachers. It is grounded in the belief that those best placed to conduct this formal welcome are experienced colleagues who have relevant and in-depth knowledge of teaching and learning in their respective schools. A Professional Support Team (PST) is in place to work collaboratively to support and mentor the NQT during school-based induction, in the first stages of their professional journey. Alternatively, an external PST member can be appointed to the PST team and take responsibility for signing the form at the conclusion of the process in place of the principal of the school. However, principals and teachers have raised many questions in relation to Droichead proposals including, among others, funding and resourcing of the scheme.

Career Professional Development

Engaging in professional development throughout one's career is an integral part of being a teacher (Desimone, 2009). There is strong support among teachers for the principle that professional development is both a right and a responsibility of teachers and teachers are on a learning journey throughout their career (INTO, 2015). Ongoing professional development is essential for teachers to improve their pedagogical practice and skills, thus, enhancing student outcomes. CPD is most effective in enhancing teacher performance and improving student learning when it is continuous and sustained relevant to the work of teachers in their classrooms and enables teacher professional collaboration and connects to wider school reform efforts (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Burns & Darling-Hammond, 2014).

The Irish system's approach to CPD for teachers has been inconsistent. Professor Coolahan has described it as a 'chequered history' with times of worthwhile developments followed by periods of stagnation (Coolahan, 2007, p.2). Prior to the 1999 launch of *The Revised Primary School Curriculum* in Ireland, uptake of CPD was haphazard and inconsistent across the profession. Engagement in CPD was limited to teachers' individual motivation to pursue career development. In appraising the unsystematic approach to teacher CPD, Loxley et al proposed that 'in the absence of any form of central provision, a default policy of laissez-faire prevails' (Loxley et al, 2007, p.270). Sugrue et al (2001) concurred that teacher CPD in Ireland was deficient and unsatisfactory in terms of professional learning. On an international front, the OECD report, *Teacher's Matter: Attracting, Retaining and Developing Teachers* (2005) noted that 'although professional development is now receiving more policy attention, it often seems to be fragmented and limited in scope'.

When European funding became available for teacher professional development, teacher professional development was co-ordinated by the newly established and highly centralised In-Career Development Unit (ICDU) in 1992. The unit became later known as the Teacher Education Section (TES) of the DES. These early CPD programmes provided support to teachers of a curricular and development planning nature. The remit was later broadened to include additional support to teachers such as classroom and behaviour management.

The 1999 *Primary School Curriculum* was accompanied by a comprehensive and complementary programme for CPD that teachers were obliged to participate in. The form of CPD associated with the introduction of the Revised Curriculum consisted primarily of in-service workshops on a whole-school basis, during school time and it was generally provided by teachers seconded from their teaching posts and tasked with rolling out the curriculum on a national basis. The introduction of the revised curriculum saw a period of highly prescriptive CPD being mandated for every teacher, during a teacher's working hours and funded by the system (O' Sullivan et al, 2011). After the off-site curricular seminars, it was anticipated that teachers would return to schools and work collaboratively to customise the curricular material to best suit their school contexts while being supported at school level by the *Primary Curriculum Support Programme* (PCSP) facilitators. Planning days were provided for this purpose. However, the financial crash reduced government spending in the area of teacher professional development and in 2010, the various support services were amalgamated over a period of two years to a single Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). Formal teacher CPD in Ireland, thus far, is in relation to system needs and funded by the DES and takes the form of seminar style lectures and workshops. There are other CPD providers including teacher unions, universities, education centres, online providers, external agencies and management bodies. However, participation is generally on a voluntary basis and often has a cost and personal time implication for the teacher. Teachers engage in a variety of CPD activities and courses in their own time, mainly in response to their individual, personal and professional needs There is no consolidation or collaboration amongst the various providers of non-DES teacher CPD, thus, the disjointed nature remains an ongoing issue.

The Teaching Council is currently developing its policy on continuing professional development entitled *Cosán.* This framework has its roots in the Teaching Council's *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* which was published in June 2011. In theory, any proposal to provide support to teachers engaging in professional development are welcome, however, there are some questions in relation to *Cosán* which must be discussed ahead of its proposed implementation in 2020. The importance of teacher autonomy in choosing CPD that meets their personal and professional needs, the provision and funding of the scheme, adequate and fully remunerated in-service training and the suggestion that completing a required number of courses in order for teacher registration to be renewed are just some of the issues that must be clarified before the scheme is implemented. In this regard it is crucial that the Teaching Council continues to liaise with teachers and their representative bodies through action research and further consultation ahead of full implementation of *Cosán.*

A CPD framework within any profession provides the opportunity to acknowledge formally the efforts of the teacher to keep up to date in pedagogical and professional developments and to be rewarded for an ongoing commitment to professional development. Despite the current ad-hoc model, Irish teachers have demonstrated a commitment to professional development despite the lack of formal recognition and accreditation. A state-wide commitment to ongoing professional development strives to ensure that teachers remain current on the latest thinking in relation to teaching, learning and assessment, and endeavours to ensure that teachers are kept abreast of curricular reforms and other national policy developments. Effective professional development enables teachers to exercise professional judgement in dealing with a range of complex issues and unpredictable situations (The Teaching Council, 2015). Irish teachers are currently practising in a climate of rapid educational change at both national and local level.

It is significant to note that professional development has a significant impact on the success of educational developments and reform (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). The INTO welcomes the fact that the new primary language curriculum is being implemented in conjunction with provisions for teacher CPD.

In conclusion, it is sufficient to state that teacher engagement with professional development is an integral part of being a teacher. Professional development can enable teachers to embrace educational reform, affirm their learning and positively influence student outcomes. Notwithstanding the challenges, Irish education is finally progressing towards a school system of learning communities and recognising teachers as life-long learners. Teaching is considered a complex activity in a constantly changing world and teachers are obliged to respond professionally. Developing a framework for CPD should continue to be a consultative process and reflect the political, pragmatic and personal dimensions of a teacher's work.

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Curriculum

1916

The *Revised Programme for National Schools 1900-1922* followed the abolition of 'payment by results' in 1899. The aim of the Revised Programme was to implement a broad and balanced curriculum. Among the key features of the radically changed programme were the adoption of wide programmes which included, as well as the three R's, kindergarten, manual instruction, drawing, singing, object lessons, elementary science, physical education, cookery and laundry as obligatory subjects. Needlework was taught to girls and agriculture to boys. The programme placed a special emphasis on the education of young children, advocating the basing of education on the local environment and proposing that schools should be interesting and humane places. Teachers were urged to adapt the programme to suit the local environment and to provide opportunities for pupil visits to local historical sites and nature trips to collect geological and botanical specimens. Teachers who could sing, conduct or train a choir and teach Irish were much sought after. In fact, Irish was taught in less than 300 of the country's 8,118 primary schools. Teachers were encouraged to integrate and teach in a non-compartmentalised manner. There was an emphasis on problem solving in arithmetic - drawing on the children's everyday experiences. In the *Notes for Teachers,* teachers were encouraged to adopt heuristic, discovery-type teaching methods. The child-centred philosophy of the Revised Programme was at variance with conceptualisations of children in earlier programmes (Walsh, 2012).

There was much discontent among teachers with regard to the school programme of 1916 (INTO, 1916). The ambitious aspirations originally set out in the *Revised Programme* were not accompanied with the necessary implementation supports and resources. By 1916, the programme was condemned for being overloaded with 'fantastic nick-nacks' long cast aside by other more progressive countries as to be almost unworkable. There were calls for reform of the entire education system as it was considered backward in comparison to other western countries. The religious programme was equally burdensome and just as difficult to manage. There were aspirations for a resurgence of 'the land of saints and scholars' at the time as teachers did not want an 'education which would only fit the youth for narrow outlooks and humdrum careers' (INTO, 1916, p. 453). Teachers considered that the injury inflicted on future citizens, with the antiquated and out of date methods of imparting knowledge, was incalculable. Teachers envisaged a programme that fulfilled the holistic development of the child through a moral, intellectual and technical education. Teachers demanded that a proper and sensible programme, not a rigid one, be drawn up, and that the subjects included in it prove serviceable in the afterlife of the pupils. Teachers argued that it was obvious that no one with expert classroom knowledge was consulted

in the preparation of the programme but instead it was lifted from the 'refuse heaps of other nations' (p. 453).

The programme in place was considered to be 'utterly worthless from a utilitarian point of view' (INTO, 1916, p.453). It was maintained that science in girls' schools, or in any primary school was worthless and should be abolished. Attempts were being made to introduce school gardens although with little success. Overall, the Revised Programme fell short of the educational revolution it set out to promote. It was criticised for being overly influenced by other jurisdictions and it was not sufficiently contextualised in the Irish context. The Programme lacked appropriate support infrastructure to ensure successful implementation. Issues around teacher training, insufficient funding, the physical conditions of schools, poor attendance rates and the lack of popular support of the reforms also hindered implementation (Walsh, 2012).

1947

In a post-colonial Ireland and amid patriotic fervour the 1922 programme was a radical departure from its predecessor. The overarching aim was to highlight the difference between pre- and post- independence educational policies, emphasising the Irish language and the Catholic religion as the main features of this distinct identity. Calls for curriculum reform emerged in the *Plan for Education* (INTO, 1947) prompted by an era of social, economic, educational and political change and particularly in the light of the global trend for the extension of popular education. The Plan was critical of education in Ireland at the time as being too academic and intellectual with the consequent neglect of the practical. The INTO affirmed that 'factual knowledge is no more education as a dictionary is a work of literature' (1947, p. 39). There were continued demands for the content and technique of all education to be reviewed to include a more holistic approach to education, nurturing not only the mind but also the body. The Plan proposed a system of education that catered not only for 'man's economic needs, but also for his individual personal needs – spiritual, mental, physical' (INTO, 1947, p.39). Suggestions for subject integration, collaborative and active learning permeated the *Plan for Education*. It was envisaged that education should prepare not only for livelihood but also for life. It was suggested that 'the needs of the child should take precedence over all other interests, motives and aims' be the guiding axiom in drawing up a curriculum (INTO, 1947, p.39). It was also clearly stated that curriculum reform must be accompanied by a radical reform of the inspection system.

Proposals for a new curriculum in 1947 recommended that religion should continue to permeate the whole schooling of the child and that it should be regarded as the first aim of education. The Plan suggested that written Irish was introduced much too early and the emphasis should be purely on oral Irish in the early years to ensure that it is taught as a living language. The INTO agreed with the Department's recommendation that the teaching of arithmetic should be correlated with the 'ordinary, daily-life problems of the community' (INTO, 1947, p.42). It was proposed that the curriculum should consider the merits of introducing the metric system as the adoption of this system of measurement would save time and trouble in both the commercial life and in schools.

The Plan also recommended that formal algebra and geometry should be abolished in any reform of curriculum.

There were recommendations to lengthen the history curriculum from two to three years and to extend the content to include international history as well as Irish history. The plan was critical of the over-emphasis and glorification of nationalism in the history curriculum at the time. It was suggested that 'we should see a little less attention paid to purely military history and a little more to social history' (p.46) in order to ensure that children don't get a confused picture of intermittent armed conflict. There was a proposal that Geography should include the social and human angle as well as the physical aspect. There were strong demands for illustrative resources and multimedia to aid the teaching of History and Geography as teachers were confined to the use of text that didn't effectively engage the children.

21st Century

A number of factors coalesced in the 1960s which acted as catalysts to reform the primary school curriculum including, among others, developments in communication and technology, increased economic prosperity and increased aspiration for attainment of equality in education (Fleming and Harford, 2014). The publication of the *Investment in Education Report* (Department of Education 1965), reaffirmed the theory that increased investment in education was an essential ingredient for economic development (Loxley, Seery, and Walsh 2014). The central role played by the Catholic Church in education began to decline and political leaders asserted their role in education policy (O'Donoghue and Harford 2011). The late 1960s saw the preparation for a new curriculum for national schools which became official policy in 1971. Curaclam na Bunscoile (1971), in its ideology and content and format was a radical contrast to that which had existed previously (Coolahan, 2014). It was lauded for its child-centred, discovery approach to learning and its wide subject range. It represented a seismic shift in state policy and attitude towards the education of children and set the tone for subsequent provision along the lines still delivered in the 21st century.

The 1999 Primary School Curriculum which was guided by the recommendations of the Review Body of the Primary Curriculum (1990), incorporated the principles of Curaclam na Bunscoile and developed them. The 1999 curriculum integrates new content and advocates new approaches and methodologies. The introduction of the curriculum was followed by a comprehensive programme of professional development support for teachers and schools. The curriculum for Ireland's primary schools is determined by the Minister for Education and Skills who is advised by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). While Ireland has a centrally devised curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on school and classroom planning. At school level, the particular character of the school makes a vital contribution to shaping the curriculum in classrooms. Adaptation of the curriculum to suit the individual school is achieved through the preparation and continuous updating of a school plan. The selection of text books and classroom resources to support the implementation of the curriculum is made by schools.

Irish teachers have a quite unique role in curriculum design. Unlike the Revised Programme in 1916, practising teachers were central to the process of the development of the 1999 curriculum. In general, the primary school curriculum 1999 was very well received by teachers (INTO, 2015). This was a departure from previous practice, whereby curriculum and policy was largely determined by the Department of Education.

The current curriculum was developed through a partnership process, involving teachers, parents, school management, and the Department of Education and Science. Primary teachers and the INTO were active participants in preparing the revised curriculum of 1999 through their involvement in designing and preparing curriculum content. According to Sugrue (2004), the INTO's involvement with the NCCA in the process and structure of the 1999 curriculum allowed for strong teacher ownership with resulting strong professional buy-in.

The pedagogical principles which underpin the curriculum have been broadened and redefined. The principles underlying the primary curriculum are based on different theories of child development and growth, including the theories of Piaget, Bruner and Vygotsky on how children think and learn. The vision for primary education outlined in the curriculum focuses on the uniqueness of the child, the child and society, education and society, the development of the child, and learning how to learn. The education system in Ireland aims to provide a holistic education to enable children to live their lives to the full and to realise their potential as unique individuals. The Primary School Curriculum is designed to nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life – spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical. The curriculum is presented in seven curriculum areas comprising 12 subjects. The development for curriculum for religious education remains the responsibility of the different church authorities. In addition to literacy and numeracy, the curriculum places due emphasis on the importance of the arts, physical education and social, personal and health education.

Assessment is an integral part of the primary school curriculum in Ireland. It is the part of the learning process whereby the learner and the teacher can evaluate progress or achievement in the development of a particular skill, or in the understanding of a particular area of knowledge. In primary schools, this informal observation is supplemented by a range of assessment tools including teacher-designed tests and tasks, project work and portfolios across the curriculum. Standardised tests in reading and mathematics are also widely used in primary schools. Children are often involved in the process of self-evaluation using portfolios and records of their work. Teachers value standardised testing as beneficial as such tests highlight areas that require intervention, however, teachers are of the opinion that they need to reflect the curriculum more accurately (INTO, 2015). The NCCA responded to requests from teachers for additional resources to support assessment with *Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools (*2007). In response to the dearth of research specific to the Irish context, the INTO and DCU are embarking on a joint research project in 2016 in the area of standardised assessment in primary schools.

Even though the curriculum was well-received, it emerged over the years that aspects of the curriculum created challenges for teachers (INTO, 2005). Based on the premise that the curriculum is a working document, the NCCA gathered data in 2003/04 for the first phase of a curriculum review in English, visual arts and mathematics (NCCA, 2005). The second phase of curriculum review spanned the years 2006/07 and was designed to examine teachers' experiences with the teaching of Gaeilge, science and SPHE (NCCA, 2008). Arising from the various curriculum reviews, the NCCA responded by working with teachers, pupils and parents to develop further resources. Curriculum overload and time were identified as the greatest challenge to curriculum implementation. The two dimensions which teachers referred to were insufficient time to fully implement all subjects, and insufficient time to meet the needs of all learners.

Following in the tradition of carrying out research on curriculum every ten years since 1975, the INTO also carried out research in 2005 and held a consultative conference on the curriculum in 2006. Teachers had a lot of praise for the primary school curriculum, however, they acknowledged challenges regarding resources, class size, time, planning, funding and curriculum overload. Particular challenges were identified by teachers of infants, particularly in relation to the use of play, parental expectations, class size, classroom support, and integration of the curriculum, usually addressed through thematic teaching. Recommendations focussed on reducing the pupil/teacher ratio, funding, facilities and resources, professional development, Gaeilge, teaching methodologies in mathematics, and the use of ICT. The INTO also recommended that curriculum review should occur on a regular and ongoing basis (INTO, 2008). INTO carried out further research in 2015 and again held a consultative conference on the topic of curriculum. The curriculum was commended for facilitating a child-centred, active and discovery approach to teaching and learning. The curriculum was lauded for promoting collaborative learning and group work. However, teachers expressed the view that the curriculum wasn't designed for inclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN). Concerns continued with regards Gaeilge, including vagueness of grammar and too much emphasis on oral language. Our colleagues in 1947 had the reverse view regarding Gaeilge citing an over emphasis on grammar and a lack of oral language particularly in the early years (INTO, 1947). Another major recurring cause of frustration and difficulty for many teachers is the sense of overload in the scope of the curriculum itself, but particularly in relation to lack of sufficient time for planning, unrealistic expectations, and increased paperwork (INTO, 2015).

One of the key methodologies of the revised curriculum is the integration of the various subjects. Integration is seen as a valuable mechanism for reducing the workload associated with many individual subject areas. However, the infant teachers expressed reservations about the planning demands of integration and they stated that in practice teachers of infants taught according to themes drawing on the various subject areas. Teachers of infants usually teach thematically and would welcome a programme that would support the approach (INTO, 2005). It was widely agreed that a thematic approach works very well across the curriculum, especially with multi-grade classes. Integration was always the key to effective teaching and the revised curriculum offered great scope for cross-curricular work. However, teachers expressed the view that they should guard against overuse of thematic and integrated approaches (INTO, 2015).

Since 1999, the NCCA has produced additional guidelines to provide practical support to schools on specific aspects of curriculum and assessment such as teaching students with special educational needs. In 2009, the NCCA published *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* in partnership with the early childhood sector. The development of the curriculum framework for children aged birth to six years involved widespread consultation with all of the early childhood education stakeholders. The aim was to provide information for parents and educationalists on challenging and enjoyable learning experiences that can enable all children to grow and develop as competent and confident learners in the context of loving relationships with others. In the absence of any national support programme to bring *Aistear* to primary schools, the NCCA, in collaboration with the Association of Teacher and Education Centres, organised the *Aistear* Tutor Initiative, providing both summer courses and evening courses for teachers who wished to use *Aistear* in their classrooms. The development of *Aistear* raised challenges in relation to curriculum developments for the infant classes, as it was based on the most up-to-date research on how young children develop and learn. Teachers continue to be challenged today in the absence of a full implementation plan and state supported infrastructure for the *Aistear* framework.

The publication of the *National Plan for Improving Literacy and Numeracy 2011-2020* by the Department of Education and Skills has, and will continue to, shape the primary school curriculum in 21st century Ireland. The draft report invited comments from teachers, education stakeholders and the public. Following the poor performance of Irish students in PISA[1] 2009, it was widely acknowledged that there was a need to improve standards in literacy and numeracy. However, the interpretations around Ireland's performance in PISA 2009 were strongly contested. Ireland's performance in later international assessments such as PIRLS[2] and TIMSS2[3] in 2011, and PISA 2012, showed that there had been no drop in standards in literacy and numeracy, raising questions in educational circles as to the importance and even the legitimacy of using test results as a yardstick of improvement or excellence. The draft strategy was amended based on feedback, and published in 2011 (DES, 2011). Furthermore, the 2014 National Assessments, carried out by the Education Research Centre (ERC), show significant and substantive improvements in both English reading and mathematics compared with performance in the 2009 National Assessments (Shiel, Kavanagh & Miller, 2014)

The *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* contained a number of proposals in relation to curriculum including, among others, a recommendation for increased time on literacy and numeracy and a call for a review of the language and mathematics curricula. It was acknowledged in the strategy that approaches to literacy and numeracy in the infant classes needed to be revised to bring them in line with the teaching and learning approaches advocated in *Aistear*. The learning outcomes that pupils were expected to

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[1] The **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)** is a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in member and non-member nations of 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance on mathematics, science, and reading.
[2] The **Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)** is an international study of reading achievement in fourth graders. It is conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).
[3] The **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)** is a series of international assessments of the mathematics and science knowledge of students around the world

achieve in the *Primary School Curriculum 1999* were somewhat obscured according to the strategy, therefore, it was recommended that the revised curriculum should be based on a learning outcomes design, with learning outcomes incorporated into all curricula statements. While many of the recommendations in the strategy have yet to be implemented, it is clear that the strategy will inform curriculum review and development going forward.

In light of curriculum review reports (NCCA, 2005; 2009; DES, 2005) and the recommendations in the *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy,* the NCCA set about revising the language curriculum. The revised primary language curriculum for junior infants to second class was published in 2016. The revised curriculum for third to sixth class is scheduled for completion in 2018/19. The phased implementation of the integrated language curriculum will be accompanied with ongoing professional development programme for all teachers. In this language curriculum, the common curriculum specification for Language 1 and Language 2 means that integration within a specific language, between languages and across the curriculum is explicitly identified, and that language learning is not compartmentalised. The revised language curriculum seeks to reduce the overload associated with the 1999 curriculum, by including fewer learning outcomes than there are content objectives in the current curriculum. A learning outcomes approach to curriculum is a departure for primary schools in Ireland. Therefore, the efficacy of learning outcomes approach in primary schools will need to be monitored and evaluated as part of the implementation process of the revised language curriculum.

The *Report of the Forum on Pluralism and Patronage (1999)* recommended that the NCCA be given the task of developing a curriculum for primary schools on education about religious beliefs and ethics. At present, a faith-based religious programme is provided in denominational schools, an ethical education programme is provided in Educate Together schools and the community national schools are developing a multi-belief education programme. These programmes are designed by the patrons of the schools and not by the state although parents may request that their children opt out of religious programmes. To some extent ethics and education about religious beliefs are included in the current patrons' programmes, while education about religions and ethical issues also arise in other curriculum areas. The NCCA has engaged in consultation on a curriculum for education about religious beliefs and ethics, but no decisions have yet been made about the introduction of such a curriculum, what it would include or when it would be taught.

The next stage of consultations on the primary school curriculum to be held by the NCCA will focus on the structure of the primary school curriculum and time allocations. The development of *Aistear* has led to demands from teachers of infant classes to reconsider the structure of the infant classes. Presenting a curriculum for infant classes with 11 subjects is no longer considered appropriate (NCCA, 2016). It was also recommended in the *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* that the curriculum for the infant classes should be revised in line with *Aistear.* The current structure of the *Primary School Curriculum* is across 4 distinct bands. The key consideration is at what stage of the Primary School should the curriculum structure move from being based

around themes, as is the case in *Aistear*, to being subject based*. The Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* also requested the NCCA to advise on time allocations to meet the recommendation that additional time be allocated to literacy and numeracy. In addition, the NCCA is currently tasked with a revision of the primary maths curriculum for junior infants to second class in line with proposals set out in the *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* and their own curriculum review. One hundred years ago, teachers worked with programmes of instruction which were inflicted on them. Today teachers are centrally involved in curriculum reform, and implementing the aspirations which were envisaged in 1947 by our colleagues in the *Plan for Education.*

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ICT

1916

The blackboard was the main tool for communication in the 1916 classroom. With electricity being a relatively new phenomenon at the turn of the 20th Century the idea of an interactive classroom would have been an alien concept. The only mouse in the 1916 classroom was of the four-legged variety and the only monitor in most classrooms was of the human type!

