into

Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

Wellbeing in the Classroom

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

Wellbeing in the Classroom

Discussion Document and Proceedings of the Consultative Conference on Education 2012

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Acknowledgements

Foreword

The theme for the INTO Consultative Conference on Education 2012 was *Wellbeing in the Classroom*. As we face into Budget 2013 and the current economic challenges, teachers are constantly being exhorted to 'do more with less'. It must be acknowledged that educational cutbacks and the resulting large classes and dwindling resources put pressure on the entire school community. It is timely, therefore, to examine the factors that contribute to the wellbeing of teachers and pupils in the Irish primary classroom.

It is interesting to note that, according to research conducted by the Education Committee, what sustains and motivates teachers in their role is seeing the progress that their pupils make. Furthermore, affirmation of their work and good staff relations also help to sustain teachers over a career.

Whilst there may be stresses and strains in the teaching profession, there are also strategies to cope with them. These include engaging in dialogue with others, having a supportive staff and principal, positive affirmation, making time for hobbies and activities outside school, and having support in one's personal life.

Strategies suggested to support and enhance the wellbeing of pupils in the classroom included positive encouragement and actively listening to pupils. In addition, it was felt that the introduction and implementation of programmes such as *Incredible Years*, *Roots of Empathy* could be a positive influence on the wellbeing of children.

While this document looks at aspects of teacher and pupil wellbeing separately, it is a fact that the wellbeing of teacher and pupil is interdependent. Improving the classroom experience for one has a positive impact on the other.

Our appreciation goes to the presenters and workshop facilitators at this conference. Thanks are also due to the Education Committee who prepared this discussion document and acted as presenters, facilitators and rapporteurs at the Consultative Conference, and to the Education team in Head Office, led by Deirbhile Nic Craith, Senior Official.

Sheila Nunan

Sheila Nunan
General Secretary
July 2015

Part 1

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Wellbeing in the Classroom

Discussion Document

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Introduction

What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing is a term widely used both in public and scientific discourse to denote a positive state, be it physical, emotional, financial, spiritual or other. With regards to the term wellbeing, Ereaut and Whiting contend there is 'significant ambiguity around the definition, usage and function ... in the public policy realm and in the wider world' (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008, p.1). The Oxford dictionary defines wellbeing as 'the state of being comfortable or happy'. Bornstein et al. suggest that 'wellbeing is a state of successful performance throughout the life course integrating physical, cognitive and socio-emotional function that results in productive activities deemed significant by one's cultural community, fulfilling social relationships and the ability to transcend moderate psychosocial and environmental problems' (Bornstein et al., 2003, p.14). Andrews et al. (2002) define wellbeing as 'healthy and successful individual functioning (involving physiological, psychological and behavioural levels of organisation), positive social relationships (with family members, peers, adult caregivers, and community and societal institutions, for instance, school and faith and civic organisations), and a social ecology that provides safety (e.g., freedom from interpersonal violence, war and crime), human and civil rights, social justice and participation in civil society' (Andrews et al., 2002, p.103).

Within academic science, researchers often draw on the positive psychology movement and 'might characterize wellbeing as 'positive and sustainable characteristics which enable individuals and organisations to thrive and flourish'' (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008, p.4). This understanding of wellbeing has led to an increased emphasis on its promotion in a number of different spheres. To enhance wellbeing in the workplace the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in association with the University of Ulster has developed a *Workplace Wellbeing* on-line questionnaire. The raison d-être of this questionnaire is to assess psychosocial risk in the workplace. The results of the questionnaire are to be utilised with the aim of 'targeting any interventions or assistance, informal or formal, which may help increase employee satisfaction and productivity' (HSA, 2012). A study by the HR department of Canada Life in 2007 found that many employees placed employee wellbeing, flexible working conditions and employee assistance programmes at least on a par with their salary and bonuses. This led the company to launch a wellbeing programme for employees within its organisation. The primary purpose of the programme is to raise awareness of wellbeing issues and to provide everyone with information and knowledge within the company. Its aim is to create a 'Good Life with Canada Life' and focuses on four key areas: mental wellbeing, nutritional wellbeing, physical wellbeing and health and safety (Nutrition and Health Foundation, 2012).

In education the introduction to the SPHE curriculum at primary level (1999, p.2) states the following:

Social, personal and health education provides particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the child and to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society.

Likewise at post primary level one of the aims of SPHE is to 'promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being' (Government of Ireland, Junior Cycle, SPHE, 2000, p.4).

Workplace and education are not the only areas where there is an increased focus on the promotion of wellbeing. In the commercial sector (food, alternative health, retail) many references are also made to wellbeing with the promise of achieving a state of virtue upon purchase and/or consumption.

Different meanings are associated with the term wellbeing and 'what is apparently meant by the use of the term depends on where you stand' (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008, p.5) A M.Sc. programme on wellbeing in the University of Bath argues that wellbeing is a social and cultural construction (MSc Wellbeing in Public Policy and International Development). Ereaut and Whiting agree with this interpretation and add it is a cultural construct which is constantly evolving and conclude that wellbeing is 'no less than what a group or groups of people collectively agree makes 'a good life'' (ibid, p.1). Ryan and Deci (2001, p.142) maintain the following:

> There has been considerable debate about what defines optimal experience and what constitutes 'the good life.' Obviously, this debate has enormous theoretical and practical implications. How we define wellbeing influences our practices of government, teaching, therapy, parenting, and preaching, as all such endeavours aim to change humans for the better, and thus require some vision of what 'the better' is.

Types of wellbeing

Wellbeing revolves around two distinct philosophies - hedonism and eudaimonism. Hedonism contends that wellbeing consists of pleasure or happiness. Eudaimonism conveys the belief that wellbeing 'consists of fulfilling or realizing one's daimon or true nature' (Ryan and Deci, 2001, p.143).

Washington State University believes that there are multiple dimensions to wellbeing and in order to be 'well' each individual must actively strive to improve themselves within each dimension. Washington State University explained eight dimensions include as follows:

Physical Wellbeing

Making healthy lifestyle choices today will affect health and quality of life tomorrow. Building physical strength and endurance along with a healthy and balanced lifestyle and diet are important for physical wellbeing. Enhanced self-esteem, a sense of direction, and other psychological benefits are some gains from developing physical wellbeing.

Emotional Wellbeing

This is the ability to recognise, understand, experience and express a full range of emotions and channel our emotions in to healthy behaviours that satisfy our personal and social goals.

Environmental Wellbeing

The environment is the basic foundation for individual wellbeing. Humans are part of the environment and are not separate from it. Environmental wellbeing is an awareness and appreciation of the critical role the environment plays in our individual wellbeing.

Financial Wellbeing

This can be defined as the ability to make informed and wise decisions on the earnings, savings and credits that enable one to attain one's personal goals while enjoying a comfortable lifestyle. Stress in the areas of emotional, occupational and social wellbeing can result if financial wellbeing is imbalanced.