1947

While IT was still not on the agenda in 1947, the INTO Plan for Education made strong demands for multi-media resources to be provided to ensure the enhanced engagement and learning of pupils. INTO claimed there was an urgent need for dramatized wireless lessons, school radio sets, films and film projectors, film strips and other modern devices.

21st Century

Information and communication technology (ICT) has brought profound changes to all aspects of our lives in recent years as its rate of change has greatly accelerated. Digital literacy - the ability to access, critically evaluate and communicate effectively using digital media and ICT - has become the new buzz word in the world of business, commerce and education in the 21st Century. In the field of education, the previously mighty pen and notepad have truly been replaced by the tablet or laptop. Students are often more competent and confident at using technology that their teachers, particularly as there has been no structured national CPD for teachers in ICT. While exceptional progress has been made, ICT is ever-changing and it requires continual investment to keep pace with new developments and to broaden and deepen our knowledge and familiarity with ICT.

ICT, in one form or another, has been part of the education system in Ireland since the 1970's. *The Computers in Education Society of Ireland* was founded in 1973 by a small but dedicated group of computer enthusiasts and has been hosting annual gatherings since then, funded initially by contributions from the teachers themselves and more recently by company and some institutional sponsorship. The first major initiative which took place to introduce IT to primary schools was undertaken by the Department of Education in 1984. In June of that year, the Curriculum Unit of the Department organised a pilot project *Computers in Education* which was conducted over a period of two school years 1984/85 and 1985/86. The project findings confirmed clearly that ICT enhances children's educational opportunities. It was established that access to

technology created possibilities for new ways of learning and teaching. Independent, self-directed learning became real for the child, with the teacher in the role of guide and facilitator of the learning process.

Despite this pioneering work it was not until 1997 that the Minister for Education and Science, Micheál Martin, T.D., produced the first technology related policy document entitled *Schools IT 2000- A Policy Framework for the New Millennium.* The Government had invested substantially under the *Schools* IT *2000* initiative. The main objective was to ensure that all pupils should have the opportunity to achieve computer literacy and to equip them for participation in the information society while teachers were to be supported toward the development and renewal of their professional skills, so as to enable them to utilise ICTs as part of the learning environment. It represented a bold initiative by the Irish government to promote ICT in schools in Ireland. It also highlighted the need for more teacher training, more funding for computers, more technical support, and encouragement to make use of ICT in education (DES, 1997). Schools IT 2000 acknowledged that a special effort by Government was needed to educate teachers in making use of ICT in their day-to-day teaching. A key aspect of the Schools IT 2000 was the Schools Integration Project (SIP). It involved pilot projects in a number of 'lead' schools in Ireland working in partnership with education centres, businesses, industry, third-level institutions and the community to develop and share 'best practice' in the use and integration of ICT in teaching and learning. Some of the largest funding in the State's history to that date was for SIP.

In 1999, the *Primary School Curriculum* identified the role of information and communications technology as a key issue. ICT is advocated as an aid to implementing the child-centred principles of the primary curriculum and teachers make efforts to integrate technology within the primary curriculum. While ICT is not a curriculum subject, it is implied that it is integrated into other curricular areas to enhance teaching and learning leading to the development of technological skills. As stated in the Introduction to the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999):

> Technological skills are increasingly important for the advancement in education, work and leisure. The curriculum integrates information and communication technologies into the teaching and learning process and provides children with opportunities to use modern technology to enhance their learning in all subjects.

The curriculum was followed by the *Blueprint for the Future of ICT in Education (DES, 2001)*, setting out a three-year strategic action plan for ICT in primary and post-primary schools. This investment aimed to ensure that students and teachers remained at the cutting edge of international innovation and development in ICT. It outlined the main thrust of Department of Education and Science's ICT strategy including the expansion of ICT capital provision for schools, increased access to, and use of internet technologies, further integration of ICT into the school curriculum, and improving the professional development of teachers. This plan aimed to provide every school in the country with substantial grants for the development of their computer infrastructure and equipment with significant extra support for special needs pupils. The Irish Government's policy for the development of ICT in education was further elaborated in the *'Statement of Strategy 2005-2007'* (DES, 2004) document, which referred to the need for education

to support a knowledge and innovation-based society and lifelong learning. The emphasis on computer literacy skills is clear in the following statement: *'we encourage pupils to achieve computer literacy and acquire the necessary skills for participation in the Information Society'* (2004, p. 36).

Investing Effectively in ICT in Schools 2008-2013 highlighted the need for an integrated approach addressing teacher professional development and school ICT infrastructure, including broadband provision, technical support and digital content. The report also emphasised the need for strong leadership and whole-school commitment if schools were to integrate ICT successfully in learning and teaching. The report was based on the premise that the integrated use of ICT strengthens learning and increases the sense of relevance by making learning more reflective of students' social and personal use of ICT.

The action plan on integrating ICT in classrooms *Smart schools=Smart Economy* was launched in 2009 making grant provisions for ICT infrastructure upgrades in schools. The funding was to be used to equip schools with a teaching computer and a fixed digital projector. The initiative has led to classrooms becoming digital hubs with interactive whiteboards at the core. The plan recognised the potential of ICT as a motivational tool to engage students and to enrich and enliven teaching across the curriculum. However, INTO (2010) noted that funding initially ear-marked for many of the ICT strategies was not delivered.

In October 2015, the DES launched its *Digital Strategy for Schools* which promises investments of €210m over five years. *Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020: Enhancing, Teaching, Learning and Assessment* pledges to provide enhanced digital content to schools to build on the successful roll-out of high-speed broadband to every second-level school by investing in high-speed Wi-Fi networks in every school. However, the plan was strongly condemned by INTO for failing to deliver broadband for primary schools across the board (INTO, 2016). The INTO also criticised the lack of detail in relation to funding for upgrading of equipment. Furthermore, the union argues that the restoration of posts of responsibility for ICT are a pre-requisite in every school before attempts are made to introduce aspects of the strategy.

The *Digital Strategy* recognises the need to work with stakeholders to promote safe and responsible use of the internet and social media, including providing new resources to schools to better prevent cyber-bullying. Social media permeate today's society with many school children engrossed, in some cases to the point of unhealthy addiction, in the latest happenings via apps such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. Social media are defined in the Oxford dictionary as 'websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking'. Tools like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were initially almost exclusively used to take a break from academics. However social media are increasingly being leveraged as a study tool, especially for today's tech-savvy students. Social media no longer have to be an obstacle to studying; it can help students create and manage a study community, make the best use of study time, and find new resources to help them learn and retain knowledge. An increasing number of schools are taking advantage of social media to communicate with parents and students through their websites whether by sending texts or providing

tweets to parents about scheduling, weather closures and school events. Social media are also being used to update parents regarding their children's progress using apps such as *Class Dojo* or *See Saw*. Social media can be an excellent tool for educators and can certainly be used effectively as long as certain guidelines are in place.

While ICT and social media provide wonderful opportunities for schools, there are also some risks and possible perils. Pupils need to be media-savvy and know how to effectively search for and evaluate online content; know how to protect personal information and reputation; know to respect copyright and intellectual property and know where to get help if problems arise. The prevalence of cyber-bullying has increased with the increasing use of the internet and particularly social media. An EU *Kids Online* survey tells us that up to 25 percent of 9-16 year olds have experienced some form of bullying (online or offline) in Ireland, with four percent of that group having been victim of cyber bullies. Schools have a duty of care to their pupils, and this includes helping children and young people to use new digital technologies safely and responsibly, wherever and whenever they go online. An absolute prerequisite to allow this to happen is the development of an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). Most schools who currently have websites also have AUP's. Support and advice on developing an AUP is available from the PDST through the *Webwise* website. Given the speed with which the internet is changing any such policy needs yearly updating to be responsive. Furthermore, the Department of Education and Skill's *Schools Broadband Programme* provides content filtering levels of internet access for schools to ensure safe use. However, students should also be facilitated with the autonomy to be responsible "web citizens".

The *Digital Strategy* also recognises the requirement to embed ICT skills as part of initial teacher education and ongoing training for teachers. The need for pre-service and in-service training in ICT for teachers has long been mooted by the INTO. In the 1997 publication, *Information Technology in Irish Primary Education*, the INTO stated that it is policy that teachers should have the right of access to training in Information Technology both in pre-service and in-service. However, uptake of CPD in the area of ICT continues to be as a consequence of a teacher's personal motivation and in the teachers' own time and at their own expense. School administration is operating in an increasingly complex digital environment, for example *Aladdin*, POD, and teachers and principals must be equipped to be responsive to these changes in administration. Also, the NCCA anticipates that the developments in the revision of the primary curriculum will be available to teachers exclusively online. The expectation for ongoing engagement with ICT, for teaching and learning and for school administration, must be supported with adequate resources and infrastructure.

INTO has long recognised the potential of ICT to enhance teaching and learning significantly when deployed and utilised in a pedagogically appropriate way, that facilitates pupils' co-constructing, applying and creating knowledge for themselves, both individually and collaboratively (INTO, 1997; INTO, 2014). ICT enables teachers to bring lessons to life in new ways, to motivate learners and to find new ways of reaching students with special educational needs. Furthermore, INTO has often highlighted the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating ICT fully into the primary curriculum. INTO has continuously campaigned for long term multi-annual funding,

provision of high quality transformative CPD opportunities for teachers, high speed broadband and the integration of ICT related objectives into the primary curriculum (INTO, 2014).

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Evaluation and Parents

1916

Evaluation

Inspection of schools has been a feature of the Irish education system since the foundation of the national school system in 1831. Inspectors were of high educational attainment and considerable social standing (Walsh, 2012). In 1913, less than a third of inspectors had been practising teachers with experience of the classroom (Fontes, Kellaghan & O'Brien, 1983). In 1916, the role of the Inspector was to assess the extent of learning and quality of instruction as well as the general running of schools, with a focus on regulation and inspection as opposed to an advisory role (Killeen, 1986). Although a single inspectorate is in place today, three separate branches previously existed responsible for the evaluation of national, secondary and vocational schools respectively.

The residual effect of the 'payment by results' system still permeated schools in 1916. The model of inspection was condemned by delegates at INTO Congress because it nurtured a culture of cramming in schools (INTO, 1916). Teachers deplored the evaluation system of the time for being 'over-inspected by gentlemen the Board calls 'inspectors', and whose chief function seems to be to find fault with teachers' (INTO, 1916, p. 454). However, INTO acknowledged that Inspectors were necessary and welcomed their role provided they remained reasonable and sympathetic. The INTO boldly proposed that a few of the inspectors at the time should have been pensioned off and removed from the education system declaring that 'any inspector who despises children attending a National school, and who looks upon the teacher with the utmost contempt, should be removed from office' (INTO, 1916, p. 454). Inspectors were condemned for their lack of appreciation of the varying capacities of children in the different localities. Congress advised the teachers of 1916 not to fall victim to school inspections and to exercise their right not to be 'cringers or crawlers to Inspectors or Organisers but to hold their heads erect and show themselves as men and women engaged in the most noble work' (INTO, 1916, p. 456). Teachers were encouraged to manifest backbone and grit in the face of the adverse and harsh inspection system inherent at the time.

Parents

The earliest commentary points to very positive beginnings to parental involvement in education. Prior to 1831, education, which was primarily provided through 'Hedge Schools', was strongly supported by parents. Professor John Coolahan stated that parental involvement in the education of their children was a notable feature of the Irish educational landscape prior to the establishment of a system of formal primary

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education. The interest of parents and the support provided by them for the education that the children of the time received in the hedge schools has been acknowledged:

> Visitors to Ireland and observers of the social scene marvelled at the evidence of such keen interest in education exhibited by indigent Irish parents, and contrasted it with the apathy and lack of interest in schooling found among the common poor in other European countries of the time
>
> (Coolahan, as cited in INTO,. 1997, p.1).

The parental involvement differed to attitudes in other countries in Europe at the time (Coolahan, 2014). However, the introduction of the National School system in 1831 had the negative effect of diminishing, if not ending, the involvement of parents in the new Irish education system. Coolahan (1988) commented that *"Parents were removed from centre stage to outside the school gates, a place where they remained until the recent past"*.

Catholic Church involvement was increased due to the necessity to provide sites for schools and to organise local funding. The churches and the State controlled the education system, took an authoritarian stance and put an abrupt end to any parental involvement in Irish Education. In the new system, parents were removed, clearly and unequivocally, from participation, keeping them outside the school gates and barring them from playing any role in the formal education of their children. Ironically, attempts to introduce compulsory attendance in the 1870s were successfully resisted by the Catholic Church as an infringement of parental rights (Walsh, 2012).

There is little reference to parents as members of the school community in the 1916 literature which is reflective of the context at the time. In fact, the perceived lack of parental investment in the child's education is noted in the President's address at Congress 1916. It was suggested that the ordinary parent was not concerned about the curriculum or the progress of the scholar. Parents believed they had fulfilled their duty if they sent their child to school for one hundred or one hundred and fifty days in the year. Parents were satisfied to leave all to the teacher or manager. Teachers also had an expectation that parents should hold the National Board more accountable for their public expenditure (INTO, 1916).

Parents had little participation in devising the *Revised Programme of Instruction* being implemented between 1900-1921. Arguably, the alienation of parents, a key stakeholder in education provision, contributed to the failure to implement the Programme successfully (Walsh, 2012). The parents who favoured more literary education were dissatisfied with the provisions of the Revised Programme.. Some teachers curtailed the implementation in line with parents' wishes to focus on literacy and numeracy in preparation for respectable jobs and emigration (Starkie, 1911). Public apathy regarding education was a major disadvantage in the Irish context, leading to the lack of financial support and irregular attendance. Pupil absenteeism was a significant issue in 1916 with an average of only 70% attendance and may well be indicative of the level of value parents placed on children's education (Walsh, 2012).

1947

Evaluation

In 1947, the INTO was still critical of the inspectorate and admonished the 'harsh tradition' of evaluation (INTO, 1947, p. 33). In 1947, robust demands were made by the INTO for a full review of the model of evaluation in situ at the time. INTO argued that the real and lasting work of the teacher could not be assessed by an outsider on a brief visit. The inspector was condemned for sitting in judgement despite not having sufficient evidence on which to form a judgement. The inspector relied solely on the question and answer method of examination and refused to consider 'adverse conditions' such as overcrowded schools, slum schools and the average intelligence of the pupils.

The *Plan for Education* condemned the rating system and recommended its abolition. After the unreliable audit, the inspector labelled the teacher as 'Efficient', 'Non-Efficient' or 'Highly Efficient'. It was noteworthy that only one in every three teachers was privileged with the ultimate accolade of being labelled 'Highly Efficient'. The Plan cited that 'it is no defence for a system that purports to grade and label workers whose raw material is personality and character' (INTO, 1947, p. 34). At the time, the practice of labelling teachers was exclusive to the Irish context and INTO argued that it was no longer tolerable to the Irish teaching profession. The system led to cramming, driving and showmanship, flawed methods and false standards indicating that teachers put on a performance to impress the inspector.

While acknowledging the possibility of occasional gross misconduct, the INTO plan stated that most teachers were well-qualified and conscientious. It was suggested that the primary function of the inspector should not be a disciplinary one but rather that they should adopt a more advisory and supportive role for teachers. The plan called on the inspector to be a role model and be prepared to teach specimen lessons. Furthermore, INTO suggested that the inspector should also be more concerned with identifying excellence in teaching rather than getting entrenched in finding weakness. The inspector reports of 1947 were strongly critiqued as 'vague, stereotyped and unreal and the alleged diagnosis was rarely accompanied by prescription' (1947, p.36).

The *Plan for Education* suggested that the Inspector should be, like teachers, willing to engage in a 'refresher course' and there should be provision for 'periodic teaching practice' to give them a true perception of teaching and its associated challenges (1947, p.38). The plan states that the Inspector gave practically no help to the teacher and that 'he looks down at the national teachers as members of the inferior race' (1947, p.34). Finally, the plan called for the term 'Inspector' to be re-evaluated in view of its associations and suggested that it should be replaced by a term more appropriate with the professional status of teachers and with the spirit of the system at the time.

Parents

The control of the Catholic Church in education developed and strengthened during the 1800s and was allowed to continue in post-independent Ireland in spite of the fact that Article 42.1 of *Bunreacht na hEireann* contains an acknowledgement of the family as the primary and natural educator of the child and guarantees to respect the inalienable right

and duty of parents to provide for the education of their children according to their means:

> The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of the parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.

However, there was little evidence that the State, or the churches, were in any hurry to rescind, or reduce, their control over schools, which they had exercised with such authority up to then. The *Plan for Education* (1947) highlights the prominence of the Catholic Church, supported by the State, in governing the vast majority of schools. At the time the Church deemed itself best informed and supremely capable of representing parents in all educational matters pertaining to their children.

The INTO acknowledged the co-dependent link between education and community. It was contended that education should prepare one for the duties and responsibilities as a member of the community and as a citizen of the state. However, there was a dearth of reference to parents in the plan reflecting the lack of involvement and inclusion of parents as stakeholders in the school community. Both the Catholic church and the state were strikingly suspicious of and hostile towards the direct involvement of the community in education matters, despite the loyalty, devotion and financial support of the local congregations (Walsh, 2012).

Effectively, parents were excluded from any involvement in the management or governance of primary schools despite a publicly stated policy that recognised and upheld parental rights in the education of their children. However, the situation began to change significantly in the late 1960s with a pastoral letter from the Catholic Bishop which publicly recognised the right of parents to consultation about the education of their child. Efforts to encourage parental involvement were continued with parental inclusion on Boards of Management in 1975 and on the Primary Curriculum Review Body in 1987.

21st Century

Evaluation

Quality assurance has long been part of the primary school system in Ireland, with the Inspectorate playing a crucial role on behalf of the Department of Education in evaluating the work of schools. Whole School Evaluations (WSE) have been carried out in Irish schools since 2005, after the process was piloted in a small number of schools during the school year 2003-2004. At primary level WSE replaced *Tuairiscí Scoile* which had formed the basis for school evaluation since the 1970s. *Tuairiscí Scoile* were carried out by a school's local inspector on a cyclical basis, approximately every four years. However, due to workload issues for the inspectors, this period often extended up to eight years. The traditional system of designating an individual inspector to one school is no longer the case. Furthermore, schools, on the whole, have more positive relationships with their inspectors and value the advisory role they play (INTO, 2009).

The current functions of inspectors are set out in the Rules for National Schools, in various Department of Education and Skills circulars and in the Education Act (1998). The inspectors act as agents of the Minister for Education and Skills to supply the Minister with information and advice on matters pertaining to individual schools and on educational matters in general. The inspector continues to evaluate and report on the work of schools and to assess the work of teachers in relation to educational matters. However, it is accepted that the present-day Inspectors offer more of a co-operative, advisory and supportive role to schools and teachers. They are, however, required to advise teachers and boards of management in respect of the performance of their duties and, in particular, assist teachers in improving teaching methodologies and classroom management. While the inspectors are required to carry out their functions in accordance with the procedures laid down in the *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting for the Inspectorate* and the directions of the Minister, the Education Act specifically provides that an inspector shall have all such powers as are necessary or expedient for the purpose of performing her/his functions. Inspectors must also be accorded every reasonable facility and co-operation by the board and the staff of a school.

The Inspectorate use a number of models to gather information on the quality of education provision in schools. Some models, such as the incidental visits and curriculum evaluations, are quite short inspections that enable the Inspectorate to evaluate the work of the school and provide feedback for improvement to teachers and school leaders relatively quickly. They monitor the overall quality of educational provision. Other more intensive inspections, such as whole-school evaluations and DEIS evaluations, take more time and involve more detailed examinations of the leadership and management of the schools as well as evaluations of teaching and learning. The Curriculum Evaluation model focuses on specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) and addresses the quality of teaching and learning in a particular subject. Focused evaluations of provision for pupils with special educational needs in primary schools are carried out to assess both the learning outcomes of children with special education needs and the deployment of resources. Furthermore, the Inspectorate must also carry out a general inspection of the work of teachers on probation.

The establishment of the School Development Planning Initiative in 1999 was a significant development by the Department of Education and Science to stimulate and strengthen a culture of collaborative development planning in schools, with a view to promoting school improvement and effectiveness. Schools are also expected to engage in self-appraisal or self-evaluation as a matter of routine. The requirement to engage in school self-evaluation, introduced in 2012, is relatively new but already many schools are using SSE to monitor and improve aspects of their teaching and learning. Through school self-evaluation, schools reflect on and review their day-to-day practices and their policies, with a particular focus on teaching and learning. It provides all schools, including DEIS schools, with an internal process for developing and progressing action planning for improvement. Circular 0039/2016 reaffirms the requirement on schools to engage in school self-evaluation of teaching and learning and to develop school improvement plans which focus on improving outcomes for pupils. To facilitate self-evaluation as a central component of the work of a school, the Inspectorate has

published *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020: Primary* (Department of Education and Skills 2016). This publication provides a framework and structure for schools to use in evaluating teaching and learning.

The WSE model encompasses a wider remit. The model is promoted as an evaluation of the school as a whole and is seen as a partnership exercise between the schools and the Inspectorate. The inspector evaluates the quality of the school management and leadership, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the school's own planning and self-review. WSE has been designed "to monitor and assess the quality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system provided in the state by recognised schools and centres for education" (*Education Act 1998*, section 7 (2)(b). Procedures were agreed between the Inspectorate and the INTO in relation to periods of notice for inspections, agendas for pre- and post-WSE meetings, and arrangements for ascertaining the views of parents. The Department of Education and Science issued a *Guide to Whole-School Evaluation in Primary Schools*, which outlines the procedures that are followed in carrying out whole-school evaluations in primary schools. The manner in which the Inspectorate evaluates the school during WSE varies somewhat. For example, sometimes the inspection has a subject or curriculum focus and at other times, they concentrate on a range of different lessons across a wide range of subjects. Oral feedback and a printed report are provided to the school community at the end of these inspection. Inspectors were required to give notice to schools prior to the end of the school term preceding the proposed WSE, however, notwithstanding opposition from the INTO, the timeframes for notice were significantly reduced in 2016.

The DES aims to afford more clarity and due notice to the teachers in advance of an evaluation and the prepared guidelines endeavour to ensure transparency and fairness. An INTO survey recognised that the WSE reaffirmed teachers and their work and provided opportunities for school staffs to take stock, review their current policies and procedures, update their plans and engage in collaboration (INTO, 2009). Teachers appreciated the need to do this periodically, and found the exercise useful. Teachers accept the need for accountability and the requirement for planning and reviewing their work in order to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the pupils in the school. Nevertheless, the survey suggests that issues of concern to teachers centred around workload, the publication of reports and consultation with parents (INTO, 2009). The WSE has been identified as a stressful process and serves to create additional workload for teachers (Morgan, 2015). There is a sense that there continues to be a lot of emphasis on planning, notes and policies.

School self-evaluation and external evaluation are complementary processes, both focusing on improvement. The school self-evaluation process gives schools a means of identifying and addressing priorities, and of ensuring a whole-school focus on improving specific aspects of teaching and learning. External evaluations take note of schools' identified priorities and assess their teaching and learning practices. Given this common focus on improvement, the Inspectorate will take account of schools' engagement with, and the outcomes of self-evaluation in the course of its evaluations while remaining sensitive to the individual context factors of schools at varying stages of SSE development. Each of the inspection models endeavour to take into account the

particular circumstance of the school. Factors such as size, location, socio-economic circumstance of the pupils and community, pupils' special needs and the support they require, and other factors impact on the work of the school. It is recognised that schools work within a very specific context and context factors are taken into consideration during evaluation.

Both school and teacher evaluation processes have been given increased attention internationally as part of a general movement focussing on school improvement, with the OECD publishing a working paper on current practices in OECD countries in relation to teacher evaluation (OECD 2009). The OECD, through its development of indicators, and its annual publication, *Education at a Glance*, has led the field in comparative research on the performance of education systems both within Europe and across the world. Ireland participates in some international comparisons of pupil achievement at primary level, for example TIMMS and PISA. It is debatable whether OECD has been influential in education policy in Ireland although many recommendations from OECD reports have been implemented in some form in our education system. Quality assurance and evaluation processes have been developed in many European countries as a means of governing education in pursuit of Europe's objective of becoming a knowledge economy / society (Grek et al, 2009). The movement towards decentralisation of school evaluation through the School Self-Evaluation model is particularly noteworthy.

Teachers are accountable to themselves, to their colleagues, to their pupils, to the parents of their pupils and to the State for their work in schools. How such accountability is understood, perceived, described, articulated or measured varies among individuals, schools and systems. However, there has been a pattern across the Western World of focusing on the transparency of accountability within the public service, which includes the teaching profession. Many systems have developed external evaluation or inspection systems and internal or self-evaluation processes though such processes differ from country to country. The recent focus on accountability has primarily been seen as a means of reforming public services. It should not be surprising, therefore, that school evaluation has been the focus of such attention as it has in Ireland in recent years, and it is anticipated that the trend will continue in the 21st Century.

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Infant Classes and School Facilities

1916

Infant Classes

The rigidity of the teaching of infants was a regular element of complaint among inspectors at the end of the 19th century (CNEI, 1900). Inspectors noted the very early introduction of formal reading, writing and arithmetic (Walsh, 2012). A new and much-needed concern was being expressed about education of very young children and the Kindergarten system was influencing approaches to early childhood education. In 1898, the Commission on Manual and Practical Instruction (CMPI) recommended the introduction of the general principles and methods of Kindergarten, in conjunction with the traditional infant subjects, in all schools attended by infant children. Consequently, the importance of infant education was especially emphasised in the *Revised Programme for National Schools* and it was urged that school should be seen as a pleasant, interesting environment. It was acknowledged that many of the principles of Kindergarten were in direct contrast with the realities for many children in infant classes where 'the original idea too often was to instruct young children as rapidly as possible in the elements of reading, writing and arithmetic' (CMPI, 1898). The Commission was cognisant of the challenges of introducing such an approach in small schools, proposing the application of kindergarten approaches across all classes and a greater concentration on junior classes in the morning. INTO Congress in 1916, clearly welcomed the kindergarten approach to teaching and learning in infant classes. Adverts for educational supplies referred to 'school tables to assist in the delivery of Montessori teaching'. Overall, the future for early childhood education in 1916 was forward-thinking and showed great promise.

School facilities

There were various types of schools in place in 1916 including ordinary schools, convent schools, monastery schools, model schools, workhouse schools, a fishery school and a hospital school. The school buildings were, for the most part, incommodious, badly-constructed and ill-equipped. Inspectors' reports provided a bleak picture of the material conditions of schools, when many were dilapidated, lacking heat and with few educational resources. The Dale Report at the turn of the 20th Century evidenced the poor material condition of schools. It found great overcrowding in many schools, some school halls catering for up to 300 pupils, which was inherently incompatible with the introduction of many subjects of the *Revised Programme* (Coolahan, 2014). Classroom equipment was often frugal and dilapidated. There was little evidence of the existence of

school libraries and museums as advocated by the Revised Programme while the stark bareness of the majority of classrooms did nothing to nurture the educational process.

1947

Infant Classes

By 1947 the earlier advancements in infant education regressed considerably and many of the proposed ideals never came to fruition. There is little specific reference to infant education in the *Plan for Education* although it clearly advocates a child-centred, active and integrated approach to teaching. Education was regarded as a crucial agency in the revival and regeneration of the Irish language and culture which had been neglected and repressed under British rule. After Independence, Gaelige was mandated as the language of instruction in all infant classes and regulations were laid down for the compulsory study of the language throughout the entire school system. The formation of the Free State in 1922 together with the dedication to the revival of the Irish language narrowed and suppressed the child-centred approach to teaching that was originally emerging in 1916. Classrooms were becoming increasingly didactic in the efforts to revive the language. Recognising the inappropriateness of a rigid, instructive curriculum for infants, the INTO controversially proposed that written Irish was introduced much too early and demanded that more emphasis should be laid on oral Irish in the earlier years of school life (INTO, 1947).

School Facilities

The condition of school buildings continued to be deplored in the 1947 Plan for Education. At the time, 50% of school buildings were considered defective with poor sanitary accommodation and inadequate facilities for heating and cleaning (INTO, 1947). Many schools were detrimental to the health of pupils due to the overcrowding and poor conditions. The system of primary education was not a State system but a State-aided system. The schools, with few exceptions, were owned by local trustees and the manager, who in most cases was the parish priest , was entirely responsible for the repair, maintenance, sanitation, heating and cleaning of the school building. The Plan was ambitious in its demands for better schools facilities. It submitted that a school should not merely be a school building but should incorporate playing-fields as 'a school without a campus is only half a school'.

The Plan emphasised the importance of the school library. It was the view of the INTO that the teacher should aim to foster an intrinsic love of reading in the scholar. The value of 'reading to learn' should not be lost in 'learning to read'. There was general consensus that the child's reading should not be confined to the school text books and that the scholar should be encouraged to read for pleasure. The Department of Education was criticised for making no organised attempt to provide money or books for school libraries and whilst it approved of such libraries, it seemed to expect that teachers would stock their shelves at a cost to themselves.

21st Century

Infant Classes

Our education system must be built on the strong foundation of Early Childhood Education (ECE). Early childhood is perhaps the most critical period for cognitive as well as social, emotional, physical development and particularly for the acquisition of languages and early literacy and numeracy. As in most other jurisdictions, early childhood generally refers to the period from birth to six years. In Ireland, the compulsory school age is six and all forms of pre-primary education are optional. However, the tradition of beginning formal school attendance at the age of four has been a strong one in Ireland. Notwithstanding the fact that it is not compulsory to attend school until the age of six, the majority of four and five year olds are enrolled in infant classes in primary schools and some 3-year-old children are enrolled in the Early Start programme. Nearly 40% of 4-year-olds and virtually all 5-year-olds attend primary school, where early education is provided in infant classes (DES, 2016).

It is argued that the early school enrolment in the formal school system in Ireland may have resulted, in the past, in a lack of public concern about pre-school education (Coolahan, 2014). Early childhood education developments encompass the infant section of primary schools in addition to providers of services such as crèches, playschools, naíonraí, childminders and so on. There is widespread acceptance that care and education for this age group are inextricably linked and both are of equal importance to the child. There is emerging consensus and understanding in Ireland of the inseparable nature of early childhood education and care. It is argued that the co-dependent relationship that exists should be nurtured and respected (Hayes, 2007). *National Childcare Strategy, Report of the Partnership Expert Working Group on Childcare* asserts that "this reality should be reflected in the ethos and programme of all services" (1999, p. 45). Therefore, primary teachers are central to the debate on early childhood care and education.

There is a clear overlap between care and education, though the childcare sector and the education sector remained quite separate in the past. However, in more recent times there has been a move to blur the distinction between care and education in relation to the early years. Recent developments would indicate that the distinction made between 'child-care' and 'education' in the early years will be less acute in the 21st century. For example, at an NCCA Consultative Forum on Early Childhood Education in December 2004 participants agreed that the terms care and education were interchangeable in relation to early childhood education. Research has been published on the transitional phase from pre-school to primary school with a view to developing supports for transitions that will provide improved communication and transparency and ultimately enhance the experience for children, parents and educators (NCCA, 2016). Further inter agency link-up is evidenced in the appointment of pre-school education inspectors with a view to improving and enhancing educational standards within the sector. It is anticipated that they will work closely with the Primary Inspectorate ensuring continuity and consistency.

The INTO has always argued that early childhood education is an integral part of every child's universal right to education. That universal right cannot be suspended or ignored

until the child reaches the age of four and is entitled to attend school. All children are active learners from birth and indeed research has proven that half of the intellectual development of a child takes place by the age of four. The State provides 'free' universal education for its citizens from the age of four but until recently, the education of the under fours (except for limited provision for children from disadvantaged areas) was left to free-market forces where only those who could afford to pay could access early childhood teaching and learning programmes.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) became more prominent in policy in the late 1990s. Developments in early years' education, included the *National Forum for Early Childhood Education* (1998) and *Ready to Learn* – A White Paper on Early Childhood Education (1999). Other reports and publications, which are significant in terms of stimulating and informing the current debate on early childhood care and education, include a discussion document, *Towards a Framework for Early Learning* (NCCA, 2004) and *Making Connections* and *Insights on Quality* published by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE, 2005). Of particular importance, however, was the OECD report on *Early Childhood Education in Ireland* (2004) which made certain recommendations of interest to primary teachers. Providing free pre-school for children from the age of 3 was a key recommendation of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy *Right from the Start* (2013). An advisory group on Early Childhood Education was established in 2014 to provide advice to the Minister on education issues in the early year's sector (0-6 age group) to promote and enhance the quality of education for our youngest children.

A significant milestone in early childhood education was the introduction of the free pre-school year by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme provides children with their first formal experience of early learning, the starting-point of their educational and social development outside the home. *The Growing Up in Ireland* longitudinal study (2011) noted the positive impact the ECCE year had on children from lower socio-economic areas in accessing early childhood education. The free pre-school year has been extended with the addition of a second year in September 2016 "which will help prepare young children further for starting school, raising the school starting age to 5 years" (Ireland, 2016, p.2). Now, children will be able to start in free pre-school when they reach age 3 and to remain in free pre-school until they transfer to primary school (provided that they are not older than 5 ½ years at the end of the pre-school year). While the development has been widely welcomed, INTO anticipates that there will be implications for schools as a result. Currently, 40% of 4 year olds are in primary school (DES, 2016). However, if children spend two years in pre-school under the extended scheme they are likely to be older when they start primary schools, therefore, the average age at each class level in primary school will be higher. The

Over the years, INTO has campaigned to enhance provision for the four to six-year-olds by demanding classes not greater than 20, childcare assistants in every infant classroom and adequate resources to provide a suitable curriculum. The Programme for Government commits to reducing 'the pupil-teacher ratio for junior and senior infants by providing smaller classes, which have the greatest beneficial impact on younger

pupils' (2016, p.88). However, Budget 2017 failed to match the ambition with the resources. INTO has always insisted on a curriculum framework for the under-fours that would 'knit in' seamlessly with the Primary School Curriculum and that would meet the learning needs of young children (INTO, 2005).

As with almost every feature of provision, a divergence between the elements of the ECCE sector provided by the State and those supported by the State is also apparent in respect of curriculum. Infant classes in primary schools and, to a lesser extent, Early Start Units, follow a curriculum laid down and monitored by the DES. Curriculum content for infant classes is detailed in each of six curriculum areas (11 subjects) although flexibility of delivery in response to individual and local needs is recommended. There has been no formal evaluation of the impact of the 1999 curriculum on practice in infant classes but in the *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care in Ireland* (2004), the OECD recorded an impression that much of the teaching in infant classes they had visited appeared to be directive and formal compared to practices in similar settings in other countries.

In 2009, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) produced *Aistear, an early childhood curriculum framework for children from birth to six years.* It is a holistic approach to early childhood education. *Aistear* provides information to help practitioners, including infant teachers and Early Start teachers, to plan for and provide enjoyable and appropriately challenging learning experiences that will allow all children grow and develop as competent and confident learners. *Aistear* has been commended and welcomed by teachers who are in a position to use and to engage with the framework. However, the lack of a state-funded and fully-resourced implementation plan, on a national basis, has resulted in many challenges for schools and teachers. It is anticipated that the associated issues will be addressed in the NCCA review of the curriculum structure and organisation. The Department has also directed the implementation of *Síolta, the National Quality Framework*, however, the framework is not very well known in primary schools.

According to the terms of the *Education of Children with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004*, children with special learning needs should be educated alongside other children who do not have such needs. The Act applies to children under the age of 18 years but whether its implementation applies only to children of school going age is unclear. In the past the services for pre-school children were limited. The OECD report *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy* (2004) was highly critical of the overall lack of service provisions for the majority of pre-school children with special needs. It recommended that urgent consideration be given to the creation of a comprehensive national system of early years' services to provide for structured and regular educational support from birth or at least from the time of diagnosis. It warned that crucial time was lost if intervention was left until the beginning of infant class. Since January 2010 the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme makes provisions for children with special educational needs to avail of this scheme over two years, with the number of hours and funding per child equating to a single year. The State also supports early intervention for children with special educational needs through providing funding to a number early childhood settings. Since September 2016,

the Better Start *Access and Inclusion Model* (AIM) provides supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the ECCE programme. The model is designed to be responsive to the needs of each individual child in the context of their pre-school setting.

School Facilities

School facilities continue to be an important resource in developing and sustaining lifelong learning, in promoting community cooperation, and in encouraging citizen participation in community activities. There have been numerous INTO campaigns over the years against substandard schools unfit for purpose. School projects are funded by the DES under a range of schemes including the minor works, summer works, temporary accommodation, prefab replacement initiative, emergency funding and the capital works scheme.

There has been very little research on the effects of school design on teaching and learning in Irish primary schools. The increasing number of school-age children in the coming decades provides an opportunity to design and build schools which enhance pupil engagement and achievement. Future school design needs to be informed by the experiences of people who use the facilities the most – principals, teachers and pupils. An ESRI Report, *Designing Primary Schools for the Future*, was published on 15 October 2010. *The report* draws on interviews with education stakeholders, principals, teachers and pupils as well as a review of international research in assessing how primary school buildings can be used to enhance the learning process.

The links between school and community are manifold and can vary greatly in their nature depending on the context of the school. Some argue that modern day schools are becoming more isolated from the local community while others maintain that the school is enshrined in the community. The geographical context has a significant impact on the role of the primary school in the community. The primary school has long been at the heart of the rural community in Ireland. The Department of Education and Skills' publication *Looking at our schools: An aid to self-evaluation for primary and post-primary schools* suggests that the relationship between the school and the wider community should form one of the self-evaluation criteria for schools, while the DES publication *Advancing School Autonomy in the Irish School System* argues that a key aim of increasing school autonomy is achieving school and local democracy. The objective includes the desire to involve the local community and parents in the administration of schools.

The *Primary Curriculum* (1999) is seen as having contributed to more active learning approaches, however, there is scope for greater use of group work and play-based learning. *Designing Primary Schools for the Future* found that the design of some primary schools, especially older buildings, made it difficult to put the child-centred curriculum approach fully into practice. Furthermore, Natural lighting and ventilation, flexibility in temperature control and lack of noise travelling between rooms are seen to enhance teaching and learning activities. The report recognises the considerable potential to integrate ICT more fully into day-to-day teaching and learning. However,

the stakeholders, teachers and pupils were critical of available ICT facilities and modern technology in primary schools. The authors of this study also recognise that outdoor space is centrally important to children's experience of school and, thus, recommend that outdoor space should incorporate a variety of play surfaces and playground equipment, appropriate for different age-groups, along with a school garden and other spaces. The report advises that future schools should be located on sites which are large enough to allow the use of outdoor space for teaching and learning as well as play and sports and to facilitate future expansion resulting from population growth. However, outdoor spaces attract the most criticism, in terms of lack of space, poor surfaces and lack of play equipment. As a result, the considerable potential for using outdoor spaces for learning is not exploited.

In 2012, INTO called on the DES to outline a five-year plan to rid the country's schools of prefab accommodation. In November 2015, the DES announced a new 2.8 billion school building programme to run from 2016-2021 delivering an additional 25,000 pupil places by 2017. INTO broadly welcomes the announcement but questions whether it will provide for increased diversity in school type, required to meet a changing population. The INTO continues to demand that projects not in the plan but already in the DES system should continue to progress to completion.

A key part of the education strategy developed by the Minister of Education in 2016 is the plan to make school buildings available out of hours for community education and recreation purposes such as after-school care, homework clubs and other community activities. The proposal to expand the use of school buildings outside the school day has long been contentious within education circles. The barriers to further expansion include insurance, staffing and ownership. One option under consideration is to provide additional capitation funding which would be linked to the availability of afters-chool options, where demand exists. The National Play Policy, *Ready, Steady, Play!* also recommends that school facilities should be made available to local communities for play and recreation purposes where possible. Furthermore, consideration has been given to the potential move towards an 'extended school model', with early childhood care and education along with local social and community services, provided within or close to the school (ESRI, 2010).

Whilst respecting that the decision ultimately lies with the Board or Trustee, the DES has strongly urged school management to give serious consideration to such requests where possible in the interest of the common good. Some schools are already making their schools available to the local community outside of the school day. Schools benefit from sharing school facilities by way of improved relationships with the wider community and additional school income generated through rent. Fostering positive relations with the wider community is essential for schools when they seek to access local services and expertise. Being well-connected allows the school to provide a wider curriculum and increased learning opportunities. In order to ensure a smooth transition and to avoid potential challenges arising, the school should carefully consider the following from the outset: a license agreement, a contract; public liability; provision for compensating running expenses, health and safety issues and Child Protection Guidelines should be followed.

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School Governance and Leadership

1916

The dominant power that the Catholic Church had built in the 19th century was vehemently guarded and entrenched in the twentieth century. In the absence of a cohesive political force or a powerful middle class, the Catholic Church became the spokesperson for the people on educational issues. The denominational system became increasingly synonymous with clerics; the vast majority of schools were vested in diocesan trustees, had the local bishop as the patron and were clerically managed. Such a structured control at all levels afforded the Catholic Church considerable power and influence over the appointment of teachers and the distribution of funding. The Catholic Church was opposed to any popular control or local lay involvement in education which would undermine its autonomy. INTO Congress 1916 raised concerns with regards the National Board allowing 20 men, responsible to no-one, to manage and control a department which possessed such powers of good or ill for the future of the child and country.

The school principal's role in 1916 was very much grounded in the principles of *primus inter pares* or first amongst equals. There were more principals in the system as a result of the higher concentration of small, single-sex schools. The Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, Department of Education and Skills, cited a total of 13,411 national teachers which included 7,690 principals and 5,721 assistants employed in 1916. 57% of teaching staff were principals. 78% of teaching staff were female. There were 1,969 schools with one teacher, the principal. In 1916, the average number of pupils on roll books was 699,570 and the average daily attendance was 70.7%.

1947

The presence of the Catholic Church in the education system permeated the 1947 Plan. Education and religion were inextricably linked and co-dependent. The plan depicted an vision to make Ireland the *'Island of Saints and Scholars'* once again. Ireland could again *'give an example to the world of a right way of living, the Christian way, the Irish way'* (INTO, 1947, p.18). The plan called for a new education deal for Ireland, a new system that would meet the needs of the individual and the nation, that would provide an education truly Christian and truly national.

The system of primary education was not a State system but a State-aided system. The schools, with few exceptions, were owned by local trustees, and the Manager — who in most cases was the parish priest — was the local authority.

21st Century

School Governance

The present Board of Management structure has been in place since 1975 and each term of office sees thousands of volunteers help with the running and organisation of over 3,100 primary schools in Ireland. More than a dozen Acts of legislation have impacted on schools in the last 40 years. In addition, Schools Development Planning, the Revised Curriculum, the inclusion of children with Special Education Needs, DEIS, TUSLA and the Welfare Board have all added to a greater level of demand on schools. It is arguable whether a management system established in 1975 can respond to the management needs of schools in the 21st Century.

The *Education Act 1998* puts the current system on a statutory basis and sets out the responsibilities of the Boards. The Board's main function is to manage the school on behalf of the patron and for the benefit of the students and to provide an appropriate education for each student at the school. There are generally eight members per Board, designed to reflect all the different interests in the school community (patron, parents, teachers and wider community). The Department of Education and Skills, under the control of the *Minister for Education and Skills,* is in overall control of policy, funding and direction while the school principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school and is accountable to the Board.

The Department of Education and Skills was requested by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform to examine school autonomy and accordingly a research and discussion paper *Advancing School Autonomy in the Irish School System* was published*.* It advocated that changes be made in relation to the autonomy of schools to make decisions with regards to aspects of staffing, budget, curriculum, governance and ethos. The aims of increasing school autonomy are diverse and manifold. A core finding in the research was that schools must have the capacity to exercise autonomy if the policy is to improve education outcomes. The consultation paper also recommends that the capacity of Boards of Management be strengthened, but there is no evidence to suggest that the Boards, as presently constituted, would be willing or able to take on increased duties or powers. The suggestion that Boards might need to be professionalised has cost implications and could also result in a total review of the management structures of schools. Board members contribute individually and collectively on a strong tradition of volunteerism and civic spirit and to aim to extend their governance role and responsibilities may be excessive and counter-productive.

A new element included in the *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019* is the provision to allow schools to operate a "shared governance arrangement" on a voluntary and pilot basis during the forthcoming four-year term. For the first time, a mechanism is set out under which schools can elect 12 members to serve as the Boards of Management for two schools. While such boards will still be required to maintain separate accounts and minutes, and to hold separate meetings, this is the first time that these rules make provision for schools to pilot a shared governance arrangement. Whether shared governance becomes a more embedded feature of the school landscape

remains to be seen although it appears to provide the opportunity for schools to collaborate and think in a broader non-competitive way.

The Irish education system has been shaped by the historical influences of the political, cultural, religious, economic and social forces of society. Irish schools are operating in a climate of rapid social change and pressure has been put on the governance and management structures to respond accordingly. Modern day Ireland is increasingly multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-faith and multi-lingual. The largely denominational system prevalent in the Irish education context no longer reflects the diversity of the Irish people. At primary school level, 90% of schools are under the patronage of the Catholic Church (DES, 2016). The *Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector* critically examined the suitability of the current system to meet changed circumstances by assessing the various views and perspectives of the education stakeholders. Furthermore, the Catholic Church has itself highlighted the necessity for a greater plurality of provision to respond effectively to the changing social needs. Additional diversity has been delivered through multi-denominational schools and the Gaelscoil movement.

As Ireland becomes increasingly diverse, can or should our education system be expanded to such an extent as to reflect all forms of diversity, now or in the future? The Education Act of 1998 provides little clear direction in this matter charging the Minister *'to promote the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents' choice having regard to the rights of patrons and the effective and efficient use of resources.'* Is it plausible, never mind desirable, to have in every city, town and village different types of schools that reflect the diversity of every subset of parents? In recent years, the issue of school enrolment has posed a significant challenge for school management. It has been brought into sharp focus in areas of over-subscription in schools and this led to the public spotlight being placed on school enrolment policies, particularly in Catholic Schools. Ireland has long had a co-operative model where church and state provide education in a spirit of partnership. The Constitution provides that "every religious denomination shall have the right to manage its own affairs, own, acquire and administer property.... And maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes" (Art 44.6) and further states that "legislation providing state aid for schools shall not discriminate between schools under the management of different religious denominations, nor be such as to affect prejudicially the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious instruction in that school" (Art 44.2.4). However, Constitutional rights are not absolute: they may be curtailed, inter alia, where the common good requires curtailment.