Intellectual Wellbeing

This notion reflects our degree of openness to new ideas, our propensity to challenge ourselves to think critically, our inclination to nourish our creativity and curiosity, and our motivation to master new skills.

Occupational Wellbeing

Occupational wellbeing is the achieving of personal satisfaction in one's life through a career path and work. Finding a healthy way to integrate work into our life can enhance personal satisfaction and wellbeing. There are several areas that may impact on our degree of occupational wellbeing. These areas include stress, a negative work environment, working too many hours, job dissatisfaction and/or poor or undesirable work conditions.

Spiritual Wellbeing

Spiritual wellbeing is where one finds meaning and purpose in one's life and in one's place in the greater universe.

Social Wellbeing

Social wellbeing is where one has satisfying relationships and support networks. One would have an understanding of self in relation to others and a sense of belonging. In addition, one would participate and contribute to the community. To achieve social wellbeing, one has to acquire the skills of communicating effectively, of resolving conflicts, of transcending differences and of providing leadership in the community.

The Washington State University did not make a direct reference to mental wellbeing which the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines as a state of wellbeing in which every individual can realise his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to her or his community. The positive dimension of mental health is stressed in the WHO definition of health as contained in its constitution - 'Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (WHO, 2006, p.1).

Measuring Wellbeing

Studies are periodically undertaken in various countries by different agencies e.g. OECD to measure wellbeing and the findings are often compared internationally. The type of wellbeing researched and measured is known as subjective wellbeing. Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) was defined by Deiner (2009) as the general evaluation of one's quality of life. He conceptualized this notion into the following three components:

- a cognitive appraisal that one's life was good (life satisfaction),
- experiencing positive levels of pleasant emotions, and
- experiencing relatively low levels of negative moods.

In the past few years subjective wellbeing studies have been undertaken in Ireland. The results of these studies have found that despite the economic downturn, Ireland as a country continues to rank high in the international quality of life league tables. An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED) report entitled *Positive Affect Balance* (2011) found that Ireland ranked twelfth in terms of day-to-day happiness. In the 2010 *Gallup World Poll* Ireland was placed tenth out of forty advanced countries in terms of life satisfaction (Walsh, 2011). A Gallup survey published in October 2012 shows that out of the 27 countries in the EU the Irish are the seventh most content in their lives (Gallup, 2012).

Also in 2011 the OECD published the *Better Life Index*. When asked to rate their general satisfaction with life on a scale from 0 to 10, Irish people gave it a 6.9 grade, higher than the OECD average of 6.7. Social status does, however, strongly influence subjective wellbeing. Whereas the bottom 20% of the Irish population has a life satisfaction level of 6.8, this score reaches 7.3 for the top 20%. In Ireland, 77% of people reported having more positive experiences in an average day (feelings of rest, pride in accomplishment, enjoyment, etc.) than negative ones (pain, worry, sadness, boredom). This figure is higher than the OECD average of 72%.

The OECD remarked, 'Ireland performs very well in overall wellbeing, as shown by the fact that it ranks among the top ten countries in several topics in the *Better Life Index'* (OECD, 2011). Below are the results of the *Better Life Index* for 2010 for OECD countries.

Life satisfaction
Cantril Ladder, mean value in 2010
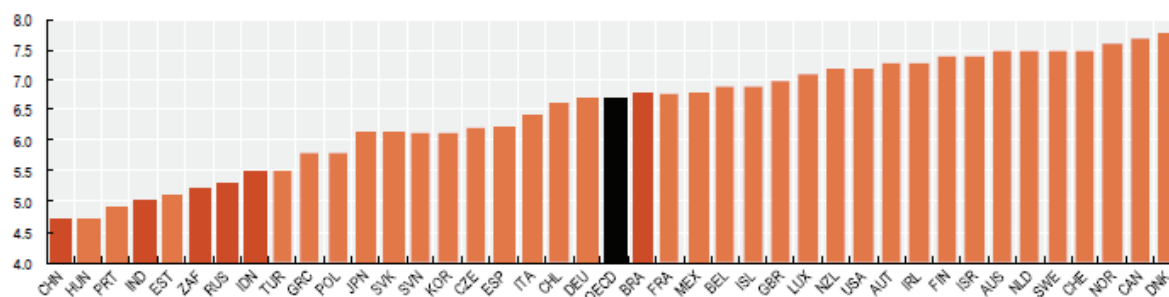
Source: Better Life Index, OECD, 2010.

In addition to the *Better Life Index*, the results of the Eurobarometer life satisfaction survey conducted in May 2011 found that Ireland ranked seventh out of the 27 EU countries. The table below shows life satisfaction percentage rankings in Ireland and the EU since 2005.

Table: **Overall satisfaction ('satisfied' and 'very satisfied') in EU countries, in percentages.**

	2005 average	2006 average	2007 average	2008 average	2009 average	June 2010	May 2011	2004-2011 average
EU-27	81	82	80	77	78	78	79	79
Austria	85	84	86	81	84	85	87	84
Belgium	89	91	90	87	90	88	91	89
Bulgaria	29	31	37	39	39	38	37	35
Cyprus	85	87	86	88	83	82	81	85
Czech Republic	82	82	82	83	82	78	81	81
Denmark	98	97	98	96	98	98	97	97
Estonia	69	74	78	75	73	73	71	73
Finland	94	94	95	95	96	95	96	95
France	82	85	84	79	83	83	83	83
Greece	65	69	68	59	51	42	46	59
Ireland	**91**	**91**	**90**	**88**	**87**	**88**	**88**	**89**
Italy	75	76	73	64	71	72	74	72
Latvia	61	63	65	63	56	60	60	61
Lithuania	56	62	64	59	56	50	56	58
Luxembourg	94	93	93	93	96	96	98	94
Hungary	55	53	52	47	43	50	51	50
Malta	83	80	83	85	77	76	80	81
Germany	81	82	85	84	85	84	88	84
Netherlands	96	95	97	97	96	95	96	96
Poland	70	73	77	76	76	79	78	74
Portugal	58	59	59	49	52	44	48	54
Romania	46	46	451	50	47	36	40	46
Slovakia	64	69	71	71	71	75	73	69
Slovenia	89	88	89	87	86	85	83	87
Spain	85	89	88	85	75	77	77	83
Sweden	96	96	97	96	96	96	95	96
United Kingdom	89	89	90	87	90	82	92	89

Source: Eurobarometer: own calculations

The Eurobarometer survey has been providing information about Ireland since 1975 in relation to life satisfaction and is the only longitudinal study about Irish subjective wellbeing. Since the inception of the survey, results over that period have shown that despite an

increase in per capita income, marked improvements in educational attainment and life expectancy 'there has been no long-run upward trend in the country's life satisfaction score' (Walsh, 2011, p.5). An EU survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) conducted in 2010 found that 79 per cent of the Irish population reported themselves to have been happy all or most of the time over the four weeks prior to the interview (CSO, 2011). Walsh (2011, p.5) maintains that there has been,

> relatively little research on the reasons why different countries rank consistently high or low in satisfaction leagues tables. The fairly stable high level of self-reported life satisfaction recorded in Ireland may reflect an enduring quality of the Irish attitude to life or cultural bias in responding to the types of questions which are asked in surveys of subjective wellbeing.