In reviewing the Irish legislation governing school admissions, Ledwith and Reilly (2013) argue that *in protecting the right of religious schools to discriminate the legislative framework in which the education system operated provides the necessary means for state-sanctioned exclusion* (p.321). However, it is significant to note that approximately 20% of schools are over-subscribed and 80% of schools accept all applicants (ESRI, 2009). Generally, there is a culture of inclusivity and refusal to enrol by a school is a consequence of the number of prospective applicants exceeding the number of places available. The issue of enrolment in schools and the demand for a

more regulated and transparent system has been an ongoing key priority for the stakeholders in education including the Department of Education and Skills, patron bodies, principals, teachers and parents.

In an increasing secular society, many parents contend that their children are failing to access their local schools because of admission policies that favour a specific religious denomination over other faiths or none. The provision to refuse enrolments on the grounds of religion was enshrined in Section 7(3) (c) of the Equal Status Act 2000. As a result, there is anecdotal evidence of "pragmatic baptisms" in order to achieve admission to some schools. The recent publication of the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2015, attempts to ensure that enrolments in schools are more structured, transparent and fair (Ireland, 2015). The Bill, inter alia, seeks to balance the competing interests of school autonomy and parental rights; however, whether a balance on pluralism can be struck remains to be seen. If the Bill as initiated becomes law, it will effect a substantial movement of control from church to state in recognised denominational schools in the sphere of school admissions. While there has long been a call for regulation and guidelines in respect of school enrolment, it has also been acknowledged that over-regulation would be detrimental to the inclusive and individual spirit of each school (INTO, 2013). There is a concern that the Bill will impinge on the autonomy and jurisdiction of the school and that perhaps guidelines on admissions would have been a better fit than legislation.

In June 2011, a new system for establishing and determining the patronage of new schools was introduced. It was proposed that in areas of stable population where there is an absence of diversity of patronage, and there is parental demand for alternative school patronage, patrons would provide the Department of Education and Skills with options for divesting an existing school to meet that demand. The Department of Education and Skills would then decide on the patronage of the divested school. For communities served by one 'Stand Alone' school, where transfer of patronage is not an option, the report makes recommendations aimed at ensuring such schools are as inclusive as possible and accommodate pupils of various beliefs. Parental preferences are at the centre of the process and the criteria to be used in relation to school patronage prioritise parental demand for plurality and diversity.

The *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019* provides for a common admission policy with a view to addressing the issue of over-subscription. Subsection 65 of the Bill empowers the Minister, following consultation with the patrons and the boards of the schools concerned, to direct two or more boards to co-operate with each other in relation to their admission process where the Minister considers that this would be in the best interest of students in an area or in order to accommodate students in the case of school closures. The system is particularly effective in developing areas to allow for maximum use of resources and to avoid fluctuations. One of the basic principles underpinning the common enrolment procedure is to keep families in the same school while maintaining a balance, both in pupils and teacher numbers across all schools in the system to ensure the viability of all schools. The common application and enrolment system may ensure a more measured and sustainable approach to enrolment in an area

of over-subscription but it also demands a joint vision, an administrative burden, and a willingness to co-operate on the part of the schools at local level.

It is arguable whether the school governance structure in Ireland has felt the impact of globalisation on education. Many education reforms have been initiated worldwide including increased school autonomy and increased management at local level. The trend has been towards devolving greater decision-making and school-based management away from central government to the lower end of the education system. In Ireland, the Education Act 1998 affirms a high level of local autonomy for schools and there are areas in which autonomy is valued by teachers and management. Schools and teachers value autonomy in the areas of school ethos, the appointment and deployment of staff, pedagogical methods and flexibility within the curricular framework. Schools appreciate limited autonomy with regard to some budgetary matters. However, there are some areas where responsibility is best left at central level.

Advocates for school autonomy suggest that it achieves school and local democracy, facilitates political decentralisation, erodes a public-sector mentality and enhances student outcomes. However, the literature is inconclusive as to whether advancing school autonomy improves the quality of education. Furthermore, it is debatable whether or not advancing school autonomy fits the political and educational context in Ireland. In any case, an increase in autonomy in schools will pose significant challenges to school governance, management, leaders and teachers. The submissions from the consultation process have revealed some hostility to the concept of autonomy with many criticising the importation of a neo-liberal concept from England and the USA which does not necessarily reflect the needs of the Irish education system.

In Ireland, school funding takes the form of direct public funding of salaries, grants for running costs, and resources based on school enrolments, and grants for school buildings. There is considerable autonomy in relation to the management of non-salary funds such as capitation grants and book grants. INTO argues that the level of funding is inadequate due to the considerable austerity measures during the economic recession. Education funding in Ireland is anomalous. Despite research evidence highlighting the value of prevention and early intervention (*Preparing for Life*, 2016), spending in education is increased as children progress through the system. The state gives 92c per pupil per day in primary, while second level schools get almost double that for each of their students (€1.77 per pupil). At present, Government funding for primary schools is €170 per pupil per year to cover running costs of the school, and yet, primary schools have the same costs as secondary schools. If we correct this anomaly, the primary sector would be able to deliver even better standards of education for our children. The return on this investment would be seen throughout the education system and beyond. Society will reap the rewards of funding parity in education. Research shows that the economic return to investment in children's early years is higher than the return to investment in later years. In terms of international comparisons, Finland funds primary education at the same level as post-primary education. A country that seeks to match Finland's outcomes needs to match its school funding.

Government cuts in capitation funding have put an undue burden on school and parents by way of fund-raising and voluntary contributions as school management boards try to make up the decrease in funding. There are ongoing reports that some schools are making donations mandatory for children's participation in school activities such as art contributions and photocopying levies. A key requirement for the free education scheme in Ireland is that contributions may only be sought on a voluntary basis. Parents who struggle to pay 'voluntary' contributions are being stigmatised and the relationship between parents and their children's school should be educational, not financial. Measures should be considered to alleviate the pressure placed on parents to address shortfalls in school's capacity to cover running costs.

Education, properly structured and resourced, can make a significant contribution to the future development of our economy and our society. It is time to agree a credible and workable plan for future governance structures that will facilitate these goals. School policies and procedures must respond to the climate of rapid change in Irish society. Subsequently, school leadership and management must make delicately balanced decisions on how best to discharge their responsibilities under the current legislation and regulation. As the debate around pluralism and patronage continues in a more diverse society, the proposed new legislation suggests that substantial powers in education will continue to shift from the Church to the State

School Leadership

Principals are operating in a very challenging educational context and their function and duties has evolved and grown considerably since 1916. The role of the principal teacher is defined in legislation. Sections 22 and 23 of the Education Acts 1998-2012 set out the functions of the principal teacher. DES Circular 16/73 sets out the duties and responsibilities of principal teachers, as well as outlining those duties which can be delegated to holders of posts of responsibility. While some of the language in the Circular may seem outdated, it is referred to in more recent DES Circulars, and as such is relevant today. Some key duties and responsibilities include consulting the Chairperson of the Board (Manager) and keeping him or her informed on all matters related to the school, responsibility for the general discipline of the school, organisation of and participation in the effective supervision of pupils, the organisation of pupils for learning purposes, the fair distribution of teaching duties and the maintenance of school records.

Increasingly, the key issue for school leaders, not just in Ireland but across the world, is the volume and multiplicity of demands. These include instructional leadership, pastoral care, human resource management, school administration and management and the financial management of ever-diminishing resources. In most cases, it is an injudicious mixture of all of these major roles as a result of devolution of responsibility to individual schools. As a consequence, increasing numbers of principals report feelings of workload pressure (INTO, 2013; INTO, 2015). The relationship between job satisfaction and stress is complex. Both are influenced by a variety of factors including the adequacy of resources, administrative support, the extent to which teachers are receptive to new

developments and challenges, school facilities and being a teaching principal or administrative principal.

Better administration of the primary education system and a reduction in the workload burden of school leaders are a matter of priority for principals. There has been a very significant increase in legislation impacting on schools at the very time that the resources required to comply with the legislation have been withdrawn or cut back. The resources include funding, teaching staff, secretarial staff, caretaking staff, training and posts of responsibility in schools. Some such legislation includes the *Education Act 1998, Education Welfare Act 2000, Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, Teaching Council Act 2001, Employment Equality Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000* and the *Data Protection Act 1988*. The commencement of the *Fitness to Teach* complaints procedure (part 5 of the Teaching Council Act 2001-2015) in July 2016 marks another potential challenge for school principals and teachers.

In addition, principals need to have an understanding of statutory instruments that may impact on their work such as S.I. No. 17 of 2002: Industrial Relations Act 1990 (Code of Practice detailing Procedures for Addressing Bullying in the Workplace) (Declaration) Order 2002 and S.I. No.146/2000 – Industrial Relations Act, 1990 (Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary Act 1997). There are also national guidelines in many areas that impact on the work of schools and require careful attention from school principals. Some such examples include *Responding to* Critical *Incidents: Guidelines for Schools* (NEPS), *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* (NEWB) and *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (DYCA, 2011). Furthermore, school leaders have to familiarise themselves with an increasing number of detailed circulars from the DES and others which impose significant changes on the operation of schools. INTO, recognising that the majority of principal teachers are full time teachers, demands that release days for teaching principals be increased to one day per school week and calls for the payment of the award for principal and deputy principal teachers recommended by the second Benchmarking Body.

From the 1990s onwards, the requirement for additional management positions in schools to manage increasingly complex administrative, managerial, pastoral, leadership, educational demands was clear and was developed over time through a series of national agreements. These additional positions of responsibility were different from existing posts in that teachers were appointed on merit, the duties attaching to the post were clearly defined and delineated and the post holders were accountable for their duties. This significant progress allowed developments in the area of school management and provided for the development of distributive leadership. However, the moratorium on appointments to posts of responsibility in primary schools imposed in 2009 poses significant challenges for principals. The moratorium has resulted in the loss of more than 700 assistant principals and 2,000 special duties posts up to 2014. The moratorium has had an unfair and disproportionate impact on schools. The effect of the moratorium in schools affected by retirements or leave is significant. Principals report key tasks now being done in a 'piece-meal' fashion if at all, an erosion of morale and goodwill and a significant increase in workload and responsibility for school leaders.

There has also been an impact on career progression and the workload for all teachers. Principals are forced to depend on volunteerism and teachers' goodwill. The issue of the lifting of the moratorium is an ongoing challenge for INTO and it has been included in the *Stand Up for Primary Education* campaign (INTO, 2015; 2016).

The role of the school principal is ever-changing and complex in nature. Therefore, school leaders make a strong commitment to their ongoing professional development to ensure they remain upskilled and prepared to respond to their duties. Originally, the Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) was established as a programme funded by the Department of Education and Science (DES) for the development of school leaders. It was later subsumed into the Professional Development Services for Teachers (PDST). The latter continues to offer a variety of professional development courses to aspiring, newly appointed and experienced principals and deputy principals. The Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) was also established in the year 1999 to address principals' professional and personal needs. IPPN supports principals at local and county level and represents their interests nationally. The Centre for School Leadership (CSL) was established in 2015 to further support school leadership at primary and post-primary level. The decision to establish a Centre for School Leadership on a partnership basis between IPPN/NAPD and the DES represents a new departure and presents a unique opportunity for the development of a coherent continuum of professional development for school leaders. The Centre also provides a pilot mentoring programme for newly appointed principals and a coaching facility is anticipated in the future. The INTO has always recognised and supported school leaders through online and face-to-face courses, the Principals' seminar programme, the Principals' and Deputy Principals' Committee, Fora and Consultative Conference.

Arguably, the main duty of the school leader or principal is to lead the school's approach to learning and teaching. Effective school leadership has a critical effect on educational outcomes (Leithwood et al, 2006). Principals, whether teaching or administrative, are teachers first and foremost. Regardless of the administrative demands, the needs and welfare of the children must be their utmost priority. Building relationships with children is not difficult. It does, however, take time. Greeting the pupils as they enter the school in the morning, being visible as they leave each day, spending some time supervising in the playground or in place of absent teachers are tasks easily done. Choosing a subject, or aspect of a subject, to teach at a particular level requires a little more thought and preparation but is worthwhile. Being involved in literacy hour, sacramental preparations, school choir or sports helps the principal to come to know the children very well. Taking regular assemblies to emphasise values and codes of the school ethos allows the principal to become familiar with the pupils and makes the pupils aware of the standards expected in the school environment.

The function of an effective principal is to build and nurture strong relationship with the various partners at the interface of the school community. When dealing with learning, the principal will primarily be involved with the pupils in the school and thus, by extension, the teachers. Any decisions taken by the principal in relation to areas such as curriculum policies, planning or introduction of new methodologies will be done in co-operation with the teaching staff. In order to best lead the learning, the principal must

know the pupils and understand the environmental influences on their learning. Relationships with the parents and families of pupils are a key function of the effective principal. The Parents' Association is a genuine asset to any school and can help lighten the work-load of the school principal. Likewise, the existence of well-trained and hard-working ancillary staff is invaluable. A supportive and skilled Board of Management is also necessary for the successful running of the school. Engaging with outside agencies such as the Department of Education and Skills (DES) or the Health Service Executive (HSE) is a critical element of the principal's role although dealing with multi-disciplinary teams places a significant administrative and time burden on the school principal.

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Inclusion

1916

Special Education

Provision of supports for children with special educational needs (SEN) was virtually non-existent in 1916. There is little reference to inclusion indicating that there was little emphasis or priority placed on Special Education in the early 20th century. Some schools for deaf mutes were established by religious communities in the early 19th century followed by similar institutions for the blind in 1870. In 1916, many pupils with mild learning disabilities or special educational needs were accommodated in ordinary schools owing to poor detection and screening systems and a lack of alternative facilities. The *Revised Programme of Instruction* in place in 1916 advocated a more child-centred and holistic approach to education where the individual needs of the child were met.

Social Disadvantage
Similarly, there was no focus on the education of children suffering from the social and economic hardship prevalent in 1916 Ireland. Ironically, the National System of Education was originally established in 1831 to address the educational needs of the poorer classes of society and to 'bring forward an intelligent class of farm labourers and servants.'

The early 20th century in Ireland was a mass of contradictions. Rich and poor, immigrant and native, nationalist and unionist, Catholic, Protestant and so many more, were all bound together in a country divided. Social provisions were virtually absent. In the *Murder Machine* (1916), Padraic Pearse sets out his pedagogical vision and addresses the class distinction inherent in education at the time 'our very diversions into primary, secondary and university crystalise a snobbishness partly intellectual and partly social.' There were poor working conditions at the time including low wages and chronic over-supply of labour which lead to the Great Lockout of 1913. There was an upsurge of people leaving a country unable to offer even the possibilities of a basic existence. Behind them they left the brutal reality of daily life for tens of thousands who lived in tenement slums in the cities, starved into ill-health, begging on the fringes of society. A significantly high death-rate was attributable, at least in part, to the fact that 33% of all families lived in one-roomed accommodation (Walsh, 2012). The slums were disease-ridden and largely ignored by those who prospered in other parts of the city. Life in parts of rural Ireland was also incredibly poor with an over-dependence on small farms to provide a meagre existence. Attendance at school was poor due to poor health and a parental reliance on young boys to farm.

1947

Special Education

There is no specific reference to special education or social inclusion in the 1947 *Plan for Education*. However, a strong call for 'equality for all' permeated the document (p.10). The Plan critiqued the system at the time for placing too much emphasis on the academic and the intellectual, with the consequent neglect of the practical. INTO proposed that options in manual work or arts and crafts could be a powerful educative agent for the 'intellectually backward and those of low verbal ability' (1947, p.11).

Social Disadvantage

School attendance remained an issue and often formal education ended in the primary school. The INTO argued that equality of educational opportunity was denied to the majority of citizens particularly regarding secondary and university education. The INTO argued that the scholarship scheme, designed to allow university access for the poor in society, was fundamentally flawed. INTO insisted that the narrow academically focused curriculum encouraged class distinctions and a rush for the 'white collar' jobs. INTO suggested that attendance at a certain school conferred a badge of social superiority and such class distinction in education was strongly condemned. Therefore, it is evident that inequality and exclusion prevailed throughout the education system over the last 100 years.

21st Century

Special Education

Since the *Forum on Pluralism and Patronage* report was issued in 2012, we have witnessed a growing campaign to address inequality in terms of access to our schools for children. Indeed, the introduction of an Education about Religious Beliefs and Ethics Programme in our schools is now being considered. Perhaps it is time for us to look at inclusion and diversity in all of its forms in our education system. There are very real barriers for many children with SEN at primary school. While all schools receive the same level of resourcing in terms of low incidence teaching hours and SNA support, parents are frequently told that 'the school down the road' might be a better option. In theory, children with special needs are included (EPSEN Act, 2004), however, much of what we have done to accommodate such children focuses more on what is different about them rather than looking at what they have in common with other learners. Our education system has led us to differentiate rather than to include. The burden of trying to plan for differentiation for several children with additional needs has been great and has led to increased workload for teachers. This challenge is growing as diversity in our schools increase. We are catering for children from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, children from different family and socio-economic contexts as well as children with different abilities and disabilities.

Since the early 1960s, Ireland has seen an increased interest in and support for special educational provision. The white paper, *The Problem of the Mentally Handicapped*, in

1960, indicated that a commission of inquiry was to be set up. Many of its ninety-six recommendations had a bearing on educational provision for those who were categorised as 'mentally handicapped.' Over the past 25 years, in particular, major change has taken place in the area of inclusive education in Ireland. The impetus for this change was the publication of the *Special Education Review Committee Report* in 1993. One of its key recommendations was the provision of "as much integration as is appropriate and feasible with as little segregation as is necessary" (SERC Report 1993 p.21). *The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004* provides that a child with a special educational need should be educated, wherever possible, in an inclusive environment alongside their siblings and peers. The recommendation that children be taught in as inclusive an environment as possible underpins policy and provision of resources in our education system. Current policy is to provide the maximum possible level of inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, while ensuring that specialist facilities are available for students whose needs are such that they need to be placed in special schools or in special classes in mainstream schools.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was set up in 2003 following the passing of the EPSEN Act. The Council was first established as an independent statutory body, by order of the Minister for Education and Science, to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities with particular emphasis on children. The local service is delivered through the national network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) who interact with parents and schools and liaise with the HSE in providing resources to support children with special educational needs. A key aim of the Council is to improve the co-ordination between the education and health sectors progressively, which continues to be an ongoing issue in the provision of supports for children with special educational needs. The remit of the Council will be significantly extended as the EPSEN Act 2004 is commenced. While certain sections of the Act have been commenced, the implementation of key sections which confers statutory rights to assessment, education plans and appeals processes on children with special educational needs has been deferred due to economic circumstances.

It is likely that the pace of change will continue over the coming years. September 2016 has seen the introduction of a new scheme to support children with disabilities in the pre-school sector. The delivery of therapeutic supports is undergoing change with the Progressing Disability Services plan. The proposed new model for delivery of supports for pupils with SEN in primary schools is now in pilot phase. International trends in inclusive education will also have an impact on how we plan and implement policy in this area. The recent publication of the NCSE policy advice paper on Supporting *students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder* acknowledged that much has improved in the education of students with ASD and that generally these students are now included and supported well in schools (NCSE, 2015). Another significant publication, which will undoubtedly shape the provision of special education services in Ireland, is the NCSE *Guidelines for Setting Up and Organising Special Classes.* The guidelines are based on the principles of good practice and Boards of Management are requested to take due

cognisance of them when setting up, staffing and organising special classes in their school (NCSE, 2016).

The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. It aims to deliver inclusive care and education for children with disabilities. The model focuses on the developmental level of children with disabilities and not on their diagnosis and it has seven levels of support ranging from universal to more specialised supports such as equipment, adaptations and in class supports. The scheme, which was rolled out from September 2016, includes provision of information for parents, staff training, funding for equipment and minor alterations to premises, as well as allowing flexibility for the pre-school provider to buy in additional support as required. It will require effective cross-sectoral working between education and health services. The starting point for this model is the development of an inclusive culture in all pre-school settings and this must inform planning for inclusion in all tiers of our Education system. This needs-based system echoes the foundation on which the proposed new model for primary schools has been developed

Shortcomings in our current model of provision for children who require additional support have long been identified. Under the General Allocation Model, schools are allocated learning support posts based on the number of classes in the school regardless of the level of need. Low incidence teaching hours are allocated based on a diagnosis of a psychologist or other medical professionals, despite having obvious difficulties in the school environment. Parents who can afford to do so often pay privately for an assessment to ensure that their child can access the necessary resources. An analysis of resource teaching allocations revealed that children living on Dublin's Southside are more likely to gain access to resource teaching for special educational needs than their Northside peers. The analysis shows primary schools in Dublin 6 got an hour of additional teaching support for every 5.6 children last year, whereas those in the more working-class areas of Dublin 9 and Dublin 11 got an hour for every 11 children (Irish Times 08/09/2015).

Policy advice of the NCSE in 2013, regarding the education of children with special educational needs, recommended that a new model for allocating additional teaching resources to schools to support children with special educational needs be put in place. The Minister for Education and Skills set up a working group under the chairmanship of Eamon Stack, former Chief Inspector, to devise a new model and to design a more equitable way to distribute additional support based on educational need. The NCSE issued policy advice in 2014 on a proposed new model for allocating teaching resources for students with special educational needs. A set of criteria has been drawn up and adapted following input from parents, teachers and management bodies. The INTO in its submission, acknowledged the merits of the proposals but also highlighted a number of concerns.

The principles of the pilot model include a basic allocation of teaching supports for all schools, with additional teaching support based on schools' needs. The educational profile of a school includes the number of children with complex special educational

needs, the results of standardised tests in literacy and numeracy, and the social context of the school. Since October 2015, the Department, with the Educational Research Centre, has worked on constructing the new model, allocating weightings to the various aspects of a school's educational profile in order to determine each school's allocation of additional teachers to support children with special educational needs. Schools and teachers are still awaiting clarification in relation to how a school's profile will be determined. Allocations should be for fixed periods but with a mechanism to respond to schools whose profiles change significantly. These are principles which the INTO supported, but there is always a challenge in making principles a reality.

Children without a diagnosis who need additional support will be able to access this support, children who had been receiving the maximum allocation of resource teaching hours may be allocated more or less time depending on their level of need and the quantum of resources that has been allocated to the school. The model proposes to enable local decision-making to meet priority needs. It is anticipated that the new model will reduce the need for clustering and allow schools to combine their SEN staffing for enhanced continuity and collaboration. There are some concerns that parents may be reluctant to embrace the new model, however, the pilot project review suggested that parental resistance was less than anticipated when the new system was explored.

Teachers are also concerned that there are potential problems with this model. Pupils whose needs are less easily quantified may be at risk of losing support. The need for relevant accessible CPD for teachers in advance of implementation of any new model is evident. The INTO's initial response to the proposals expressed strong reservations about the use of standardised test results to allocate teachers to schools. The proposed model will grant schools the autonomy to allocate resources locally. Therefore, teachers and principals will be required to exercise their professional judgement while also considering professional reports in order to determine the level of support that an individual child will receive. This increased level of autonomy for schools and teachers will be accompanied by increased accountability. Teachers will be required to make professional decisions which will increase or decrease the level of support that a child may have received previously. Teachers will need to have the professional confidence and competence to do this and to ensure that decisions have a sound rationale and can be supported by relevant documentation.