Concluding comment

This chapter examined the term wellbeing and identified some of the challenges in defining the concept. For this discussion document, the term wellbeing incorporates what makes for a good life. The chapter also explored the different types of wellbeing. In addition, it looked at how subjective wellbeing is measured and found that despite the economic woes in this country, Ireland still ranks fairly high by international comparisons in life satisfaction surveys.

Chapter two of this discussion document examines the wellbeing of children in Ireland since the foundation of the state. It considers how different pieces of legislation and the different education curricula have impacted on children's wellbeing. It also examines the types of relationships children have had with adults over that period.

Chapter three examines the changing role of the teacher in Ireland. It explores how teachers sustain and motivate themselves in their roles. It also deals with the topic of teacher stress and presents some of the measures that are available to enhance teacher wellbeing.

Chapter four details how wellbeing is promoted and enhanced for pupils in the classroom. It examines the various policies and practices at both a formal and informal level. It also explores how the curriculum focuses on the general wellbeing of pupils. In addition it details the different programmes in use in schools through the SPHE programme to enhance pupil wellbeing.

Chapter five presents the findings from the focus group discussions and interviews conducted by the INTO Education Committee.

Chapter six discusses the findings and makes recommendations about how to enhance *Wellbeing in the Classroom*.

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The Wellbeing of Children in Ireland Since the Foundation of the State

Introduction

In the ninetieth year since the foundation of the Irish state, this chapter examines how the wellbeing of children was both promoted, enhanced and supported throughout that period. It also charts the various pieces of legislation enacted which have had an impact on children's wellbeing. It considers how the different curricula in operation impacted on pupils' wellbeing. It also discusses how the relationship between child and adult has evolved over the ninety years. In 1926, ten years after the beginning of our struggle for independence, CSO figures show that the number of children under the age of 16 in the Saorstát was 855,320. It was only children who were dependent on the married and widowed section of the population who were included in the 1926 census. These dependent children constituted only 92% of the total number of children under sixteen years of age in the Saorstát (CSO, 1933). Whilst the fledgling state was trying to recover from a period of instability and turmoil and find its voice amongst the nations of the world, so too were the children trying to make their voices heard within the newly formed state. Just how did the new state try to realise the ideals espoused in the Proclamation of the Irish Republic which made a specific commitment to 'cherishing all the children of the nation equally'?

Children and legislation

A new state required a new constitution. When the Constitution of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Éireann) Act was passed in 1922, only one reference was made to children. This was in relation to their education and religion. Article 8 of the Constitution of the Irish Free State (1922) provided for the state not to 'impose any disability on account of religious belief or religious status, or affect prejudicially the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending the religious instruction at the school' (Constitution of the Irish Free State/Saorstát Éireann, 1922). The insertion of this article reflected the divisions prevalent in the country at that time in relation to religion and religious instruction. While children were granted religious freedom in relation to their education, this was at the behest of their parents. No other direct provision for children was made in this constitution and nor were children recognised as citizens in their own right.

Following a national plebiscite in 1937, Bunreacht na hÉireann was adopted as the state's new constitution. Unlike the Constitution of the Irish Free State (1922) more provisions were made for children. These provisions were made under the sections relating to the family (Article 41) and to education (Article 42) (McPartland, 2010, p.4). Article 41 of Bunreacht na

hÉireann refers to the family rather than to the child. The rights of children were further cemented and seen 'in the context of the rights of the family as a whole' (Cousins, 1996, p.14). McPartland argues that the 'protections within the Constitution are afforded to the family and not to the individual child' (McPartland, 2010, p.4). Article 42 of Bunreacht na hÉireann which relates to education acknowledges the following:

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

Even though there is no direct provision for children as citizens in their own right in Bunreacht na hÉireann, the Courts have acknowledged them (children's rights), albeit with caution on several occasions. The Courts have interpreted Bunreacht na hÉireann in such a way that deemed that the welfare of the child 'is generally best served by being placed with his or her parent or parents' (Cousins, 1996, p.16). The Kilkenny Incest Investigation Team (1993, p.16) noted the following:

> The very high emphasis on the rights of the family in the Constitution may consciously or unconsciously be interpreted as giving a higher value to the rights of parents than to the rights of children.

Following the foundation of the state, much of the legislation in force was inherited from Ireland's time under British rule. Gradually the state introduced new pieces of legislation, very few of which pertained to children. In 1930, the Illegitimate Children (Affiliation Orders) Act was passed. This Act, whilst repealing the Bastardy (Ireland) Act, 1863 provided for the Courts to place an affiliation order on fathers, where identified, to make payments to support their children born outside of marriage. Although the Act provided for the betterment of children's wellbeing through maintenance being provided by their fathers, it did not enhance all children's status as citizens. In addition, the state conferred the term *illegitimate children* upon children who were born and reared outside of marriage. It also denied them equal rights. For almost sixty years, this legislation created a dichotomy in the status of children. It also caused certain children to be stigmatised until the repulsion of the Illegitimate Children (Affiliation Orders) Act in the Status of Children Act 1987.

The nineties heralded a new dawn for the rights of the child in Ireland with the signing by the Irish Government of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This document committed the state to 'promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children, as outlined in the UN convention' (United Nations, 1989, p.1). The preamble to this document emphasizes the importance of the role of the family just as Bunreacht na hÉireann did. It states, 'convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community' (ibid, p.5). Furthermore it recognises, 'for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding' (ibid, p.5). Despite this, Article 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) committed the state to undertake 'all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention' (ibid, p.10). Since the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) came in to force, many legislative changes have taken place in the state specifically pertaining to children. Among the Acts relating to children passed by the Oireachtas are the following:

- Child Care Act (1991). This Act gave powers to health boards to care for children who were ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused.
- Child Abduction and Enforcement of Custody Orders Act (1991). This Act dealt with the wrongful retention of children.
- Children Act (1997). This Act recognized natural fathers as guardians, allowed children's views to be considered in guardianship, access and custody matters, and allowed parents to have joint custody.
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act (1998).
- Protection of Children (Hague Convention) Act (2000). This Act implements into Irish law the Hague Convention on the protection of children.
- Children Act (2001). This Act regulates the treatment of children found in breach of the criminal law in Ireland.
- Ombudsman for Children Act (2002).
- Child Care (Amendment) Act (2007).

Coupled with a commitment to changes in domestic legislation, the UNCRC also obligated the State to provide a voice for children in matters that directly affected them. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

> State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Article 13 states:

> The child shall have the right of freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

The new millennium paved the way and brought further recognition for the rights of children in Ireland. The publication of the National Children's Strategy in 2000 envisaged a new departure for the voice of children in Ireland. The Strategy (2000, p.4) called for the following:

> An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential.

In order to assist the Government in having a better understanding of children and their needs, a longitudinal study of children is currently underway. The *Growing Up in Ireland* study is taking place over a period of seven years and following the progress of two groups of children; 8,500 nine-year-olds and 11,000 nine-month-olds. The main aim of the study is to paint a full picture of children in Ireland and how they are developing in the current social,

economic and cultural environment. It is hoped that this information will be used to assist in policy formation and in the provision of services for all children. The general aim of the study is to understand all aspects of children and their development, including the following:

- how children develop over time,
- what factors affect a child's development,
- what makes for a healthy and happy childhood and what might lead to a less happy childhood,
- what children think of their own lives and learn what it means to be a child in Ireland today, and
- to contribute to policy formation and the provision of services for children and their families.

An interim report on *Growing Up in Ireland* concluded that child characteristics such as gender, health status and temperament were the most important predictors of social and emotional wellbeing, even after accounting for parenting and family factors. In addition, the reports in general indicate that the majority of nine-year-olds have positive outcomes in terms of child development in the three areas of health status, education attainment tests and emotional health. However, there are variations depending to a greater or lesser extent on family social class, level of mother's education and family income.

In April 2011, the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs launched a national consultation that gave children and young people the opportunity to have their voices heard in relation to matters that directly affect their lives. Children and young people were invited to complete questionnaires in all schools and Youthreach Centres throughout the country. In June 2012, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs launched a public consultation to feed into the development of the new National Children's Strategy and other key policies and strategies within the Department over the next five years, including those on early years and youth affairs.

Articles 28 and 29 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child also committed the Irish Government to certain rights for children in respect of education. Crucially it committed the education system to the 'development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential' and to 'take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity' (United Nations, 1989, p.27-30). In recognising the importance of education as giving a voice to children a number of pieces of legislation were enacted in the late nineties and early noughties. These included:

- The Education Act (1998),
- The Education Welfare Act (2000), and
- The Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs (2004).

In March 2011, the Fine Gael/Labour coalition Government appointed the first ever cabinet level Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Since this ministerial office has been established it has consulted widely in developing plans to improve the lives of children and young people. On 20th July 2012, the Department published the *Report of the Task Force on*

the Child and Family Support Agency. The establishment of a single dedicated State agency for child and family welfare was envisaged. At the launch of the report the Minister remarked:

> When a child comes to the attention of a social worker or an educational welfare office or a Garda Diversion Project, that child will come in to a single system; a single continuum of services all focused on that child's wellbeing.

Despite these advancements Devine (2004, p.115) argues:

> The absence of the children's voice is no longer tenable in the light of discourse and legislation, both national and international, which stresses the rights of children to have a voice in matters that directly affect them.

Periodic reviews by the UN Committee of the State's record in this area have identified a number of shortfalls. In response to criticisms expressed in the 1998 review on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, the Irish government established the office of Ombudsman for Children and drew up a national children's strategy. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children was established in 2004. The Office advises the Government on how to deal with issues that matter to children and young people. It also keeps an eye on laws that affect children and advises the Government and the Oireachtas on ways to make sure that the law protects children's rights. The Annual Report for 2011 was published on 9th October 2012 and found that there was a 22% increase in complaints from the previous year. Nearly half of the complaints (47%) were about issues in education (Ombudsman for Children). The Ombudsman recommended changes in the way public bodies deal with children. She stated that 'these are very simply that public bodies consider the child when they are making decisions that can sometimes have a profound impact on that child's life' (Logan, 2012).

In 2006, following concerns expressed by the committee that the wording of the Irish Constitution does not allow the State to intervene in cases of abuse other than in very exceptional cases, the Irish government undertook to amend the constitution to make a more explicit commitment to children's rights (O'Brien, 2006). In a speech by the Ombudsman for Children, Emily Logan, to the Merriman Summer School in August 2009 she identified that 'the absence of clearer protection for children's rights in the Constitution has had an adverse effect on children across a wide range of areas' (Logan, 2009, p.10). In her speech, Logan cited the then taoiseach Bertie Ahern from February 2007 in which he stated:

> It appears increasingly clear that the inadequate recognition in our constitutional law of the rights of children as individuals has to be addressed. That is an essential first step in creating a new culture of respect for the rights of the child (ibid, p.10).

In September 2012, the Government announced a referendum to amend the Constitution to include a new article on children's rights. The referendum was passed in November 2012 and the Constitution was amended to include the following wording:

New Article 42A.1: 1
"The State recognises and affirms the natural and imprescriptible rights of all children and shall, as far as practicable, by its laws protect and vindicate those rights."
New Article 42A.2.1:

"In exceptional cases, where the parents, regardless of their marital status, fail in their duty towards their children to such extent that the safety or welfare of any of their children is likely to be prejudicially affected, the State as guardian of the common good shall, by proportionate means as provided by law, endeavour to supply the place of the parents, but always with due regard for the natural and imprescriptible rights of the child."

Articles 42A.2.2
"Provision shall be made by law for the adoption of any child where the parents have failed for such a period of time as may be prescribed by law in their duty towards the child and where the best interests of the child so require."
...and 42.A.3
"Provision shall be made by law for the voluntary placement for adoption and the adoption of any child."

Article 42A.4.1
"Provision shall be made by law that in the resolution of all proceedings -
(i) brought by the State, as guardian of the common good, for the purpose of preventing the safety and welfare of any child from being prejudicially affected, or
(ii) concerning the adoption, guardianship or custody of, or access to, any child, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration."

Article 42A.4.2
"Provision shall be made by law for securing, as far as practicable, that in all proceedings referred to in subsection 1° of this section in respect of any child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the views of the child shall be ascertained and given due weight having regard to the age and maturity of the child."
This provides that, depending on the age and maturity of the child, his or her views must be taken into account in all proceedings involving State care, adoption, custody and access.

(Government of Ireland, 2012)

Children and curricula

A new state also meant reform of the education system. In 1922 the National School Programme was introduced. Taking on board the advice of the Rev. Timothy Corcoran that the early years were the language years – 'the vital years for vernacular usage are those from three onwards' (Corcoran, 1924, p.213), Dr Corcoran supported 'the view that the most effective way to initiate a language revival was through schools, and especially, the infant classes' (O'Connor, 2010, p.189). Figures from the 1926 Census showed that 5,461 of three and four year olds spoke Irish in the home while 112,712 did not (CSO, 1932). The National School Programme placed a strong emphasis on the revival of Irish language, history and culture. So much so, Irish became the medium of instruction in infant classes. This rule affected approximately 250,000 children. According to Ó Cuív, cited in O' Connor, it meant that 'the normal home language of over 90% of these would be excluded from their first years of schooling' (Ó Cuív cited in O' Connor, 1987, p.5). O' Connor (1987, p.5) contends:

> By the 1920s infant education had acquired a new status. Infants were no longer to be looked upon as the passive 'babies' of the early nineteenth century. They came to the fore as the leaders of the language revival movement in Ireland.