The new model was piloted during the school year 2015-2016. It is proposed to introduce the new model for all schools in September 2017. A commitment to ongoing review and flexibility will be essential components to implementation of the model. Any new model must also be supported with a consolidated service for the provision of therapeutic services so that schools do not have to 'harass' the HSE and other bodies for services such as speech and language, psychological intervention and occupational therapy.

The Minister for Education announced in February 2016 that an Inclusion Support Service (ISS) would be established, bringing together under the NCSE the Special Education Support Service, the Visiting Teacher Support Service and the National Behaviour Support Service. The proposal for an ISS has the potential to respond to

issues raised in the INTO Workload Survey (2015). The survey reported that *"there was a very high level of agreement (nearly 99% of teachers) for better support services for children with special needs"* (Morgan, 2015 p.20). There is a necessity for the smooth linking of therapeutic services and to streamline the current system with the possibility of having one contact number that would link directly with all the applicable services. An Inclusion Support Service could prove an ideal opportunity to provide for a central point for data collection to avoid duplication of data and information.

A multi-disciplinary approach must be central to any new model for addressing special educational needs. Presently disability services in Ireland are delivered by the HSE and non-statutory organisations have developed independently over time. There is wide variation in the services available in different parts of the country and for different categories of disability. Some children who attend special schools receive a good service with therapeutic supports delivered in the school environment. Other children receive no service unless it is paid for through the fund-raising activities of the parents and school management. Children with disabilities who attend mainstream schools may or may not receive a service depending on their location. Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (PDSCYP) is a national programme which aims to address inequity in ad hoc service provision and achieve a national unified approach to delivering disability health services. The service brings together therapists, teachers, school principals, representatives of NEPS and the NCSE as well as parents with a view to developing policies, procedures and protocols to ensure more equitable access to services.

21st Century

Social inclusion

Tackling educational disadvantage has become an integral part of the educational discourse in recent decades. In order to attempt to address poverty and social exclusion, several initiatives were launched. The first of these was the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme (DAS), initiated in 1984 to provide additional funding to primary schools in disadvantaged areas. This was reviewed in the late 1980s and, emanating from this review, The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme was piloted between 1990 and 1993. Initially, 30 teachers were employed as co-ordinators in 50 selected primary schools in the DAS at the time. Still within the pilot period, in 1991, this was extended to a further 13 post-primary schools and, in 1999, all other primary and post-primary school in the DAS were offered HSCL coordinators. By 2001, it was benefitting 314 schools and it was further extended in 2005 under Delivering Equal Opportunities in education (DEIS), the Action Plan for educational inclusion.

While significant advances were made in parental involvement at a political and curricular level from the 1960s on, the focus of attention moved, in the early 1980s, towards encouraging direct involvement of parents in their children's education in areas of socio-economic deprivation. It had become apparent that, in many such areas, there was little or no engagement by parents with the system. It became increasingly obvious that many parents, for various reasons, had been unable to experience the formal education system to a degree that might allow them to support their own children

through their educational journeys. For a sizeable quotient of the population, guiding their children through a full and fruitful education was a luxury they could not afford in an environment that was virtually alien to them.

The importance of early intervention prior to starting school has been the cornerstone in educational thinking in recent years. The *Early Start* programme is a pre-school project established in 1994 in 40 primary schools in designated areas of urban disadvantage. The programme was a one-year intervention scheme to meet the needs of children, initially aged between three and four years old, who were deemed at risk of not reaching their potential within the school system. The project involves an educational programme to enhance overall development, help prevent school failure and offset the effects of social disadvantage. High quality pre-school education is considered to have a long-term benefit for pupils, particularly for those children at risk (Sylva et al, 2008).

In 1995, the Combat Poverty Agency and the Educational Research Centre conducted a detailed study of existing approaches to the identification and support of pupils in disadvantaged backgrounds. In response to the study, an initiative aimed at addressing the cycle of educational disadvantage was launched in 1996. The Breaking the Cycle Pilot Project sought to discriminate positively in favour of schools, in selected urban and rural areas, which had high concentrations of children who were at risk of not reaching their potential in the education system because of their socio-economic backgrounds. The five-year pilot phase of this scheme involving 32 urban and 121 rural primary schools ended in 2001 and it was closely followed by a new programme for social inclusion, *Giving Children an Even Break*.

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) was offered to all primary schools with designated disadvantaged status in 1999. The scheme was concerned with establishing partnership and collaboration between parents and teachers in the interests of the children's learning. The role of the individual coordinator was to promote active cooperation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children and to raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills. The School Completion Programme (SCP) was first introduced in 2002 by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and was subsequently expanded in 2006 as part of the School Support Programme under DEIS. From 2009, the SCP came under the remit of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). In 2011, the SCP and the HSCL were placed under the policy remit of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Responsibility for SCP transferred to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, on its establishment in January 2014.

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools: the *DEIS: Action Plan for Educational Inclusion* was launched in May 2005 and remains the policy instrument to address educational disadvantage. At the core of DEIS is 'a standardised system for identifying and regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage, and an integrated School Support Programme (SSP) that brings together and builds upon existing interventions for schools' (DES 2015a, p.4). It focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school

through second level education. In 2015/16, 836 schools are included in its programme, 646 at primary level and 190 at secondary level.

In the *DEIS Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*, parental involvement and the forging of closer ties between the school and the wider community are listed among the areas that had already been receiving significant emphasis, since the late 1980s. It is clear from the Irish experience that educational initiatives, based in schools, can raise the educational level of the adults involved and result in a general sense of empowerment in the local community. Parental involvement, especially in areas of socio-economic deprivation, does not just benefit the children in the school, it is a crucial aspect of lifelong learning (OECD 1997, cited in DES 2005, p.40). The Action Plan, among its many and varied aims, sought to strengthen supports for parental and family involvement in education, through targeted measures to tackle problems of literacy and numeracy, with particular reference to family literacy. In its view of reform, it was agreed that there was a need to improve integration of educational inclusion measures and to enhance delivery structures to further strengthen the involvement of parents, family members and the wider community.

The Minister for Education and Skills announced a review of DEIS in 2015. DEIS has remained largely unchanged since 2005 notwithstanding the backdrop of major increases in child poverty since the economic crash. There is no doubt that many aspects of the DEIS support programme have been successful according to teachers and independent research. However, there are many pupils in our schools who are at risk of social exclusion, and who are not attending schools participating in the DEIS support programme. Any review of DEIS must consider how all pupils at risk of social exclusion are supported, while recognising the need to commit concentrated resources for those schools at highest need due to inter-generational poverty. Delegates at the INTO Social Inclusion Conference 2016 voiced concerns regarding poverty including the need to address more systematically child hunger in school to ensure children's needs are not being neglected. Delegates also highlighted the adverse impact of the growing problem of homelessness and living in temporary accommodation on children's education and wellbeing.

The INTO has argued for an explicit focus on pupils' mental health, well-being and their social and emotional development to be incorporated into the DEIS support programme. For some children, behavioural challenges arising from unfulfilled social and emotional needs are the greatest barrier to their learning. The effect of the economic crash on children's and families' mental health makes the need to rectify the omission from the previous DEIS strategy all the more urgent. A multi-disciplinary approach needs to be a central part of the new DEIS strategy and INTO welcomed the commitment to establish an inter-departmental group for the DEIS review as the complex, multi-faceted nature of children's needs under the burden of the injustice of poverty requires a multi-faceted response from State services. Multi-disciplinary teams in and around schools are a feature of many European school systems and key to addressing complex needs of children and their families at risk of social exclusion, including their mental health needs.

In comparison to previous programmes to support schools in meeting the needs of pupils at risk of not succeeding in school, DEIS had a more robust approach to target-setting, planning and evaluation. However, it is important to recognise that successes in DEIS built on the cumulative impact of previous programmes. In an evaluation of the effectiveness of DEIS in terms of outcomes, it is noted that 'there has been a significant improvement over the period 2007 – 2013 in the reading and mathematics test scores of primary children in DEIS schools. Improvements have been greater in reading than in Maths' (Smyth et al 2015, p.vii.). However, a drive for better outcomes cannot be used to obscure or downplay the need for resource inputs. The DEIS review must involve a positive commitment to invest further resources rather than become an exercise in taking from some DEIS schools to give to others. A strength of a previous programme, *Breaking the Cycle*, was in highlighting the role of the arts for engaging marginalised pupils.

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Education in Northern Ireland

National School to National Curriculum

In 1916, the National School system operated throughout Ireland. The Government of Ireland Act, 1920, provided for the setting up of two governments in Ireland, one for six Ulster counties which were to form Northern Ireland, and the other for the rest of the country. On the 22 June 1921, Sir James Craig became Prime Minister. Responsibility for education was transferred from Dublin to a new Ministry of Education for Northern Ireland, under Lord Londonderry, and a period of rapid reform began. After nearly a century, the national system was dismantled and replaced by one more in line with that introduced in England and Wales by the Balfour Act of 1902. From now on England was to provide the model for Northern Ireland and, within a decade, the educational system in the two parts of Ireland had diverged significantly.

Education Act of 1923

Under the Education Act of 1923, new Local Education Authorities were empowered to provide schools, to accept schools transferred to them and to give limited assistance to voluntary school authorities who were prepared to cooperate with them; they were also empowered to employ teachers and to oblige parents to send their children to school between the age of six and fourteen. The Ministry's priorities were to:

- remedy the Belfast situation as quickly as possible;
- create the new structures in the regions and to have them efficiently staffed;
- amalgamate small schools; and
- revise the curriculum to take account of Northern Ireland's position as an integral part of the United Kingdom.

At a local level, the foundations of the new system were successfully laid: sites were found, schools were amalgamated, greatly improved attendances were achieved and a new curriculum was introduced in 1932 which lasted almost to the 1980s.

Clerical and Political Pressure

Lord Londonderry was determined that every public elementary school in Northern Ireland (the term national school was abandoned) should, if possible, attract children of all religious denominations and the Education Act of 1923 decreed that schools financed from central government funds should not provide religious instruction within the hours of compulsory attendance or take religious affiliation into account when appointing teachers.

The Catholic authorities had little bargaining power in the conditions prevailing in Northern Ireland in the early 1920s, and apart from the teachers' salaries, received no public funds. It was not until 1930 that a rapprochement was attempted, when doubts having been raised with the British Home Secretary about the legality of certain provisions of the Education Act of that year, the Craigavon government made their first concession to voluntary school of a 50 per cent grant on approved capital expenditure. In 1968, an amendment act came to their aid by providing that the church authorities would receive 80 per cent towards capital expenditure and 100 per cent of maintenance, if they were agreeable to one third of schools' management committees to be nominated by the Government or the LEAs. By the late 1970s almost all Catholic schools had achieved what was known as 'maintained' status. The underfunding of Catholic schools, persisted until the 1990s, when it was challenged in Parliament, and subsequently overturned.

Butler Education Act
Northern Ireland, following the example of Britain's Butler Education Act of 1944 raised the school-leaving age to 15, and decided to provide free secondary education for all children from 12-15. The Act sharply distinguished between primary and secondary education at age 11 and ended the traditional all-age (5-14) elementary sector, enforcing the division between primary (5–11 years old) and secondary (11–15 years old) education that many local authorities had already introduced. It abolished fees for state secondary schools. It brought a more equitable funding system to localities and to different school sectors. The Act renamed the Board of Education as the Ministry of Education, giving it greater powers and a bigger budget. While defining the school leaving age as 15, it granted the government the power to raise the age to 16 "as soon as the Minister is satisfied that it has become practicable", though the change was not implemented until 1973. It also brought in a new system for setting teacher salaries.

The new Tripartite System consisted of three different types of secondary school: grammar schools, secondary technical schools and secondary modern schools. To assess which pupils should attend which school, they took an exam known as the 11-plus. This was possibly the most major event in education in NI, as an educated and articulate Catholic middle class emerged in the 1960s. The system was intended to allocate pupils to the schools best suited to their "abilities and aptitudes", but in practice the number of grammar schools, for the academically inclined, remained unchanged, and few technical schools were established. As a result, most pupils went to secondary modern schools, whether they were suitable or not. One of the results of the Act was to open secondary schools to girls and the working class, educating and mobilising them. Another result was that the percentage of children attending higher education tripled from 1% to 3%.

The Education Act 1944 made it a duty of local education authorities to provide school meals and milk. The authority could remit the charge for the meal in cases of hardship. The separate School Milk Act 1946 provided free milk – a third of a pint a day – in schools to all children under the age of 18. In 1968, Harold Wilson's Labour government withdrew free milk from secondary schools. In 1971 Margaret

Thatcher (then Secretary of State for Education) withdrew free school milk from children over seven, earning her the nickname, 'Thatcher, the Milk Snatcher'.

The Thatcher Years

Margaret Thatcher's accession to power as Prime Minister of the UK in 1979 heralded a decade of turmoil for the teaching profession. Education in 1980s NI could be characterised by a number of trends arising from Government policy and from public/media opinion. The emphasis on privatisation or the break-up of large nationalised institutions and organisations, the trend of increasing government control, the encouragement of consumer or market forces and the development of an entrepreneurial economy can be clearly seen in the face of the economy today. Within education, this can be characterised by

- An apparent growing dissatisfaction about the process of education and its outcomes
- A shift towards the operation of the market and consumer forces, with an increased emphasis on parents' rights, powers and responsibilities
- A lessening of the view that 'professionals know best' and to some extent a reduction in the perceived status of some professionals
- A feeling that increased accountability of professionals and the institutions in which they work is needed
- An increased focus on the needs of the individual and the optimisation of the learning process for all pupils
- A reduction in the responsibilities and power of local government alongside the devolution of certain responsibilities to local level (e.g. local management of schools (LMS)) together with increased central control over areas that were traditionally the province of the professional i.e. the curriculum

Jordanstown Agreement 1987

As a result of negotiations during 1987, an agreement (known as The Jordanstown Agreement), was reached between the recognised teacher unions and the employing authorities, setting out the working time, professional duties and responsibilities of all teachers.

- Working time (thereafter known as Directed Time) was determined as; a teacher shall be available for work for 195 days per year, of which not more than 190 days should involve teaching children in a formal situation. These 5+ days came to be known as 'Baker Days' after Sir Kenneth Baker, the then Minister of Education in the UK
- In addition, a teacher was to be available to perform such duties at such times and such places as may reasonably be specified by the principal for 1265 hours per year, exclusive of time spent off school premises in preparing and marking lessons
- A teacher would not be required to teach as distinct from supervise children in a formal situation for more than 25 hours per week in a Primary School, and 23.5 hours in a post primary school
- A scheme of staff development and performance review (SDPR, now PRSD) was agreed at this time for all teachers

Introduction of the National Curriculum, 1989
The British government, concerned about what were alleged to be falling standards in all sectors of education, proposed a number of major reforms, which altered the financing and management of schools and provided a national curriculum and a common means of assessing the progress of all pupils in grant-aided schools. Comparable measures were introduced in Northern Ireland by the Educational Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. A discussion paper which preceded the drafting of the Order acknowledged the high standards which generally prevailed in Northern Ireland schools, but expressed concern that at a primary level there was undue attention to a narrow range of skills, so that many pupils had no experience of activities involving science, creative work, and physical education. There existed in primary schools, a successful 'Guidelines' initiative, unique to Northern Ireland, which acknowledged the individual circumstances of each school, and gave cognisance to professional judgement. Despite its popularity in schools among professionals, this was ignored and subsequently abandoned.

The Educational Order was appointed to advise the Department of Education (DE) on a balanced and broadly based curriculum and to work in close liaison with the Northern Ireland Schools Examinations and Assessment Council (NISEAC, which became NICC, and subsequently CCEA) in establishing the assessment criteria for pupils at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16, at the end of each 'Key Stage'

The rampant and remorseless change imposed from above became a pressing and immediate feature of teachers' working lives: the introduction of a subject by subject, stage by stage curriculum; the establishment of detailed age related Attainment Targets, and the inauguration of a nationwide system of standardised testing.

Initially, four 'Key Stages' of education were established:

Key Stage 1: Primary 1 – Primary 4
Key Stage 2: Primary 5-Primary 7
Key Stage 3: Year 8-Year 10
Key Stage 4: Year 11-Year 12

In addition to each of the eight-core curriculum subject areas, there were four additional 'Cross Curricular Themes' to consider. These were Education for Mutual Understanding, Cultural Heritage, Information Technology and Health.

The Good Friday Agreement 1998
Devolved government was restored to Northern Ireland, and for the first time since the early 1970s, there was a local Minister for Education, and an Education Committee in Stormont. The signing of the GFA enshrined the right to access to both integrated education, and Irish Medium Education (IME). Both these sectors had been established for decades, but not all of these schools were funded by DE. To date there are 84 schools which provide IME for over 5,000 children, and 55 schools in the Integrated sector, catering for 22,000 children.

The Revised Curriculum 1996

The original National Curriculum was much maligned for being too prescriptive and narrow. As a result of Lord Dearing's 1993 report, the Revised Curriculum was introduced, which was a welcome move to a skills-based curriculum.

The Enriched Curriculum 2007

A further Key Stage was introduced, that of the Foundation Stage, which acknowledges the link between Nursery and infant education, and spans from Pre-school – Primary 2. The maximum class size in the Foundation Stage is 30. Subjects were now divided into Areas of Learning, and the focus was developing skills rather than content.

Assessment

The original vision of the 1989 Curriculum was that assessment at the end of each Key Stage would become statutory. INTO has led the way in boycotting such assessments over the years, and this, coupled with the retention (both official and latterly unregulated Transfer Tests for Grammar schools), has led to their almost total abandonment.

Overview of the education system – 2016

In 2016, one hundred years on from the then National School system, education provision in Northern Ireland has evolved to become a complex educational structure with a range of bodies involved in its management and administration. It is unfortunate that despite the advantages of the 11+ initially, nearly 70 years later we have a system that divides pupils at age 11 into successes and failures. INTO has actively opposed selection at 11 for over 40 years and it is very disappointing that the new Unionist Minister for Education has decided to try and make it statutory once again. INTO will continue to oppose the 11+ and work to ensure that primary teachers do not teach to or administer these tests again.

This is an overview of the current Northern Ireland education system from pre-school to post-primary education, including its structure, governance arrangements, school phases, management types and sectoral bodies.

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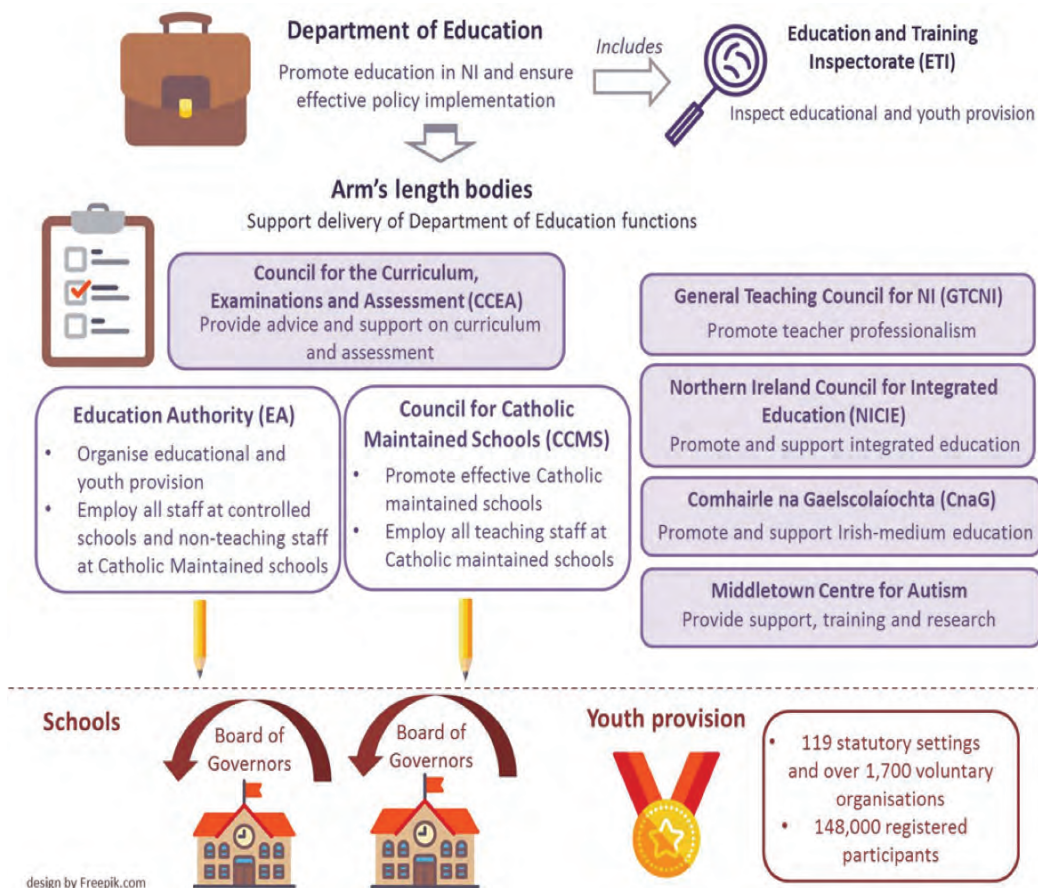
Department of Education

The Department's main statutory duty is to promote education in Northern Ireland and implement education policy. Its main areas of responsibility are:

- Educational provision for children up to the age of four;
- Primary; post-primary and special education; and
- The youth service

Through the Minister for Education, the Department is accountable to the Assembly for fulfilling its statutory duties and using its public funds effectively.

Inspection arrangements

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspects a range of providers, including pre-schools, primary and post-primary schools, the youth service, institutes of further and higher education, and educational provision within the prison service. It is part of the Department of Education.

Arm's length bodies

The Department has nine Arm's Length Bodies, or non-departmental public bodies, each accountable to the Department, to support the delivery of its functions. The

Department's Accounting Officer is responsible for safeguarding the public funds given to these bodies, supported by the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of each body. The non-departmental public bodies, each considered in the following paragraphs, are the:

- Education Authority
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
- General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
- Middletown Centre for Autism
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland
- Exceptional Circumstances Body.

Education Authority (EA)

The Education (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 provided for the establishment of the Education Authority. The EA took over the existing duties of the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and continues to manage and deliver services in accordance with the geographic areas previously defined as ELBs.

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 established the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS). Its key duties include:

- Employing all teachers at Catholic maintained schools
- Advising the Department on Catholic maintained schools
- Promoting the effective planning, management and control of Catholic maintained schools
- Providing advice and information to the trustees, Boards of Governors, principals and staff of Catholic maintained schools.

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 established the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education

The Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 requires the Department to encourage and facilitate integrated education, defined as the education together at school of Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils. It also allowed the Department to pay grants to anybody aiming to promote or encourage integrated education.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 required the Department to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education, and allowed it to pay grants to anybody aiming to encourage or promote Irish-medium education. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) aims to promote, facilitate and encourage all aspects of Irish-medium education

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 established the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI). It aims to promote teacher professionalism, and its key responsibilities include:

- Registering all teachers in grant-aided schools
- Approving qualifications for the purposes of registration
- Providing advice to the Department and employing authorities on all matters relating to teaching.