Dr. Corcoran, who had undue influence over the new programme dismissed the child-centred theories of Froebel, Pestalozzi, Rousseau and others. As a result of his antagonism towards progressive models of education, O'Connor (2010, p.197) argues as follows:

> The structures set up in 1900 which advocated a child-centred curriculum, and laid stress on individual and personal growth, were not reflected in the schools programme of the Irish Free State of 1922.

The programme was also difficult to implement in practice. This was mainly due to the large number of pupils in classes. O'Connor contends, 'teachers were faced with the task of controlling, organising and teaching forty or fifty active infants' (O'Connor, 1992, p.24). These teachers could be regarded as the lucky ones as Bryan McMahon in his novel *The Master* (1992, p.10-11) writes:

> My mother taught in the room beneath me. The number of infants in her class was an incredible 120 when all her pupils were present. When she murmured to the curate about the number of pupils she had to teach she was told she was lucky to have so many: did she realise that certain schools in the country were closing because of falling averages?

O'Connor argued that, 'the child-centred infant class, with its corollary of more attention to individual needs and differences and teacher-child relationships, was difficult to integrate with the all-Irish language policy operating in the Irish infant classes' (O'Connor, 1992, p.24). Upon its foundation in 1868, the objective of the INTO was 'the promotion of Education in Ireland, the social and intellectual elevation of the teachers, and the cultivation of a fraternal spirit and professional intercourse with kindred organisations in this and other countries' (O'Connell, 1968, v). The INTO's involvement in education concentrates not only on teachers' wellbeing but also on pupils' wellbeing in education. Indeed the first president of the INTO was Vere Foster, a renowned philanthropist, who had spent much of his life helping the less fortunate. In 1941, the INTO issued the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the use of Irish as a Teaching Medium to Children whose Home Language is English. The report argued that the 'repression of the child's desire to express himself in the natural way discourages him at a very early stage in his career and materially retards his progress' (INTO, 1941, p.21). The report further concluded that 'it would be better from the point of view of the mental and physical development of the child that both languages rather than one should be used when English is the home language' (ibid, p.22). Taking the views of the INTO and others on board a Revised Programme for infant classes was introduced in 1948. It contained the following aspiration:

> To provide for young children the environment, opportunities and activities most favourable to their full development. Infant teaching, if it is to be successful, must be based on the young child's instinctive urge to play, to talk, to imitate, to manipulate materials, to make and do things.
>
> (Dept. of Education, Revised Programme for Infants, 1949, p.3).

The programme emphasized the recognition and facilitation of individual differences. According to O'Connor, 'stress was laid on individual and group learning, emphasising a return to the heuristic approach to pedagogy' (O'Connor, 1987, p.6). However, the medium of instruction was still through the Irish language. Figures from the CSO census of 1946 show

that 4,603 of three and four year olds spoke Irish in the home while 106,712 did not (CSO, 1953). Approximately 96% of pupils in the infant class were instructed through Irish which was not the first language of the home. For over thirty years the Department of Education had insisted that the work in the infant classes should be carried out entirely through Irish. It was not until 1960 and the issuing of a circular that amended this rule and gave 'each individual teacher of junior classes the right to choose between Irish as a medium of such classes, and teaching Irish as a subject only' (O'Connor, 1987, p.7).

Two years after the introduction of the primary school curriculum the payment by results system was abolished. The system had placed added pressures on pupils and teachers as schools were paid on the basis of pupil exam performance. In 1929, the primary school examination for children leaving national school was introduced. It remained optional until 1943 when all pupils in sixth class had to sit the test in Irish, English and arithmetic. The primary cert, as it was known, became high stakes as in some cases it was required to get a job. This certificate was abolished in 1967.

The sixties in Ireland saw more sweeping changes in education. The country became more outward looking through its involvement with international organisations such as the UN, UNESCO, and the OECD. Investment in education was seen as important to enable Ireland 'to compete on an increasingly international stage' (Walshe, 2004, p.7). An economic boom provided for increased investment in education resulting in the introduction of free second level education for all pupils in 1967. Whilst the numbers of those participating in education increased there was also a change in how education was organised as Ireland had opened up to international models of policy and practice. This led to a fundamental change in the voice of the child and childhood in Ireland and culminated in the introduction of a new primary school curriculum in 1971. This curriculum placed a strong emphasis on the child as individual and childhood being recognised as a distinct period of human development (Department of Education, 1971). Children were no longer viewed as future adults with less knowledge and less understanding but rather as children. Writing in *An Múinteoir Náisiúnta*, Eugene Judge summarized the raison d-être of Curaclam na Bunscoile. He stated, 'basic to all its thinking is the notion of the inalienable right of the child to freedom of development along a route which only his individual aptitudes, interests and abilities can determine' (Judge, 1969, p.7). The curriculum returned to child-centred principles and recognised that education heretofore had been "curriculum-centred' rather than 'child-centred" (Department of Education, 1971, p.15).

The aims of primary education as stated in this curriculum were as follows:

1. to enable the child to live a full life as a child, and
2. to equip him to avail himself of further education so that he may go on to live a full and useful life as an adult in society.

(Department of Education, 1971, p.13)

The 1971 curriculum emphasised the following:

1. *all* children are complex human beings with physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs and potentialities, and

2. because *each* child is an individual, he deserves to be valued for himself and to be provided with the kind and variety of opportunities towards stimulation and fulfilment which will enable him to develop his natural powers at his own rate to his fullest capacity (ibid, p.13).

Curaclam na Bunscoile also made an effort to improve the physical wellbeing of pupils. For the first time physical education was introduced as a mandatory subject. Heretofore, physical education was an optional subject at primary level. In the implementation of physical education there was more of a tendency for boys to benefit. In some schools it was a case of 'games for the boys and knitting for the girls'. In an effort to address this anomaly, the INTO Equality Committee produced a leaflet in 1993 entitled *Fair play for girls and boys - Sport in National Schools*. The leaflet presented a checklist of good school practice in the implementation of the physical education curriculum. Throughout the years the INTO campaigned for enhanced physical education facilities to ensure its successful implementation. The physical education curriculum also included health education. The curriculum suggested the integration of health education with other subjects. Topics such as personal hygiene, nutrition, safety, lifestyle, smoking, alcohol and drugs were included. In an Education Committee survey on the curriculum conducted in 1975, teachers felt that the course in Physical Education was too wide ranging. The respondents to the survey demanded the provision of in-service courses. A report by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education (1979) on the view of the teaching of physical education included a section on health education. The report stated that the area of health education showed great need for improvement. It also noted that teachers lacked confidence in their ability to teach PE; that many regarded PE as an area of lesser importance within the school curriculum and that there was a lack of knowledge and understanding of PE amongst teachers (INTO, 1992, p.3-4). To assist teachers in the promotion of pupil wellbeing, the Health Promotion unit of the Department of Health produced a number of resources in the nineties in conjunction with partners in education. These included Bí Folláin, Walk Tall and the Stay safe programme.