Middletown Centre for Autism

In April 2002, the North South Ministerial Council endorsed an agreement between the Department of Education and the Department of Education and Skills to establish an all-island centre for children with autism spectrum disorders in Middletown, Armagh.

The Centre receives joint funding from the Department of Education and the Department of Education and Skills. It began offering services to children and young people with autism, their parents and education professionals in 2007.

Area planning

In September 2011, the then Minister for Education announced a need for strategic planning of schools on an area basis and commissioned a viability audit of schools, following by the publishing of area plans. In October 2016, the Minister for Education launched his draft area plan, 'Providing Pathways' with findings including that:

- Area planning appeared to have had limited impact on the school's estate
- The Department had failed to adequately resource arms-length bodies to conduct area planning
- Measures of sustainability and planning for the supply of school places needed to improve.

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Part 2

Proceedings of the Consultative Conference on Education

18 & 19 November 2016 Tullamore

Presentations

Ger Stack, Cathaoirleach, Education Committee

A Chairde agus a Chomhmhúinteoirí,

I would also like to add a few words of welcome to our guests and delegates here today. This year, we have more delegates than ever registered to take part in the INTO's Consultative Conference. On behalf of the Education Committee, we are delighted and heartened by the numbers of teachers that take the time to attend this conference and to contribute to professional debate.

The INTO Education Committee was set up to advise the CEC on educational matters. Its members are the President, Vice President and one representative elected by the members of each of the 16 districts. The general aims of the Education Committee include:

♦ To be the leading voice in education policy development

♦ To be to the fore in progressing education issues

♦ To be aware of broader developments in Education

In addition, the Education Committee prepare research for presentation at the annual Consultative Conference on Education.

Over the last number of years, topics that have been considered by the Education Committee have included: Quality in Education; Literacy; Numeracy; Wellbeing, Learning Communities and Curriculum. This year we had the aim of building on some of the work that has been done over the past number of years and using the historic year 2016, as an opportunity to look at 100 years of teaching - Teaching in the 21st Century.

We saw this important centenary year as an opportunity to look back as far as 1916 to see how far we have come, and take stock of what has been achieved. We also need to challenge ourselves and see what the future holds for our profession and how we can shape it.

Life in 1916 was tough for both children and teachers. School buildings were described by INTO President George O'Callaghan as 'incommodious, ill-constructed and badly-equipped'.

Children attended over-crowded classrooms with little or no resources. Many came to school cold and hungry. While the Revised Programme for National Schools introduced in 1900 proposed a broad and balanced curriculum, the child-centred philosophy was impossible to implement. Rote-learning and corporal punishment were standard in Irish classrooms where payment by results had been in place until 1899.

Despite all of these shortcomings, primary schools were at the heart of their communities in a 32-county Ireland. Indeed Joe Duffy, in his book *Children of the*

Rising, points out that the hungry children of Dublin's tenements were fed at school. He also suggests that far less young lives would have been lost in the rising if the schools had not been closed for Easter holidays. Children who were roaming the streets in search of firewood or looting would have been attending classes during the day.

Teachers campaigning for equal pay for equal work today can look back to a similar campaign in 1916. Catherine Mahon proposed a motion at Congress that year for pay equality for female teachers as there was a considerable discrepancy in rates of pay at the time.

Irish teachers were also paid less than their English or Scottish counterparts despite having a larger percentage of trained teachers in their ranks. At Congress that year, many delegates and indeed guests bemoaned the fact that teachers were paid quarterly not monthly like their English and Scottish colleagues. This quarterly payment resulted in teachers having to go into debt to survive between payments.

Delegates to Congress earlier this year were given a souvenir copy of the Irish School Weekly – a forerunner of today's *InTouch* magazine.

Describing itself as a practical journal for practical teachers, the Irish School Weekly contained extensive coverage of the 1916 Annual Congress, held that year in my native city of Cork. It is heartening to note that the President's address highlighted the disadvantaged situation of many children coming to school and expressed concern about the over-loaded curriculum. Even in 1916 teachers were just as concerned with the wellbeing of their pupils and the quality of their education as they were with their own salary and conditions.

And finally, there is evidence that some things haven't changed in a century .The Moville branch included a motion accusing the CEC of dereliction of duty in not lobbying MPs to use their influence to increase teacher's salaries.

I hope you enjoy the conference and that the discussion groups and workshops give you a good opportunity for professional learning and debate.

Deirbhile Nic Craith, Director of Education & Research

Introduction

Good afternoon delegates. Agus céad bliain de theagasc á cheiliúradh againn inniu, tá deis againn féachaint siar ar a bhfuil bainte amach againn sa chóras oideachais agus fís nua do na blianta amach romhainn a phlé.

Mar a léirigh Ger, bhí an saol crua go maith sa bhliain 1916. Ní raibh múinteoirí go ró-mhaith as – bhí a dtuarastal íseal, bhí an chigireacht dian, agus bhí siad faoi smacht na cléire, a raibh cúram bainistíochta na scoile orthu. Ní raibh an saol i bhfad níos fearr sa bhliain 1947, bliain i ndiaidh na stailce móire i 1946, nuair a d'fhoilsigh Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann Plean don Oideachas – plean fad radharcach mar a léirigh Aidan. Dar ndóigh tá an saol athraithe ó shoin.

Today our school population is diverse. We strive to be inclusive schools where all children regardless of ability or background are educated together in our local schools. We have a child-centred modern curriculum designed for the 21st century, even if not fully resourced. Teachers are well-qualified graduates who have their own professional regulatory body and are well regarded by society.

Mar sin tá an saol i bhfad níos fearr do mhúinteoirí sa lá atá inniu ann. Nó an bhfuil?

In my brief introduction today, I will focus specifically on issues relevant to our professionalism.

Teaching

We're probably familiar with McKinsey's statement that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers (McKinsey, 2007, p.4). Globally, we are seeing more emphasis on teachers and teaching quality. Teachers really matter. Even more than standards, resources, or assessments. But here lies the challenge. There are divergent views on what high-quality teaching looks like and what's the best way to get it and to keep it (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012, p. xii).

One school of thought takes a business approach to teaching and teachers' work. If the quality of teachers matter, let's reward those top performers and get tough on those at the bottom. Let's make sure they perform. Let's prescribe their work and measure their performance. Let's ensure they are accountable.

Teaching is seen as technically simple and can be readily mastered. Minimal training will suffice. Good teaching is driven by hard performance data about 'what works', and involves enthusiasm, hard work, raw talent and measurable results. Within this paradigm we see efforts to attract bright young graduates, give them minimum training, and work them hard for a few years in schemes such as 'Teach First' in England or 'Teach for America'. We see attempts to pay teachers according to performance, which may motivate a few, but alienates others and neglects the majority. There are also attempts to make teaching simpler by diminishing teachers' judgment and

professionalism so that less-qualified people can do it. This approach narrows the curriculum, standardises instruction, teaches to the test and treats teachers as mere delivery agents for government policies.

There is another view espoused by Hargreaves and Fullan, which is about investing in teacher professionalism and developing teachers' professional capital. Teaching is seen as sophisticated and difficult, requiring high levels of education and long periods of training. Good teaching is perfected through continuous improvement, involves wise judgement informed by both evidence and experience, and is a collective accomplishment and responsibility.

Bureaucratic accountability processes and attacks on teachers' professionalism have impacted negatively on teachers in other jurisdictions. According to Michael Katz and Mike Rose, the public education system in the USA is under siege. Teachers are blamed for poor education standards, teacher unions are blamed for putting their interests first, and schools of education are blamed for preparing ineffective teachers. There is a lack of reliable methods for assessing student progress or teacher quality, and job tenure protects 'bad' teachers. The silver bullet solution – beloved of politicians – is basically new high-stakes testing regimes and the application of market principles to public education. According to Sandra Leaton Gray, teachers in England are under siege as they struggle to educate young people in outdated organisations and structures under strict accountability regimes and managerialist systems. According to Bob Lingard, an educational researcher in Australia, 'we should see the English situation as a warning, not as a system from which to learn' (2009). I think many teachers here would concur with this view.

So what about Ireland?

Ireland

In a global context, Ireland is one of the lucky countries that continues to attract high calibre candidates to teaching. Among young Irish people, to be a teacher is a popular choice that carries strong social prestige unlike in most other countries in Europe, (Sahlberg, 2011, p.5).

According to the OECD, initial teacher education is probably the single most important factor in having a well-performing public education system. High-performing countries such as Singapore, Korea, Canada and Finland, have systematically invested in enhancing the initial education of their teachers. In these countries, teachers are educated in universities on a par with other academic professions. Teaching is also an attractive career choice which makes admission to teacher education highly competitive and intellectually demanding. Teacher education in Ireland, both North and South, is similar. Courses have recently been extended and reconceptualised and continue to attract high calibre applicants. According to the international panel that reviewed the structure of teacher education in Ireland, the high calibre of entrants to teaching was among the highest in the world. Perhaps a useful point for future pay talks!

Our education system is very different to that of the US or of England, where there appears to be a constant undermining of teachers' professionalism. But we haven't

escaped entirely from global influences in education. There is no doubt that the language of business has permeated our system, where we talk about setting targets, measuring progress, devising improvement plans, evidence-based decision-making and reporting outcomes.

Our challenge is to ensure that teachers, the most valuable resource in our education system, are well-prepared, motivated, and nurtured and supported throughout their careers. We will return to the theme of the teaching career at a future education conference.

Teaching Today

The role of teachers continues to expand. Our colleagues in 1916 didn't concern themselves unduly with pastoral issues, behavioural and social problems or with special education - all features of today's classrooms. Parents today are more demanding regarding their children's education. Children now have rights. In addition, demands for accountability continue to increase and the 'system' requires more documentation.

Teaching is becoming more intensified – with an increased focus on testing, top-down initiatives, inspections and evaluations. And I think we're struggling a little with our professional identity and what it means to be a professional teacher in 21st century Ireland.

In our work on teacher professionalism in the early 1990s, the INTO sought an extension of the B.Ed, longer school experiences and a more active role for class teachers in the education of student teachers as part of their school placement. The INTO argued for an induction programme, which would be a bridge between initial teacher preparation and being a fully-fledged member of the profession, where experienced teachers would mentor their new colleagues. The INTO was instrumental in getting the national pilot project on teacher induction under way in 2002. We demanded a framework for teacher professional development, to address the ad hoc and unstructured nature of provision and support. We sought the establishment of a Teaching Council to enable teachers to take more control over their own profession. Progress has been made on all these fronts, but there are tensions around interpretations and understandings of teachers' collective professional roles.

The recession didn't help. Austerity policies undermine professionalism as Governments seek to reduce budget deficits rather than invest in public services. Austerity policies usually travel with neo-liberalist policies, characterised by privatisation, deregulation and a rolling back of the state from many areas of social provision. Economic rationale and markets prevail, and 'value' becomes more important than values. (Allman, 2010). Austerity policies over the last number of years have taken their toll on teacher morale. Expecting teachers to accept cutbacks in education, pay cuts and massive reductions in resources and to carry on with their professional work as if there was no austerity, has impacted on teachers' receptiveness to new initiatives.

The INTO's study on Workload, Stress and Resilience of Primary Teachers, carried out by Professor Mark Morgan on our behalf, indicates that teachers' work has become more stressful in the last five years. A major factor is the additional 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 demand to solve problems that have their origins in societal concern. Teachers perceived themselves less in control and felt that their professional expertise was being downplayed. On the other hand teachers were highly motivated to be involved in planning at the level of their own school and wanted opportunities and time to make it happen.

The matters that emerged as stressful reflect the current socio-political climate, and a concern about greater accountability of teachers established through more documentation. Demands for paperwork, perceived as evidence of greater accountability, could lead to a diminution of professional trust, which is not in our interest.

Nevertheless, teaching remains a satisfying career for most of our members, according to the same study. However, we cannot be complacent. We must continue to ensure that we attract good calibre candidates into teaching, that our newly qualified teachers are supported, mentored and nurtured, that we continue to develop and grow our knowledge and expertise throughout our careers, and that we retain our autonomy to make decisions within our professional domain.

We are right to defend our profession from threats to undermine it, but that does not mean that we retreat to old understandings of what teaching is. What made teachers well-regarded in 1916 is not what makes them well-regarded today. What made teaching a well-regarded profession in the 1940s, the 1970s or even ten years ago, is not what's required today.

The teaching profession must become a force for continuous change that benefits **all** individuals and society as a whole. Let us not forget our role as advocates for social justice. We should never let teaching become only about performance, test scores and results. We must not lose sight of what motivates teachers and pupils, and what brings joy to our work with children – for example, when a pupil grasps something new, first begins to read, or masters a new problem.

Testing

I would like to say a few words about a new project we're undertaking. Like many countries, testing plays a bigger role in our schools today than it did before. Over the years our understanding and use of standardized testing has changed. When I started teaching the use of standardized tests was low key. They were optional. Schools decided if and when to use them and which tests to use. Test results were reported verbally to parents if reported at all.

It is now mandatory to administer standardized tests in English reading and mathematics in 2nd, 4th and 6th class in May. Teachers no longer have the choice when to administer the mandatory tests. At least they still have the choice of which test to use as long as it is normed on the Irish population. Results are now reported to parents on report cards, and in aggregate form to boards of management and to the Department of Education. There is now more public awareness about the tests.

It is because of these changes that the INTO is collaborating with the Centre for Assessment Research and Policy in Education (CARPE) in DCU, headed up by Professor Michael O'Leary, on a joint research project on standardized testing in Irish primary schools. The project will hopefully throw some light on what's happening in schools and provide us with some rich data to inform policy and professional development for teachers. So look out for the questionnaires and focus groups over the next year.

Professionalism for 21st Century

So where should teacher professionalism be heading now? According to Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan, teaching as a professional – teaching as a pro – (as they call it) involves a personal commitment to rigorous training, continuous learning, collegial feedback, respect for evidence, responsiveness to parents, striving for excellence and going far beyond the requirements of any written contract (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012, p. xiv).

It's about collective responsibility, and not only individual autonomy. It is about scientific evidence as well as personal judgement. It's about acknowledging that we all have different strengths. It's about developing competence, judgment, insight inspiration and the capacity for improvisation throughout our careers. It's about ensuring that the cumulative experience of pupils is not just good, but great. Teaching like a professional is a collective and transparent responsibility. Making decisions in complex situations is what professionalism is about.

Governments create the climate to enable teachers thrive - or not - by how they treat, respect and trust teachers. But it is teachers themselves who acquire, develop and invest in their own and their colleagues' professionalism.

In the words of Hargreaves, sustainable improvement can never be done *to or even for* teachers. It can only ever be achieved *by and with* them. Teaching like a Pro is about improving as an *individual*, raising the performance of the *team*, and increasing quality across the *whole profession.* (p.23)

Conclusion

Under the framework of our over-arching theme of Teaching in the 21st Century, we have discussed many topics of relevance to both teachers and pupils – learning communities (2010), quality and accountability (2014), teacher and pupil well-being (2012), curriculum (2015), the core subjects of literacy (2011) and numeracy (2013), and as strong believers in holistic education, the arts (2009). ICT has permeated many of these topics but we plan to have a particular focus on ICT next year. This conference is about bringing these different threads together, and focusing on our vision for education for the future. You will begin this process in the discussion groups this afternoon with some blue-sky thinking on some of the themes. But let's push out the boat, and also consider what schools might look like in the future, perhaps taking inspiration from this kindergarten school in Japan, where children climb trees, play on the roof, and move freely between indoor classroom spaces and the outdoors.

Bainigí taitneamh agus tairbhe as an gComhdháil.

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Aidan Gaughran, Education Committee

The INTO 1947 Plan for Education took three years to complete and came to 123 pages. Due to time constraints, I can only give you a flavour of the Plan and its recommendations. The Plan did not confine itself to primary education and its over-arching theme was that education was a preparation for complete life, focussing not only on one's economic needs but on one's personal needs – spiritual, mental, physical – and for children's needs as members of a community and as citizens of the State. Most pupils could only avail of primary education which was academically biased. The INTO called for more arts, music and drama, a link-up between primary, secondary and third-level education and a Council of Education involving stakeholders which could advise the Minister and the Department of Education on teacher education, curriculum, resources, school buildings, wellbeing and inspection.

As regards Initial Teacher Education, students entering the profession tended to be from the top echelons of school leavers as measured by the Leaving Certificate. However, primary teaching was bedevilled with the "largest classes, the poorest buildings and equipment and the worst paid teachers (INTO, 1947, p. 16. In addition the INTO believed that Inspectors "looked down on the national teachers as members of an inferior race" p. 37.

The INTO aimed to attract the brightest and the best to teaching and the first way to do this was to have salary scales improved so they would compare favourably with other professions. The Plan called for a four-year teaching programme – three of which would be spent in a university and the fourth devoted completely to professional training. Student teachers should gain experience in various types of schools and in addition to supervised practice, there would be continuous teaching where the student-teacher would be left in complete control of the class. The Plan looked for Continuous Professional Development. Teachers would have the opportunity to engage in "periodic instalments of formal training in the form of short refresher courses" p. 30.

The education system was condemned for not having a proper policy in relation to planning, co-ordination, resource allocation, evaluation, certification and continuity. Educational research was also lacking. In terms of the curriculum, the Plan argued that it was too academic and intellectual with the consequent neglect of the practical. INTO affirmed that "factual knowledge is no more education as a dictionary is a work of literature" – INTO, p. 39.

As well as more music, arts and drama the Plan called for illustrative resources and multimedia to aid the teaching of History and Geography as teachers were confined to the use of text that didn't effectively engage the children. In terms of reading, the INTO argued that the value of "reading to learn" should not be lost in "learning to read". The Department of Education was criticised for not providing money or books for school libraries. In terms of maths, the Plan argued that the teaching of arithmetic should be correlated with the "ordinary, daily-life problems of the community" - INTO, 1947, p. 42.

The strongest criticisms were reserved for Irish. The Plan lamented "the immeasurably difficult task of making Irish-speakers of children whose parents are largely indifferent, the most of whose waking hours are spent in a totally un-Irish and invariably pro-English atmosphere ... And who leave school at 14 to enter a world which, in their eyes, has very little use for Irish" – INTO, 1947, p. 106.

On the same page, the Plan says "teachers are bidden to make Irish-speakers of their English-speaking pupils, but there is no formula in the Notes which will make this miracle come to pass". Irish speaking was making little headway in the Gaeltacht or in the Galltacht. The Plan suggested that written Irish was introduced much too early and the emphasis should be on oral language particularly in the early years. The final paragraph of the whole 1947 Plan sums up for me, not just the problem with Irish – then and now – but also the problems associated with the various initiatives imposed on teachers in the last number of years. "We await with anxiety prompt and decisive State action to show that it realises that the schools are not expected to – and indeed cannot possibly shoulder the burden alone" – INTO, 1947, p. 123.

ICT wasn't on the agenda but the INTO claimed there was an urgent need for dramatized wireless lessons, school radio sets, films and film projectors and other modern devices. The Plan was ambitious in its demands for better school facilities in general. There is no specific reference to special education or social inclusion. However, there is a strong emphasis on equality for all.

In relation to parents and school governance, whilst the Constitution 'acknowledges that the primary and natural education of the child is the Family' there was little evidence that the state or the churches were in any hurry to rescind, or reduce, their control over schools. The presence of the Catholic Church permeated the Plan and there was an aspirational vision to make Ireland "the Island of Saints and Scholars" once again – indeed, Ireland could 'give an example to the world of a right way of living, the Christian way, the Irish way' – INTO 1947, p. 18.

And so, finally, to the Inspectorate. The INTO argued that the real and lasting work of a teacher could not be assessed by an outsider on a brief visit. The Inspector refused to take into account adverse conditions, slum schools and the average intelligence of the pupils. The Plan called on the Inspector to be an exemplary role model and be prepared to teach specimen lessons. Inspectors should be, like teachers, willing to engage in 'refresher courses' and there should be provision for 'periodic teaching practice' to give them a true perception of teaching and its associated challenges – INTO 1947, p. 38.

It also suggested that the term 'Inspector' should be replaced by some term more in keeping with the professional status of teachers – INTO 1947, p. 38.

In conclusion, having given careful consideration to the INTO Plan for Education – written, as it was, twenty years before I was born - I am reminded of a phrase from my own secondary school days; "plus ça change plus c'est la même chose".

Brian Mac Craith, President of Dublin City University

Transforming lives through education

I am delighted to be here this afternoon and thank you for the kind words of welcome and thank you for the invitation. I am probably the first physics professor that has spoken to you at one of these events, so I hope I live up to expectations. Just let me say a bit about myself and my street credibility in this company. Both my parents were primary teachers, one in the South and one in the North, we lived in Dundalk and I sampled both systems and sampled both parents indeed, and I am married to a teacher and as a physics professor for over 30 years, I regard myself as a teacher. My late dad was a great INTO stalwart, in fact this is his birthday. I'm not sure what he would be thinking looking down at me, the cheek of me coming to talk to the INTO. But he might have a little bit of pride that I have seen the light, that the university has taken a very big decision to create what surprises most people - Ireland's first faculty of education in a university setting - and that fact will be a backdrop to some of the things I will say to you. The final thing before I start formally, is another part of my activity, apart from heading up the university, you get a ten year sentence as a university president in Ireland so I am in year seven at this stage, is that one of things I have a particular interest in is STEM education. After over two years work, the Minister of Education and Skills will launch next Thursday - appropriately on Thanksgiving Day - the report on STEM education, and it focusses on STEM education in the school system, so it will comment on both primary and secondary schools and I think there are some very important recommendations in there for a very important aspect of our education system.

Briefly, just about the university itself - we are growing very rapidly. We are just 36 years old, and took in 200 students in November 1980. Last year the numbers grew so much that we were Ireland's fasting growing university, but this year with the incorporation completed on the 30 September, we are at 16,500 students and we have grown over 50% in the past five years. I think it reflects the demographics and reflects our location and hopefully it reflects our quality as well.

What I want to talk about today is the pivotal role of teachers in our education system and really take a look forward and Deirbhile's introductory remarks are very helpful to me in terms of setting the scene for some of the issues and the individuals that are influential in that. We are living through a period of unprecedented challenges globally and nationally and I think the role of the education system in enabling us to determine our future both societally in the quality of that shared society and economic terms was never more important. I think our fundamental values of creativity or innovation but most of all the quality of our shared society all rely heavily on the quality of our education system. It will be central to Ireland's social wellbeing and future economic prosperity and central to that, first of all before I talk about teachers, is the talent emerging from our schools at every level. I think you will hear more and more - whether the language is appealing or not - around the development of talent, and to give you one example of that, the IDA which has been so successful in advancing Ireland over recent decades, has talked about the three Ts in Ireland that enable them to attract foreign

direct investment and that is taxation, talent and track record. I think there is every indication that one of those Ts may well be less relevant in the future and track record is something that cannot be managed or predicted. So talent will be at the heart of this, and that is creating much more of a focus on our education system and I revert back to the quotation that Deirbhile had from the McKinsey report "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of the teachers". I think that is central to the discussion that follows. So what I would like to highlight really is what are the key issues in my opinion of ensuring that Ireland will have one of the leading education systems in the world if not the leading and what we in DCU, in our new form, are trying to do about this? And the first question I would pose around what determines a world class education system, is what is the purpose of an education system, particularly in the 21st century, what makes it different in this case? In addressing the role of an education system, I think we do come back to the individual student and emphasise in our view that the primary purpose of education is to enable our students to flourish in the challenging world of the 21st century. To flourish in their personal lives, in civic society and in the workplace and each of those elements is important, critically important. Central to this is the role of the teacher themselves. We are saying that we want people to flourish in the 21st century, we have to look at the 21st century itself and ask ourselves what characterises that. Words that describe a world even in the last 25 years that is so different than what came before it are: connected, globalised, knowledge-based, digital, aging, developing, urbanised. That notion of digital you understand very well. Connected, by 2020 there will be 50 billion connected devices in the world, bear in mind that for seven billion people in the world there are more than seven billion mobile phones at any given time. Just think about that. Ireland is now the second most globalised country in the world, so we have gone from a country that 25 years ago was essential mono-ethnic to now the second most globalised country in the world and on our campus we routinely have 120 different nationalities and I know from visiting many of your schools, depending where you visit, you can have similar diversity of culture. So it is a very different world indeed and in preparing our students to flourish in that world, we have to take that into account. So these characteristics that I have mentioned have or should have a direct bearing on the focus of our education system and therefore on the role of the teacher themselves.