Just under thirty years after it was introduced, the curriculum was revised in 1999 (Government of Ireland, 1999). This revised Primary School Curriculum constitutes a detailed interpretation of the recommendations of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum and also encompasses the philosophical thrust of *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1971) and the Education Act, 1998. The curriculum envisages the celebration of 'the uniqueness of the child, as it is expressed in each child's personality, intelligence and potential for development. It is designed to nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life — spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical' (Primary School Curriculum Introduction, 1999, p.6). The revised curriculum was more forthright in advocating pupil wellbeing. Along with a continued emphasis on physical education, a new subject Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) was also introduced. At school level, student councils were proposed as ideal forums to frame a redefinition of children's citizenship and, more practically, to channel formally the voice of the school-going child. In recent years, primary schools have become more proactive by allowing pupils to participate in decision-making in the belief that such participation can be a real experience with definitive change in policy being possible to effect through negotiation and shared decision-making (INTO, 2006, p.24). With more and more pupils participating on student councils, McLoughlin (2004) contends that 'children's perceptions and experiences of a council

centred on the theme of communications and rights' (p.136). According to Devine (2003, p. 143), 'if children are not given a voice and this voice is not heard and listened to, children experience school as an imposition: something done by adults to, rather than with, them'.

Childhood and relationships

In its infancy the state was largely an agricultural nation. As such, this necessitated the contribution of children to ensure certain tasks were completed. Children were often withdrawn from school to assist their parents at harvest time or to assist with turf cutting in the bog. In some parts of the country these children were known as 'grazers'. The long summer holidays allowed for children to assist with the much needed manual labour.

Despite improvements in the quality of life, poverty was still widespread and diseases such as tuberculosis often claimed the lives of children at young ages. Between 1948 and 1951 an effort to improve the health services to women and children was made by the then Minister for Health Dr. Noel Browne. Browne attempted to introduce a healthcare programme known as the 'Mother and Child scheme' with the intent of tackling high levels of child mortality. It hoped to introduce free ante and post-natal care for mothers and to extend free health treatment to all children under 16 years of age. He insisted that the plan was necessary in a country with 'the highest infant and maternity mortality rates in Europe' (Cooney, 2000, p.256-257). This was backed up by statistics from the 1946 Census which showed that the infant mortality rates of the lower income groups in Dublin was 133 per 1,000 (CSO, 1949). However, his attempt to introduce a scheme caused a furore. Strong opposition from the medical profession and the Catholic Church eventually led to the scheme being jettisoned. The Catholic Church 'objected to what it regarded as undue interference in family matters' (Kenny, 2005, p.31). It felt it was a bridge too far and saw it as a dilution of the family as provided for in Bunreacht na hÉireann. In October 1950, the Catholic hierarchy set out its opposition to the scheme in a letter to the then taoiseach John A. Costello. They argued, 'the right to provide for the health of children belongs to parents, not to the State. The State has the right to intervene only in a subsidiary capacity, to supplement, not to supplant' (Cooney, 2000, p.258). Whilst these were potentially good measures to improve children's welfare and wellbeing public opinion did not bring about their realisation. Once again, the position of the child was cemented in the context of the family.

The relationship between parents and children is of great importance to the life of the child (Minister for Health and Children, 2006). The importance of support from both fathers and mothers to the lives of children has been previously acknowledged (Tamis-LeMonda and Carera, 2002; Luthar and Becker, 2002). In the Canadian National Longitudinal Study of Children, findings suggest that the amount of time parents interact directly with their children is positively related to child outcomes, although the importance of time is not measured only by the actual number of hours the parents spend with the child, but rather the 'quality' of that time (Government of Canada, 2003). In Ireland, a 2006 State of the Nation's Children report found that in 2002, 56.2% of children aged 10-17 reported that they found it easy to talk to their father when something was really bothering them. This percentage compares with results from 1998, when 48.1% of children reported this. Also in 2002, 77.6% of children aged 10-17 reported that they found it easy to talk to their mother when something was really bothering them in comparison to 74.0% of children in 1998.

In Ireland, decreased family time together, as a consequence of commuting and parental participation in the workforce, was identified as a key factor influencing family life. In recent years increasingly, family-friendly work arrangements are becoming an essential part of ensuring that workers can combine their personal life and caring responsibilities with their employment (Drew et al, 2004). There are a number of legislative measures in place to assist in family-friendly working arrangements, including the Protection of Employees (Part-time Work) Act, Maternity Protection Act, Parental Leave Act, Force Majeure Leave Act, Adoptive Leave Act and Carer's Leave Act. Other non-statutory leave can also be made available to families, including flexi-working, term-time working, paternity leave and compassionate leave (ibid).

The Notes for Teachers issued to teachers in 1951 recommended, 'the children should be made to feel happy in school' (Department of Education, 1951, p.3). However, it is difficult to ascertain how children were made to feel happy given that corporal punishment was still a feature in schools. In his book, *School Days - Cool Days or Cruel Days,* author Flan Quigney contends, 'the stipulation that corporal punishment be administered for misbehaviour only and not for failure at lessons was often seemingly ignored' (Quigney, 2011, p.57). The stick was frequently used for failure at spellings, tables, poor writing, homework not done, not knowing Catechism questions etc. (ibid, 2011). According to Quigney, this failure was 'equated with laziness and hence, by some, this was seen as misbehaviour' (ibid, p.58). Bryan McMahon maintained that 'discipline was enforced with a bamboo cane but never to excess' (McMahon, 1992, p.16). In his autobiography *Angela's Ashes* (1996, p.119) Frank McCourt recalls one particular day at school:

> The master's face goes white then red. His mouth tightens and opens and spit flies everywhere. He walks to Question and drags him from his seat. He snorts and stutters and his spit flies around the room. He flogs Question across the shoulders, the bottom, the legs. He grabs him by the collar and drags him to the front of the room.

Former Health Minister Noel Browne raised the issue of corporal punishment on a number of occasions in the Dáil. On the 2nd May 1957, the new minister for Education Jack Lynch told the Dáil:

> I am probably in a considerable minority in my attitude to this question for I hold the view very strongly that corporal punishment is an utterly medieval and barbarous practice … In most books now, educational authorities sum the whole thing up by calling it a barbarous practice. The difficulty, indeed, when reading into the question of corporal punishment, is to find an average modern book on child education which recommends the beating of a child as an aid to education. To me, it is clearly so absurd that I cannot understand why it is still retained.

> (Dáil debates, 2nd May 1957)

On 5th June 1957 he further admitted that rule 96 (3) of the Rules for National Schools provided for 'only a light cane or rod may be used for the purpose of corporal punishment, which should be inflicted only on the open hand' (Dáil debates, 5th June 1957). He even invoked papal teaching in defence of corporal punishment. He referred to the Encyclical letter, Divini Illius Magistri: the Christian Education of Youth, Pope Pius XII said that disorderly inclinations amongst children must be corrected. Despite Lynch's strong views

against corporal punishment it remained as a disciplinary method until 1982. According to Quigney (2011, p.59),

> This corporal punishment had its origins in an Ireland where discipline in all walks of life was very evident. Authority was sacrosanct. Power and discipline were prevalent in the Church, the Gardaí, the defence forces and in many cases, the home.

Corporal punishment wasn't just a school phenomenon but a societal one. Whilst the physical punishment of children featured in schools and in the home, abuse of a more severe nature was inflicted upon some children who were placed in the care of the State and some religious orders. Much of this abuse occurred in industrial schools which were established almost a century earlier. In 2000, a commission was established to inquire into child abuse. It found that over a period going back at least to the 1940s, many children in industrial schools in the Republic had been subjected to systematic and sustained physical, sexual and emotional abuse. The commission also enquired into allegations of abuse in St. Joseph's Industrial school in Artane and concluded that the school 'used frequent and severe corporal punishment' which was 'systemic and pervasive', and that even when a child behaved it was still possible for him to be beaten (Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, Vol. 1, 2009, Page 155-156). When children in the school reported the abuse the most common reaction was to move the offender to another institution run by the same order. Frequently, abuse was not investigated nor was it reported to the Garda Síochána or to the Department of Education.

The curriculum of 1971 was child-centred in theory but it was not always the case in practice because large class sizes militated against the development of the child and led to the continuation of corporal punishment in schools. Just over a decade after the introduction of *Curaclam na Bunscoile* corporal punishment was finally abolished. This would be the first time since the foundation of the state that children would no longer be in fear of being physically punished whilst attending school. The signing of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child brought a whole new dimension to wellbeing for children in relation to the relationships between adult and child in schools. A greater emphasis on pupil wellbeing was advocated. Guidelines were issued on codes of behaviour and there was a new emphasis on children and on their behaviour.

Successive governments introduced a number of programmes to increase pupil attainment levels in schools. These programmes included the *Home School Community Liaison Scheme*, *Giving Children an Even Break, Breaking the Cycle and Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)*. Whilst these programmes were introduced to increase pupil attainment, the wellbeing of pupils was also enhanced through initiatives arising from their implementation - such as the establishment of breakfast clubs, for example. Despite the abolition of corporal punishment in schools in 1982, it took a while for this change to enter into the Irish psyche. In today's Ireland, physical punishment still exists in some homes. Family, societal and cultural issues seemingly justify the meting out of the 'odd smack'. Ireland has come under repeated pressure from the EU to ban corporal punishment completely and was found to be in breach of human rights legislation regarding the same a number of years ago. The Children's Act 2001 repealed the right of parents to use reasonable and moderate chastisement in disciplining children as provided for in the Children's Act (1908). Constitutional obstacles such as the right of the family have often been cited as to the

reason why it cannot be outlawed. An outright ban on smacking is currently under consideration by the Minister for Children (Irish Times, 28th December 2011). Following on from a number of inquiries in relation to children that have taken place within the past few years there is a move to place the *Children First* guidelines on a statutory footing. This aims to further enhance children's wellbeing.

Undoubtedly, the relationship between child and adult has changed through the generations. The premise of that relationship - fear - has somewhat shifted. For most of the time since the foundation of the state children generally feared being children in the presence of adults. Nowadays the relationship is characterised by adults fearing children being children. There is a tendency for children to be shielded due to over-protectiveness on the part of the adult. A report published by the National Trust entitled *Natural Childhood* in the United Kingdom at the end of March 2012 found that traffic, the lure of video screens and parental anxieties are conspiring to keep children indoors (Natural Childhood, 2012). Tim Gill contends that 'childhood is being undermined by adults' increasing aversion to risk and by the intrusion of that fear into every aspect of their lives' (Observer, 2009). Speaking on the *Today with Pat Kenny* radio programme, Jill Vialet recalled how when she was growing up she 'played outside, unsupervised every day after school, all weekend long, all summer' (Vialet, 2012) and argued that today 'kids in school don't have the basic skills to get games going and to keep games going' (ibid). She maintained that children's 'opportunities for play have been reduced if not wholly eliminated' (ibid). Furthermore, she contends that there is an increased tendency for children to be enrolled in structured and supervised activities. On the same programme, Vialet remarked:

> For more affluent kids they are going from one structured activity to another but for more low income kids there are often parents who are justifiably afraid of them going outside unsupervised.

Preliminary findings from the Cork Children's Lifestyle Study which examined the wellbeing, diet, and exercise levels of children has found that one in ten had high blood pressure. This high blood pressure is linked to inactivity and to poor diet. The study also indicated poor activity levels in many youngsters, particularly girls. Parents reported that while 75% of boys completed at least 20 minutes of hard exercise for at least three days in the previous week, just over half of the girls matched this level of exercise (Shanahan, 2012). The recent Growing Up in Ireland report on obesity in children highlighted a huge problem with this issue and found that obesity in Irish children was higher than in many northern European countries. That study found that Irish children are becoming more obese and that this was creating serious health risks for the future. It highlighted that by the age of 10, 19% of Irish children were overweight and 26% of Irish children were outside the healthy range for their weight. On October 4th 2012, the Director of Human Health and Nutrition at Safefood addressed the Joint Committee on Health and Children. There she informed the committee that childhood obesity was a 'child protection' issue and that tackling childhood obesity required a holistic approach involving parents, schools and wider society.

Concluding statement

Have we reached a stage whereby we need to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions about childhood? In his preface to his fiction *Émile*, Rousseau (1762, p.7) wrote:

> We know nothing of childhood: and with our mistaken notions the further we advance the further we go astray. The wisest writers devote themselves to what a man ought to know, without asking what is a child capable of learning. They are always looking for the man in the child, without considering what he is before he becomes a man.

The conceptualisation of children and childhood has evolved in Ireland since the foundation of the state. Child philosophers such as Rosseau, Piaget, Dewey and Aries have increased society's understanding of children and of our relationships with children. Legislative and curricular changes have had an impact on how children in this state are viewed and treated and have had a positive impact on their wellbeing. Nearly 100 years ago, our forefathers had a vision of a new Ireland, an Ireland guaranteeing religious and civil liberty, an Ireland of equal rights and equal opportunities and an Ireland which sought to cherish all the children of the nation equally. Generations have passed and whilst Ireland has taken her place amongst the nations of the world the attainment of that vision for children has been a slow and arduous process. The signing of the UNCRC in 1992 has greatly accelerated the pace of change in relation to the provision of children's rights and their wellbeing. As the then Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald, outlined prior to the 2012 referendum:

> 'At a constitutional level … do you believe … that young people, young children should be treated as citizens?'
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> RTE News at One. 25th April, 2012.

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The Wellbeing of Teachers

Introduction

A s stated at the outset of this document, defining wellbeing is difficult. Defining teacher wellbeing is even more challenging and tends to focus on job satisfaction, stress and burnout. One positive definition specifically in relation to teachers is that 'Wellbeing expresses a positive emotional state, which is the result of harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand, and the personal needs and expectations of teachers on the other hand', (Aeltermann, Engels, van Petegem & Verheghe, 2007, p. 286). This chapter looks at existing research that has been undertaken both in Ireland and in Europe on factors that affect teacher wellbeing as well as examining 'What Makes Teachers Tick?' a valuable study conducted with Irish primary school teachers in 2009.