So, in that context, I am going to talk about four areas which I think are critically important in terms of 21st century teaching with the objective in mind of enabling our students to flourish. Such is the pace of change and unpredictability of the future that one of the key characteristics that students and ultimately graduates from a system must have, is the adaptability to change. So in addition to the disciplinary knowledge, we must equip our students with a set of personal skills or attributes that will enable them navigate the particular challenges of the coming decades. These are skills such as leadership, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, you have heard these before. One of the key ones I would argue is making sense of information. It used to be that the family home that had Encyclopaedia Britannica had an advantage; you could get access to information and that was hugely important. Well as you know, accessing information is no longer the issue, it takes nanoseconds to get any information you want. It is assessing information, it is distilling information, it is making sense of information, it is the ability to apply that information in a sensible way.

Key issues for 21st century teaching:

- Development of Personal Skills
- Assessment
- Innovative Pedagogies (IBL; PBL)
- Technology / Digital Learning

In January this year at Davos, you would be familiar with the World Economic Forum, they asked something like 5,000 employers across the world, major employers, what they thought they would be looking for in individuals emerging from our education system in 2020. Look at the words they are using - they are quite surprising.

- Complex problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- People management
- Coordinating with others (teamwork)
- Emotional intelligence

The problem-solving wouldn't surprise you, the critical thinking wouldn't, people management, the ability to manage people, teamwork the ability to collaborate, emotional intelligence, empathy, these are words that are emerging now and when I took over as president of DCU seven years ago I spent the first year talking to employers and saying 'Are you happy with what is emerging from our education system and if not, what is missing?' The message was consistent from a disciplinary perspective everything was fine but the nature of the individuals wasn't. And one of the leaders from a major employer said to me, 'the first class honours nerd is no good to us', as simple as that. It takes us 18 months for that person to join in the system and add value to what we are trying to achieve. So I asked what were you looking for and it was these words here again, creativity, problem-solving, ability to communicate, leadership skills, and I think that changes because the access to the information is no longer the issue and in many cases technical information in a lot of the technical areas changes so rapidly, it is the ability to actually adapt to that and to learn that that is critically important.

So part of my own belief in terms of the educational system itself is that we should be looking at the education continuum and we could achieve a lot more from our national education system if we established a coherent approach and aligned our objectives along all the elements of the education continuum. In fact many of the problems that we now face happen at the transition points whether it be between primary and secondary and in particular between secondary and third level. There isn't a coherence to this and if we set about identifying the overall outcomes that we want in terms of our education system and develop those step-wise along every stage of the system we would have a much more successful outcome. While acknowledging that the Minister has recently launched the action plan for education with a very bold ambition to be the leading education system in Europe by 2026, I still think it is very surprising that there is actually no overall strategy for education in this country. You cannot draw down off the shelf an ambition where we take a system level approach of what we want to achieve for all our students of every age and ensure that every stage of the education continuum is acting coherently

with common objectives. In my own view and with a view to the future education should be and some of the words appeared in Deirbhile's introductory words, coherent continuous personal development that is what education should be at every stage and we are developing the individual across all dimensions of the individual self.

Any discussion around developing attributes and students brings us logically to the critical issue of assessment, and the phrase that I think captures most of all what we all understand about assessment particularly those of us involved in the education system "what you assess is what you get; if you don't test it, you won't get it" this from the well-known psychologist Lauren Resnick appeared time and time again in educational literature. Stated another way, the nature and focus of assessments used in education drives both teaching and learning behaviour and you know that the best and really the worst example of that is the Leaving Certificate, it drives six years of teaching and learning behaviour by its crude nature. We all understand the concept of teaching to the test but if we really want to develop individuals, personalities, attributes we need to assess those in some fashion and as we move from knowledge content based objectives in our education system to focus on attributes and skills development and we need to develop and implement more sophisticated and innovative assessment modalities. Properly developed from assessment of learning to assessment for learning whereby the assessment itself can be used as a tool for improved learning. The whole concept of formative assessment is driving some of the research that we are doing and you will see how that emerges later on. Formative assessment provides teachers with information with which to modify or change teaching and learning activities in which students are engaged. So it is a real time engagement with assessment in personal development. In contrast, the summit of assessment which certainly at second level is the driving force promotes rote learning and a tactical approach on behalf of the student. Really assessment should be designed to measure students ability to collaborate, diagnose problems, plan investigations, research information, construct models, debate with peers, form coherent arguments and create and co-create content, that is what we should be focussing on.

The third topic I want to mention is about the new modalities of learning or the innovative pedagogies -an introduction of innovative pedagogy to match the nature of the 21st century learner. These are some of the things we have learned through research about what is different about 21st century learners. We do know that given they have lived through lives where accessing information and surrounded by streams of information has caused them to learn in different ways so students engage with information in radically different ways. We know that they learn best as active participants rather than passively. We know that peer-to-peer collaborative learning is key and really the role of the teacher, certainly at third level, is to move the student from information to knowledge and from knowledge to wisdom and again not just being able to regurgitate information but to understand through knowledge then to develop insights of wisdom, I think that is critically important. So in that regard the whole area of inquiry based learning and problem based learning IBL and PBL puts the emphasis on initially curiosity and observations which are then followed by problem solving and experimentation and through the use of critical thinking and reflection students are able to make meaning out of gathered evidence and make sense of the natural world. In PBL,

problems are posed in such a way that the students need to seek new knowledge before they can solve them rather than seeking a single correct answer. Students interpret the problem, gather the information needed to identify solutions and then evaluate possible options and present conclusions. The significant shift towards enquiry based learning and problem based learning necessitates a similar shift in the type of continuing professional development offered to teachers and CPD should include learning events where there are opportunities for collaborations among teachers in which they can engage in active learning and that whole area will be crucial in terms of advancing the performance and advancing in particular the understanding for students in their ability to grapple the world around them.

The fourth element I am going to talk about of the four that I had is digital learning. And of course we are aware of the ubiquitous nature of digital technology itself; I am not going to say too much about this because I think it is well trodden ground. To date there has been an uneven adoption of technology to enhance learning, teaching and assessment in Irish schools. But I am pleased that the new digital strategy for schools which was launched last year will address some of the issues. It sets out a clear vision for the role of digital technologies in enhancing learning teaching and assessment in schools and it is worth quoting from it "so that Ireland's young people become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens who participate fully in society and the economy." But that whole space of digital technologies and supporting teachers to embed that is critically important. There are challenges and I think resources will be required for the management of IT infrastructure in schools and for upskilling teachers in the use of technology, providing courses that influence pedagogical orientation as well as CPD on the pedagogy associated with the use of technology in teaching, learning and assessment. So government really has started but has to continue I know the PDST are playing a central role in this as well. It is absolutely crucial that preservice and CPD programmes necessary to update teachers on how best to develop and deploy technology enhanced learning and teaching in the classroom. That is absolutely critical that we get that piece right. I could talk a lot about flip classroom but I will move on.

I think it is interesting that Deirbhile showed an image of a school in Japan. The Japanese government has recently announced that every primary school in Japan will be given a 3D printer. Now if you want an advanced technology linked to computers where the whole issue of STEM and the creative aspects of technology can actually bring out the best in students, this is a huge example. This will be a technology which is accessible from an economic perspective, financial perspective but I think will transform how we think about the whole creative process itself but is a very good example of how technology can be used to advantage.

So this is looking at all the things that I think are going to be part of the education of the future and critical in terms of making sure that we have a world class education system in Ireland. So it is very easy for me to comment but what is DCU doing about it? Our own strategic plan is focused on transforming lives and societies. Where the transformation piece is really what we do for our students and I want to say a little bit about that. What we put in place, what the motivation was and what we are doing

already. It came from early 2012 following a request from the Minister of Education and Skills, the HEA established an international review panel chaired by Pasi Sahlberg to actually look at the reconfiguration and advancements in teacher education in Ireland. Let me quote from the report "to envision innovative strategies so that Ireland can produce a teacher education regime that is comparable to the world's best". The international review panel published its report in July 2012 again you have seen some quotes from Deirbhile already but look what they say about trying to create teacher education to be comparable with the world's best; "recommend that teacher education should be in a university setting and should address the full continuum, the full range of teacher education from early childhood through primary and secondary and adult education, enabling greater synergies. It should have a critical mass and should have a significant capacity for high quality research". So it is about research intensive initial teacher education in a university setting. We had already decided what we wanted to do and this was St. Pat's, Mater Dei and DCU coming together our school of education studies with what was happening in St Pat's and Mater Dei. Sometime later Church of Ireland College of Education joined that. So what we have put in place is Ireland's first faculty of education. It does address teacher education along that full education continuum, initial teacher education in the first instance, but also as a major resource for CPD and you will certainly see a lot more of that coming out. We knew and you would understand this very well but this could not have happened unless we addressed the denominational issue first thing. So this is four year project, the first two years were focussed on getting the denominational piece right. So we have created an ethos of progressive pluralism so that within the context of a secular university we could address the preparation of teachers for denominational schools, non-denominational schools and multi-denominational schools all with mutual respect. That we put in place and that has worked. In terms of the research intensive we have created research centres in STEM education, digital learning, assessment and you heard that mentioned and I'm delighted that that project with the INTO is taking place with Michael O'Leary, special needs education, language and literacy, we have new centres emerging as well in the area of early childhood education and a number of other areas. We have about ten major research centres which means that teachers will emerge from this institute at the cutting edge of knowledge around the key issues that I have been talking about in 21st century education and what is more, practical teachers through CPD can access this continual development of information around cutting edge of knowledge. I think this is critically important and this will be part of network of major institutes of education around the world. I am just back from China where we are working with ECNU which is a major university in Shanghai where every principal of every school in China must attend. Do the maths on that. But the scale of what we have put in place here the vision and the structure has caused them to want to collaborate and I think that notion of the global teacher will be a critical part of the future as well.

I'm coming to the end now and I just wanted to flash up a few last comments of three individuals. I asked Pasi Sahlberg to tell me what he thought the future of education would be and this is a summary of his answer. Less formal classroom instruction, activity-based learning;   interpersonal skills, creativity and problem-solving central; needing to be able to assess, assessment at the heart of it again, innovative assessment and the notion of personalised road-map of learning for each child, critically important.

I'm going to finish which I think would be appropriate today quoting two other people, the second one being Pádraig Pearse. The first person I'm quoting is Noam Chomsky: he said that education should be about encouraging creative exploration, independence of thought, and willingness to cross frontiers and he also said it should be about fostering the ability of people to learn on their own. And it is the word fostering that caught me and if you go back to the Murder Machine and Pádraig Pearse he calls out that in the old Irish the teacher was áite or foster and the pupil was dalta or foster child and the system was aiticus or fosterage – words that we still retain as oide, dalta agus oideachas.

Séamie Ó Néill, Head of Education at Maynooth University Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

A Uachtaráin, a rúnaí ghinearálta, agus a chairde,

Ar dtús, ba mhaith liom a rá gur mór an onóir dom labhairt libh inniu, tráth a bhfuil deireadh á chur leis an gComhdháil Chomhairleach ar Oideachas 2016. Is mian liom buíochas a ghabháil le Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann as ucht iarraidh orm labhairt libh anseo inniu.

Firstly, let me say what an honour and privilege it is for me, as someone who has worked as a primary school teacher, a primary school principal and currently working in initial teacher education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University, to address you at the end of the 2016 INTO Consultative Conference on Education. When I saw the theme I realised that they needed someone a bit long in the tooth for the historical perspective!

I would like to wish yesterday's keynote speaker Brian Mac Craith and my fellow teacher educators the very best of luck in their new configuration in DCU. We need to have healthy, vibrant colleges of education to ensure the future of our profession and the new DCU Institute of Education is a very important player in that field.

It has always been my belief that this is a very important conference, forming a key part of the national educational debate. If you look over the conference proceedings from previous years on the INTO website, you will find the seeds of many ideas that came to fruition in the intervening years. I attended a conference last year where the main topic was *Communities of Practice,* a theme that was discussed at an INTO Conference over 20 years ago. There is no doubt that the INTO Education Conference has acted as a catalyst for change in Irish education over the years.

Today I will leave energised and will return to my workplace full of the joys and ideas stimulated over past two days. I trust that you have probably also enjoyed a similar experience and will leave with a wish for change. But on reflection, wanting change and leading change are two different things. The most critical point to understand from my perspective is that change cannot be imposed. Vision cannot be imposed. So, while recognising the fantastic work that you have engaged in during the conference, we need to realise that we cannot impose that change on our colleagues, instead we have to bring people with us. We have to bring our colleagues with us.

Torben Rick, 2015, www.torbenrick.eu/blog/change-management/change-management-comic-strips/

Yesterday we had a number of productive discussion groups based on some key questions (see Appendix 1). It would be a very interesting experiment to bring the questions that framed our discussion yesterday back to our colleagues in school. Could they be used to frame a school-based discussion? It is important that we try to widen the debate with the full teaching body.

Agus muid ag druidim i dtreo dheireadh 2016, this conference provides an ideal opportunity for reflection and, hopefully, a springboard for forging a vision for education for the next 50 years. In my role as Director of School placement in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, visiting schools is one of the greatest privileges of my job. In the last year, I have visited around 50 schools and greatly enjoy seeing our wonderful teachers in action. It is an honour to work with a brilliant cohort of student teachers and seeing them in practice, I know that the future of teaching is in safe hands.

I have been asked in this presentation to provide some feedback on the conference and, like the writer Maeve Binchy who picked up many of her best stories listening on the bus, I have been doing something similar. If you noticed me lurking around your breakfast table tá a fhios agaibh anois cad a bhí ar siúl agam! However, before beginning my feedback, I want, at the outset, to spend a brief few moments indulging in a personal reflection on my own educational journey and in doing so to recognise how far we have come in building our teaching profession to the wonderful, high calibre career it is today.   My reflection offers a description of the massive change that has occurred in school environments particularly in the last 50 years.

I had a very warm junior infant teacher whom I fondly recall, but unfortunately, for the next 12 years my school experience was pretty bleak and it was a pretty bleak experience for a lot of people in those days. I think those children who were reasonably bright academically did well, but school for those who were not bright was harsh.

Let me share my thoughts about the fifth class in which I was a pupil in 1970:

5th Class 1970

not a sound
silence
of the silenced
thirty-nine pairs
of watchful eyes
watching now
full attention
as
slowly
deliberately
nonchalantly
the teacher
pushed
the smallest boy
in the class
into the press
under the desk
'that'll keep you
quiet for a while'
the smallest
and the
quietest boy
in the
class

Now contrast that with a Senior Infants Class in Lucan which I visited a few weeks ago in my role as Director of School Placement. My attention was drawn to a little girl in the class. She was enthralled by her teacher, a master teacher who was young but a consummate professional in full flow and at the zenith of her teaching. It was a privilege for me to witness this moment between child and teacher. Nuair a chuaigh mé abhaile scríobhas na focail seo:

Senior Infant Lucan 2016
the
uninhibited
joy on the
face of the
senior infant
as she gazed
adoringly
at her teacher
was a joy
to behold
a teacher
drawing out
the best
of all
that is good
in that
child

Those two pieces for me acknowledge how far we have come in the teaching profession; from the bleakness and harshness of the education system of the early years of our nation to the central role teachers play today in ensuring that schools are warm and caring environments for our children. I observed *a teacher drawing out the best of all that is good in that child*. That is what teachers do, day in, day out throughout our nation and I truly believe we are the better for it. It is not feasible to implement Bloom strategies until we have created foundations informed by Maslow's theories and it is really reassuring that in Irish primary schools we incorporate the Maslow 'stuff' very well into our teaching and learning.

The next question posed is – *How did that happen*? If we are here creating a vision for the next 50 years, how did it happen that in the last 50 years we have gone from bleak and harsh environments to warm and caring environments? Where did that vision come from? It was not an imposed vision; it came from you in the teaching profession. That is a key message to be shared today – vision cannot be imposed.

I would now like to take the time to examine a point raised by Brian Mac Craith in his keynote presentation yesterday. In the presentation, Brian quotes from Pasi Sahlberg on an educational future where there is less formal classroom instruction, activity-based learning, interpersonal skills, creativity, and problem solving. Taking these as a rubric, I want you now to look at the following photos from the senior infant class teacher in the class in Lucan that I referred to earlier.

These photos were selected from the many photos that the class teacher shares on Twitter. If we use the Pasi Sahlberg rubric to examine these photos, evidence of activity based learning, interpersonal skills, creativity and problem solving can clearly be identified. The pictures tell an absolutely powerful story and it is a story of joyful learning and of joyful engagement.

To follow my personal reflection, I now turn to the theme of this conference: *Teaching in the 21st Century*. I have to confess that I have a difficulty with this concept as it implies that we have to be constantly teaching for the new, whereas I believe we need to teach for the now. In a way, is it not impossible to conceptualise what teaching might be like 50 years from now?

One of the discussion groups yesterday focussed on the need for adequate facilities: *Infants need space to move, grow and play with highly qualified adults to facilitate all needs in a bright, well-resourced school. Schools should have high quality facilities that are designed to meet the changing needs of the school community over an extended period of time.*

The class in the photos above have those facilities but there is a huge disparity in facilities across the country. On a recent visit to a large sixth class housed in a cramped prefab, it was obvious that the kind of activities evident in the pictures above would have been impossible. There is a big issue around suitable classroom facilities. Having worked in shared area back in the 1980s, it was obvious that the concept just did not work with a large number of children stuffed into inadequate space, so pupil teacher ratio is an issue when it comes to delivering curriculum.

A concept that emerged a number of times during the conference in terms of 21st Century leaning is *Creativity*. To understand this, we must first ask, what does it entail? It is a word that is used frequently and I am unsure if we really have a conception of what creativity is or if we have a conception, we may not have a consensus. The language around such concepts is problematic when it comes to creating a vision for the future.

Another concept that emerges is *improvement*. In its current usage, it has emerged from a constant deficit model. Rather than talking about *improvement*, we should be talking about *changing our practice for new contexts.* Instead of approaching the future from a deficit model of practice, we should examine practice from a contextual model. The idea of *improvement* can be potentially distressing because there is no end to the upward trend of the graph. If my class scores improve every year, where are they going to be in 10 years' time? There is not going to be room on the graph for them.

Returning to the concept of creativity, one delegate described it in the context of the primary school as *playful teaching.* This is a very apt definition but our challenge is to move playful thinking from junior classes up to the senior classes in primary school and, in particular, to resist the downward pressure from the post primary curriculum, the narrowing of curricular focus that permeates into the higher classes in the primary school from post primary. One delegate suggested that "maybe we need to mobilise the best infant teachers and dispatch them to 5th and 6th class for a couple of years". In principle, this is a worthy idea. However, I have huge sympathy for the 5th and 6th class teachers because the aforementioned downward pressure on them rather than a lack of playfulness tends to be at the root of a more constrained delivery of curriculum in senior classes. I know of one school in South Dublin where 20 out of the 28 children in 6th class were doing grinds to prepare them for secondary school. Many of these children were already scoring very well on standardised tests. While this may not be the norm, it is something that we need to resist and question. There is very little room for creativity when such mind sets permeate the system.

It is imperative that we examine and interrogate the reasons why that downward pressure is occurring. We have to change mind-sets as the ongoing downward pressure is affecting pedagogy in the upper end of the primary school in particular. As quoted in *InTouch* in December, standardised tests value performance over mastery, and data over potential. Pasi Sahlberg describes standardisation as the word enemy of curiosity. If we agree with that, then what are we going to do about it? Sin ceist eile. Where standardised tests lead to undue peer pressure, interschool envy, interclass envy and, if I can mention it, children in the playground discussing their test results, then we need to resist such notions.

Another challenge along with the concept of creativity in the age of assessment is the *assessment of creativity*? Last week, I brought a bag of Lego to three schools. I asked the principals if I could conduct a small experiment in the use of Lego in sixth class. It was interesting to note the response. There was hesitancy on the part of all three, a fear that allowing children to play with Lego might give the wrong message, that is was not academic work. Eventually, one of the local principals allowed me to work with a fifth class. I gave a bag of Lego to three fifth class pupils and asked them to work as a team with the Lego. I gave them no further instructions or guidance. The following picture is a sample of what emerged:

The pupils collaborated as a team and they were actively and creatively engaged for two hours. On my return, I had a most wonderful conversation with them on what they had created. They described how they reached agreement on what they would build. It was obvious that all the concepts mentioned by Pasi Sahlberg: *less formal classroom instruction, activity based learning, interpersonal skills, creativity,* and *problem solving* had occurred in the two-hour period. However, some of these skills and approaches cannot easily be measured by tests. How can you measure curiosity and creativity? It is difficult to create a rubric to measure such concepts.

There are many qualities and skills that are considered important in 21st century learning that are not measured by most tests. Motivation, reliability, sense of beauty, resilience, empathy all are considered to have great value. Do we actually need to measure such attributes? Can a professional not exercise judgement and wisdom rather than a prescriptive rubric? Pasi Sahlberg mentioned that we need to assess 21st century skills. Is the teacher not best placed to assess informally in the classroom? They do it all the time. When they have 30 children in a class, assessment is happening constantly. Teachers willingly share assessments and observations of children with colleagues in the staff room over a cup of coffee, so in my view there is a lot of informal assessment going on in schools that is every bit as useful as standardised tests.

In planning a future vision for education in this century, it is a big challenge for us to predict the future. Only 16 years have gone by and there are still 84 to go, if my sums are right. Let us look at the big changes that have occurred in the last twenty years alone. Who would have predicted that, whereas twenty years ago a parent was dragging a child in from play, in 2016 we are trying to drag them out to play? Who would have predicted that four-year-old children would be spending three or four hours a day on screen time with a piece of metal with a shiny surface on it?

In looking to the future, there is a tendency to look in particular at the specific skills required for the workplace. I would like to reject that notion and instead start with some questions that were addressed in yesterday's discussion groups. What delighted me about these conversations was that there was very little emphasis on skills. If we examine the questions and feedback from the sessions, it is interesting to see what emerges.

A number of key questions were posed:

Key Question 1: What kind of schools do we want in the 21st Century?
Key Question 2: What kind of teachers do we want to teach in those schools?
Key Question 3: In an ideal world what would professional learning for teachers in those schools look like?

Interestingly, the answers that emerged in the discussion groups were actually value-laden and not skills-laden: values around the teacher, around the learner, around the profession, around the community. If the focus was on skills and knowledge alone, maybe the role of the teacher would be in danger of changing. Knowledge and skills can now be accessed on the internet. For example, if you want to find out how to insert a slide into a PowerPoint, you just need to google — *how to insert slide*. But the concepts that emerged from the discussion groups yesterday were much more than knowledge and skills alone. They included *Trust, Inclusion, Holistic Development, Autonomy, Agency*. The concept of agency was mentioned in the context of agency between parents and teachers and I thought that that was marvellous as agency is very much linked into beliefs and values.

In looking at the theme of the conference, *Teaching in the 21st Century*, I conducted a small survey. My data was gathered by sending a text to 10 teachers asking them what 21st century schools should look like. The responses were very heartening as indicated by the following samples:

any school where the child's ability to grow as a person is as important as scoring a STEN of 10

a school where parents and teachers work together to help the child achieve their dreams.

These responses mirror the INTO Education Conference discussion document*: an ideal evaluation model would extend beyond content knowledge to encompass the holistic skills and competencies of the child.*

When visiting a school in Ballyfermot during the week I informed a teacher that I was attending this conference and that the theme was *Teaching in the 21st Century*. I asked her what would contribute to a vision of teaching and learning in the 21st Century. She replied that is was very simple: *put the child at the centre of every decision*. I thought that was a brilliant response in its simplicity and clarity. Imagine if we did that in colleges of education, if we did that in schools, if we did that as boards of management, as Minister for Education, what would the education system look like?

A dominant theme that emerged from the discussion groups is the concern that teachers have around standardised tests and learning, the fear that schools are becoming a treadmill of tests and box ticking. If that is happening here in Ireland, do we need to be concerned?

From the Easter Rising of 1916 emerged the Ireland of the artists, the poets and the writers. The 1947 INTO report called for more arts, more music and drama in education. Will the Ireland of 2016 become the Ireland of the STEN scores, the percentile rankings and comparative data? We cannot allow that to happen as so much would be lost in terms of 21st century learning.

I want to focus for a moment on language, because when we are looking at vision and visioning, we have to be very careful about language. In education, language is sometimes used without interrogation. A number of examples emerged in conversations yesterday:

DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools. While a noble concept and noting the success in some schools of DEIS initiatives, we must resist the notion that schools alone will sort out society's problems and that teachers alone will deliver equality of opportunity.

The concept of the Inspectorate was discussed in the context of what one delegate described as *the rampant fear of the inspector in Irish society.* We need to do something about that. Is it just a problem of language or is it something more deeply ingrained in the Irish psyche? If our education system is to encourage collaboration and consultation, can such occur if there is a culture of fear in our schools? This warrants further study.

The concept of Autonomy emerged as a theme in the discussion groups. While laudable in many respects, I would also have concerns about its implications. For example, the report *Advancing School Autonomy in the Irish School System* (2015) states that primary schools should consider reporting standardised test results at the end of 6th

class. My fear is that primary school league tables would emerge from such reporting. As a former principal of a DEIS school, I know that it would have torn the heart out of the teachers in my school to see that happening.

In visioning the future, you, the teachers, need to trust in yourselves. After all, nobody knows your context as well as you. Improvement or change of practice depends on context. One of the best data collection methods is meaningful conversation with yourselves in your own setting. According to Dylan William, everything works somewhere but nothing works everywhere. The question to pose is: *under what conditions does it work?* The beautiful infant class referred to earlier will not work in a poorly maintained prefab with a hole in the roof. There is no point in saying that I am going to transfer that type of teaching and learning across to another school because it may not work, but you need to start those conversations in your schools. Instead of always looking over the fence you should just look at what is happening inside the fence and trust the knowledge, the experience, the know how that we have in our schools.

Interestingly, the word *research* was never mentioned yesterday in the discussion groups even though the Researchmeet was on today as part of the conference, which, like Teachmeet is a brilliant approach to professional learning. However, as teachers, we need to be critical consumers of education research.

Citizenship education was another concept that emerged from discussions. In today's world it seems to me that it has taken on a significant importance. As a starting point, it would be useful to read the proclamations that the pupils in our schools wrote as part of the 1916 commemorations. Start there with your own school. If you want to create a vision for your school, read the children's proclamations, take them seriously and listen to the children's voice because they are laden with strong values. For example, on the wall of the lobby of a local school in Maynooth, a proclamation written by the children declares that people from other countries and cultures will be welcomed into our country and treated with respect no matter what belief systems, race, gender, abilities, disabilities, or age they may be. It was signed by 20 children. That is not a bad starting point for citizenship education.

Finally, a few questions to ponder in no particular order that emerged from our discussions yesterday as we look to the future:

- Will teachers in years to come have the same fear of the inspector arriving?
- Will we still give the same type of homework?
- Should teachers be expected to produce workers for the world of work?
- Will schools be organised in the same way?
- Will we still have timetables segmented off into 30 or 40 minute blocks?
- Will we see still parents as a 'challenge'?
- Will we still not allow play in the senior classes?
- Will we have multiple initiatives landing in schools?
- Will we have teachers working longer in schools and for what purpose?

In developing a vision, we need to ask: What are we doing, with whom, for whom and for what purpose? (Hegarty, 2016)

In developing a vision, we need to react. We need to react, but not in a reactionary way. Instead we need to reflect, enquire and act. We then need to consolidate and then teach in a cyclical manner.

As part of my work with the Froebel Department, I have visited many schools this year. I have enjoyed open and engaging conversations with many, many teachers. I am privileged to work with a cohort of really bright student teachers in Froebel and with fellow teacher educators from whom I draw inspiration. This conference has demonstrated to me that we have a teaching body whose values are rock solid. We have a highly skilled, highly intelligent, body of teachers who in the words of John Dewey are open-minded, whole-hearted and responsible. We have the brightest and best in Irish society, let's put our trust in them.

Reference:

Hegarty, T. (2016). *Developing a Mission Statement*, Maynooth University Froebel Department (unpublished presentation).

INTO Vice-President, John Boyle:

I'm glad that that 'react' slide was there now that we see the very warm reaction that Séamie has got from this audience. It was a very challenging presentation full of humour but it has to be taken seriously ladies and gentlemen, we do have that power individually in our classrooms and in our schools to resist all this pressure, we do have the power - we just need to take control and we can do it individually and if individuals do it the group does it and the pressure is removed from your school and from your classroom.

Now in relation to the question - Séamie was taken by the concept of fully probated teacher leaving his wonderful college of education and he mentioned a number of words in his presentation that he isn't happy with, that particular word would be a bug bear of my life for a long time, the word **probation** – I'm interested to find out your response.

Séamie Ó Néill:

When a B Ed student leaves our college, they have spent four years on the programme. In first year, they have little to say for themselves but by fourth, they are very articulate about their profession, which is brilliant. During their time in college, they have been supervised over 20 times by HEI tutors. In my personal view, I am quite happy to sign off on the ability of those students to teach in those contexts. If their final teaching practice is in fourth class in a school in Donnybrook and I go in there and sign off, there is no guarantee that that student is going to thrive in some other school in a different context. But I will sign off on that student in that context. I'm happy to sign off on their ability to teach in that context but that is no guarantee that in 20 years' time they are going to be still teaching to the same high standard in a different context.

So on that question of probation, I think it is nonsense that, having spent four years with us where they have worked really hard, that they have to go through another very rigorous probationary period. If you ask them why they want to be in teaching they will tell you *I want to be in teaching to make a difference*. They are the most fantastic, bright, articulate people in this country with wonderful values. They don't need that signing off again about their ability to teach.

It may be necessary to retain some low level probation that can be signed off on regarding punctuality, attendance at staff meetings etc. but for me, it is all about context and students who graduate from us have been signed off on their ability to teach in their particular placement contexts.

Reports from Discussion Groups

Introduction

Delegates attending the conference were divided into groups, facilitated by members of the Education Committee, with a view to collectively envisaging a future vision for primary education and teaching in Ireland. The delegates explored the themes addressed in the discussion document and those presented by the various presenters. Reports from the different groups have been collated and are presented below under a number of thematic headings.

The Teaching Profession

Delegates considered how teaching compared with other professions. There was general agreement that significant expectations were placed on teachers that didn't exist in other professions. There was a view that there was a growing expectation on teachers to expand their role to include that of the nurse, social worker and counsellor. One delegate suggested that teachers are 'expected to be masters in all areas'.

Teachers expressed concern that the increased demand for accountability was challenging their professional autonomy as teachers. The majority of the respondents indicated that their greatest challenge in teaching was the increasing demands for bureaucratic paperwork. The impact of excessive paperwork and accountability measures on the profession was outlined by one respondent who advised that 'a number of my friends have left teaching after only a few years as they realised that teaching was becoming swamped under the weight of paperwork'.

Concern was also raised with regards the rate of policy turnover and, in particular, the global trend of 'policy borrowing'. There were specific recommendations to avoid the approach to educational policy that had been adopted in the UK. Teachers cautioned that Ireland needs to guard against looking to the UK for guidance. The cost to the profession of following less desirable education systems was remarked upon: 'if we go down the English route of paperwork we face the proven consequence of masses of teachers leaving the profession within a few years of graduation'.

Delegates suggested that improved terms and conditions, such as pay equality, are essential in order to attract and retain high calibre candidates to teaching. Others suggested that teaching needs to offer clear progression pathways and opportunities for promotion to ensure the continued attrition of high quality graduates. The gender imbalance in teaching was also highlighted as another potential risk to the teaching profession in the future.

Some delegates predicted that teaching will evolve into a more collaborative profession in the next ten years with a trend towards team teaching and planning. One teacher envisaged that there will be less distinction between roles in the learning process. It was predicted that ICT will continue to influence and transform teaching and classrooms.

Teacher Education

Some delegates in the discussion groups suggested that consideration should be given to jointly preparing teachers in the colleges of education from pre-school to post-primary. There was a general view that joint preparation would enhance continuity and coherence across that continuum of education enabling a more seamless transition for pupils at the various transitionary stages.

Delegates also considered whether probation was necessary in light of the extended initial teacher education programmes. The discussions highlighted the need for more standardisation in the colleges of education to ensure consistency in quality across the board. Some delegates expressed the view that probation was still necessary to safeguard the integrity and professionalism of teaching. However, there was widespread recognition that the probationary period is stressful for younger colleagues.

The various groups discussed a possible framework for career professional development (CPD) that would meet the needs of teachers in the 21st century. Several teachers were of the opinion that CPD should be voluntary and that the individual teacher was best placed to identify their own professional development needs at any given time. Delegates acknowledged that CPD is an integral part of being a professional and that it enables teachers to remain current and upskilled in their pedagogical practice. However, there were strong demands that CPD should be well resources, fully substitutable and during school time.

Some teachers proposed that learning communities are a great opportunity to enhance professional development. One teacher highlighted the benefits of groups of educators meeting regularly to share experience and work collaboratively. However, it was emphasised that the system must provide space and time for teachers to collectively share their expertise and insights.

Curriculum

In general, teachers had positive views in relation to the 1999 *Primary School Curriculum* although curriculum overload and increased paperwork were cited as the key barrier to effective implementation. It was acknowledged by some that the current curriculum does not reflect the needs of the 21st century, such as mental health, modern languages, emotional intelligence and digital literacy skills. Surprisingly, there were mixed views among teachers around the promotion of technology as overuse in very young children is apparently impacting on children's communication skills. Delegates also reiterated that proposals for additions to the curriculum can only be considered if other subjects are removed to make space. The teachers present were reluctant to suggest subjects that should be removed as they highlighted that the current curriculum is celebrated for its breadth and holistic nature. In particular, the delegates expressed a view that the Arts should be safeguarded. Some suggested that SESE should be taught in an integrative, thematic way in the junior classes to create more space for the development of *Aistear* and socialisation. There were conflicting views on the current time allocated to the Patron's programme. The view of several teachers was that the time allocated to religion was merited while other believed it was excessive. Overall, teachers

sought more autonomy and flexibility to determine curricular needs and time allocation at local level.

Teachers present considered new possible approaches and methodologies to teaching in the next ten years. It was envisaged that creative, play pedagogy would continue to develop as a core approach in all junior classrooms. Moreover, teachers advised that thematic teaching was the way forward across all stages in attempting to meet the demands of an over-crowded curriculum. The delegates highlighted that collaborative, team teaching was now commonplace in many schools. Furthermore, it was proposed that the new special education model would continue to encourage such an approach with its emphasis on in-class support.

ICT

There was widespread agreement that it is impossible to promote all primary schools as digital schools due to the lack of funding, resourcing and connectivity. There was consensus that ICT policy changes so rapidly that schools struggle to stay up to date. Integrating ICT across the curriculum also poses significant challenges for teachers. In particular, delegates highlighted the need for system wide professional development opportunities for teachers to enable them to engage with ICT with confidence. Delegates also identified the need for technical support to assist schools in maintaining and improving equipment. One principal suggested that technical support should be provided in a cluster arrangement, shared between local school to ensure consistency in provision of service. Delegates advised that the restoration of posts of responsibility is pertinent in supporting digital schools to allow for the appointment of a dedicated ICT co-ordinator. Some teachers expressed concern about virtual learning encroaching on real space in formal education. In addition, teachers predict that internet safety will continue to be an issue for schools going forward.

Leadership and Governance

There was general agreement that the primary focus of the principal teacher should be on teaching and learning. However, the demands of school administration and management impinge greatly on the principal's capacity to be a leader of teaching and learning. Some delegates proposed that principals could be freed up from their managerial function with the re-establishment of in-school management teams. Others suggested that principals could focus more on teaching and learning if they were supported with school secretaries who had access to standardised professional development to allow them to expand their capacity in assisting the principal.

It was noted that there is an issue around attracting and retaining teachers to the role of school principal. In order to draw high quality candidates to the position, delegates proposed that the system must be supported with the outstanding bench marking award, professional development opportunities and an in-school management team. The delegates present welcomed the provision of a new leadership course for principals but reiterated the need for additional in-service CPD to reinforce professional development on an ongoing basis.

In an attempt to address the growing demands for paperwork, additional release days are required for teaching principals. There was a general view that the future of principalship is based on a distributive leadership model facilitated by a well-structured in-school management team. The delegates expressed the view that progressive career development is paramount to the teaching career. One teacher noted that from middle management flows the potential for developing leadership skills and ultimately career progression. Another teacher outlined the necessity for teachers to get the opportunity to upskill and develop their leadership and management skills in advance of potentially taking on the role of principal in the future.

Delegates expressed many views regarding the future of Boards of Management (BOM). In particular, delegated expressed concern that the current structure of BOMs, originally established in 1975, has become outdated and challenged in responding effectively to the management needs of schools in the 21st century. Considering board members operate on a strong tradition of volunteerism and civic spirit, delegates advised that it was difficult to expect them to extend their governance roles and responsibilities to meet the growing demands expected of Boards. There were conflicting views on whether Boards should continue to have responsibility for recruiting, and in some cases, dismissing employees. Several teachers were of the view that we should safeguard the unique employment arrangement that we have in Ireland. Others claimed that there were often conflicts of interest and unfair recruitment procedures as a result of this local arrangement. There was also some debate as to whether BOMs would be better supported with external financial support in the future. Many delegates welcomed the proposal for more professional and expert support in the legal, financial and recruitment area of school governance. However, other expressed concern that we should safeguard against the application of a business model to schools.

Evaluation

The delegates reflected on the various forms of evaluation over the years and considered the ideal approaches for the 21st century. There was widespread agreement that the main purpose of evaluation should be to benefit teaching and learning, with teachers and pupils both having a role to play. There was a view that teachers should be trusted as professionals and affirmed in their best practice with inspectors taking on more of an advisory role acknowledging the reality and diversity pertaining to each individual school context. Some delegates proposed that future evaluations would not be confined to content knowledge but extend holistically to individual children's skills and competencies. Teachers in attendance from school with disadvantage status commented on the intensive DEIS evaluations. In light of these particularly challenging school contexts, these delegates said that these evaluations were another pressure. Teachers present recognised the need for accountability and transparency in teaching but cautioned that the demands for paperwork was eroding professional autonomy and teaching time.

Parents

The delegates acknowledged the need to develop sustainable relationships with parents notwithstanding the challenges of the busy, modern life of home and school. Teachers shared their various approaches and experiences to building open and strong

partnerships with parents from shared reading involvement to monthly newsletters. There were conflicting views on whether homework was a valuable conduit in improving parental involvement and in communicating between home and school. Some teachers commented that start-of-year meetings enabled them to outline their approaches and intentions for the year ahead to parents. Delegates predicted that going forward parents would continue to be centrally involved in the education of their children and work closely with teachers as shared partners in their education. Several teachers in the discussion groups highlighted how their school included the voice of the parents locally from parent associations to consultation on school policy development. Overall, teachers welcomed parental involvement in the education of their children as they recognise that positive parental attitudes to education are an important determining factor on children's educational development and subsequent life chances.

Inclusion

Delegates agreed that all schools strived to be inclusive schools based on their context and capacity. However, teachers in attendance highlighted that there were many barriers and obstacles in their efforts to provide a fully inclusive experience to all children. Teachers identified the need for a well-resourced support structure to facilitate all pupils to achieve their potential within a genuinely inclusive setting - not just physical integration. The current pupil teacher ratio was highlighted as the greatest mitigating barrier to inclusive education. Delegates considered whether the new model would better support provision for special education. Some welcomed the autonomy to identify the allocation of resources locally while others had concerns about the implied responsibility. Reference was also made to the burden of planning to differentiate encroaching on, rather than supporting, teaching and learning. Teachers also commented on the need for a fully functioning multi-disciplinary approach to supporting pupils with SEN. It was proposed that there should be viable options in place if the local school cannot facilitate inclusion.

Delegates also considered the provision of education for children from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds. The delegates in attendance from schools designated as DEIS expressed concern about the future of the school support programme. Particular concern was expressed regarding the need for a reduced PTR in all DEIS schools to ensure a targeted approach to the most vulnerable and 'at risk' children. Delegates advised that the success of DEIS is partially attributed to the involvement of parents in their children's education and teachers cautioned that these efforts must be sustained in an effort to break the cycle of disadvantage. Going forward, one teacher highlighted the need to specifically support Travellers in education as they have been marginalised from policy since the with-drawl of the RTT.

Infant Classes

Now that Aistear has extended our understanding of how young people learn, delegates considered what the curriculum for the infant classes should look like in the future. Many teachers welcomed the NCCA's commitment to review the structure of the curriculum, particularly, as it relates to infant education. There was general agreement the early years education should be provided in a thematic and integrative way. However, teachers cautioned that such an approach must be underpinned with a

reduced PTR in the junior classes and with additional support to truly facilitate a play-based, active and collaborative pedagogy. Ideally, infant teachers hoped to see the realisation of the INTO's long standing demands for classroom assistants in the infant classrooms. Some teachers expressed concern that our infant classrooms were not originally designed to facilitate play-based and active learning and, therefore, teachers are being challenged to provide a safe and appropriate space for pupils to move, play and learn. The delegates recognised that the early years' sector was undergoing change and they welcomed the proposal to build relationships with the pre-school sector to ensure a consistent, coherent and smooth transition from pre-school to primary.

APPENDIX

<u>**Discussion Group Questions**</u>

1. The Teaching Profession

What should the teaching profession look like in the 21st century?
- How similar/different is teaching to other professions?
- What could be the potential risks facing the teaching profession in the future?
- How can the profession ensure that it continues to attract and retain high calibre people?
- How do you see the role of teachers changing in the next 10 years?
- Will the distinction between roles in the learning process be less defined in the future? Why?

2. Teacher Education

How can teacher education respond to the teaching and learning needs of the 21st century?
- Is there room for joint preparation in teacher education? i.e pre-school, primary and post-primary teachers
- In light of the extended 4-year B. Ed programme, is probation necessary? Why?
- What should be included in a framework for CPD that would meet the needs of the teacher in the 21st century?
- How could we use learning communities (a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively) to enhance teaching expertise?

3. Curriculum and Assessment

How can we future proof the primary curriculum?
- Which subjects should be added to the curriculum? Why?
- In order to accommodate any additions to the curriculum which subjects should be removed? Why?
- What changes would you like to see in our teaching methodologies over the next 10 years?
- How can we improve our use of assessment to improve children's learning?
- How does the process of 11+ - whereby the children are selected for post-primary education in Northern Ireland based on their performance in tests – impact on the mental health and wellbeing of students and teachers?

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4. ICT

Should all primary schools be digital schools?
- What is the best way to integrate ICT across the curriculum?
- What is the role of digitalised textbooks?
- What is the best way of achieving digital literacy in our schools in the 21st century?
- What are the opportunities and challenges in becoming digital schools?
- Do all teachers need to be competent in ICT to teach the primary curriculum?
- Will virtual learning space be more important than school building/real space in formal education?

5. Leadership and Governance

I. Leadership
The primary focus of the Principal is teaching and learning. Is this how it should be?
- How can school administrative and managerial functions be better dealt with to free up the Principal to focus on teaching and learning?
- What supports does the Principal require in the 21st century?
- How can the role of the Principal be made more attractive?
- How can schools provide leadership opportunities to classroom teachers?
- What is the ideal model for in-school leadership and management?

II. Governance
Can the current Board of Management system, established in 1975, continue to respond effectively to the management needs of schools in the 21st century? Why?
- Considering board members operate on a strong tradition of volunteerism and civic spirit, is it possible to extend their governance role and responsibilities?
- Should Boards of Management retain the responsibility of recruiting and dismissing employees? (HR functions) Why?
- Do you think Board of Managements would be better supported with external HR and Finance support? Who could provide these services to schools?

6. Evaluation

What are the ideal approaches to evaluation?
- In light of the many approaches to evaluation, how will evaluation shape schools in the 21st century school?
- What is the purpose of external evaluation?
- What assessment tools will be used in the future?
- Do you think it will be more important to measure skills and competence rather than content knowledge as we go forward? Why?

7. Parents

What is the best approach to developing sustainable relationships with parents in the busy, modern life of home and school?

- What is the value of homework in the relationship between home and school?
- How useful are start-of-year meetings where teachers outline approaches and intentions for the year ahead?
- What is the role of parents in school evaluations?
- How do you think the role of parents will change in schools in the next 10 years?

8. Inclusion

All schools are inclusive schools, but is this the reality?

- What measures/supports do schools require to ensure an inclusive school?
- What options should be in place if the local school cannot facilitate inclusion?
- What are the challenges to being an inclusive school?
- What is the ideal inclusive school?

9. Infant Classes

Now that Aistear has extended our understanding of how young people learn, what should the curriculum for the infant classes look like in the future?

- What changes do you see in the infant classroom in the next 10 years?
- Now that children can avail of a second pre-school year, how might this impact on the primary school, particularly the infant classes?
- How could smooth transitions be supported from the pre-school to the primary school?
- How should classroom design change to facilitate the infant needs?

10. School Facilities

If you were building a school today, what facilities would you include?

- What facilities do schools have in the community?
- How can schools be used as a resource by the wider community?
- What do you think of the idea of open classrooms, where the physical walls separating classrooms were removed to promote movement across class areas by teachers?
- How can we organise a better life inside the school – during breaks, why can't we all be together?