Changing landscape of primary teaching

Primary teaching and the landscape in which it takes place has changed enormously. As stated in Chapter Two, the roles and the responsibilities of the primary school teacher in Ireland today are very different to what was expected of a teacher in the 1960s. Changes in curriculum, teaching practice, assessment and policies in addition to the changes in society, family structures, demographics and the rate of technological advances, are just some of the factors that have contributed to the changing nature of primary education. Increased emphasis on national and international educational comparisons has led to more assessments and a culture of accountability. Combined with a fear of litigation, this has led to pressure on schools to develop policies on a myriad of curricular and non-curricular issues.

A positive school climate

Kyriacou (2001) refers to a school with a 'positive climate', advocating that a healthy school is where there is good communication and a strong sense of collegiality. According to Kyriacou, in schools with a positive climate, management decisions are based on consultations, consensus is established on key values and standards, whole school policies are in place, and roles and expectations are clearly defined. In addition, teachers would receive positive feedback and praise, a good level of resources and facilities would be provided to support teachers, help would be available to solve problems, policies and procedures would be easy to follow, red tape and paperwork minimized and additional duties would be matched to teachers' skills, all in a pleasant work environment.

European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) Study

According to the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), teachers are among the professions reporting the highest level of work-related stress. A previous research project conducted by ETUCE (ETUCE, 2007) had resulted in the identification of the five main stressors that affect teachers' work (workload/work intensity, role overload, increased class size per teacher, unacceptable pupils' behaviour, bad school management and/or lack of support from management). The subsequent publication of the ETUCE Action Plan contained policy guidelines for its member organisations.

In 2011, a large-scale project *Teachers' Work-Related Stress: assessing, comparing and evaluating the impact of psychosocial hazards on teachers at their workplace* was undertaken to collect data from 500 schools in all EU/EFTA countries in order to gather detailed and concrete facts on teachers' work-related stress at grass roots level.

With the assistance of education partners in the individual countries (the INTO acted as national co-ordinator for Ireland), data from almost 5,500 teachers was gathered. The overall survey results were published and presented at the Final Project Conference in Berlin in November 2011. At the launch, ETUCE President, Ronnie Smith, linked teachers' work-related stress with its effects on quality education, underlining that 'stress can thus be harmful not only to the workforce - teachers and other educational staff - but also for the pupils, jeopardizing the quality and efficiency of education'.

The questionnaire looked at standard aspects that impact on the psychosocial work environment such as demands, influence and development, interpersonal support and relationship, trust and fairness and job insecurity. There were also questions that pertained specifically to the teaching profession, eg. common educational vision, lesson disturbances, noise and voice strain, opportunities to relax, conflicts with parents, support from parents, teaching equipment, quality of conferences and meetings, subject support, verbal abuse and physical violence.

While the method of data collection had some limitations, the survey was nevertheless one of the biggest of its kind undertaken in Europe and it provided a comprehensive summary of contributors to teacher work-related stress in primary and secondary schools as well as clear indicators for measures to prevent, mitigate and reduce stress and burn-out. In Ireland, 20 schools, each with a minimum of five participants, undertook to complete an on-line questionnaire at a specified time, having been given a separate user name and password for each school to unlock the questionnaire.

On a positive note, the statistics from Ireland reported the second highest (after Switzerland) level of support for teachers from parents, an above-average commitment to the workplace, above average feeling of trust and fairness (statistically linked to increased job satisfaction and lower levels of stress), high levels of job security and a high level of common educational vision.

Areas that were of concern to Irish teachers were the low level of feedback at work, the high level of quantitative demands, social relations, higher than average intention to leave the profession and higher than average cognitive stress.

Teaching Council study

Closer to home, in 2010, the Teaching Council commissioned the ESRI to conduct a study on: *Job Satisfaction and Occupational Stress among Primary School Teachers and School Principals in Ireland,* the ESRI took data from the wide-ranging, longitudinal study *Growing Up in Ireland*, a government-funded research project that has provided a wealth of information on many aspects of life in Ireland.

The findings of this study indicated that an overall majority of Irish primary school teachers (98%) and principal teachers (93%) were happy in their job, though some experienced occupational stress (45% of teachers and 70% of principals). Job satisfaction and occupational stress were associated with a number of background and school-level factors. In relation to gender, for example, while gender was not a significant factor in teacher job stress, female teachers had higher job satisfaction levels than their male counterparts. Principals' occupational stress did not vary by gender.

Results did vary depending on the age of the teacher. Teachers aged in their forties had higher stress levels than other age groups. Stress levels were also higher for principals over 40 years of age whereas principals' job satisfaction did not vary by age. There was also some fluctuation in job satisfaction level by length of service with newly recruited teachers and principals and those with a longer service record reporting higher job satisfaction levels. Occupational stress was evident at all stages of the teaching career, but stress levels were somewhat lower for those teaching for two to five years. Stress levels were significantly lower among those principals who had previous experience in a similar role in another school. As with teacher stress, principal stress was evident across all stages of the career, but was somewhat lower for those who had been holding the post for six to ten years.

Teacher stress was not directly associated with school location, size (although job satisfaction was somewhat higher in large schools) or with class size. Teachers teaching multi-grade classes were more stressed, but teaching multi-grade classes did not affect their job satisfaction level. The study highlights the need to support teachers through professional development in engaging with the complexities involved in teaching multi-grade classes.

Teacher stress was associated with the composition of the student body (especially in terms of behavioural difficulties) and with the extent of contact with parents. Teachers were also more satisfied when their students were well behaved and parents were more involved in school life. The composition and climate of the school were also important drivers of principals' stress levels and satisfaction: the more pupils with emotional/behavioural difficulties there were in the school, the higher the stress levels experienced by the principal. The relevance of school composition for job satisfaction and stress points to the need to provide teachers with behaviour management skills through initial and continuing teacher education and to provide principals with appropriate professional development support in fostering a whole-school approach to dealing with pupil misbehaviour.

Teacher stress was associated with relationships with other staff members. There was an association between teachers' stress and the stress levels of the principal in the school. The level of teacher job satisfaction was also associated with that of the principal. Day-to-day interaction among the school partners – teachers, pupils, parents – mattered in shaping teachers' own experiences. Promoting a positive school climate was therefore considered a

fundamental part of school development planning. Teachers' sense of control over various activities at school enhanced their job satisfaction, especially when they had a say in which class groups they taught.

Combining teaching with school leadership was seen to pose considerable challenges not only for the principals themselves but also for classroom teachers in their school. This finding suggests the need for professional development support for school principals, but perhaps also raises more fundamental concerns about the long-term viability of this dual role.

Access to adequate resources, especially staff resources, was seen as contributing to enhanced job satisfaction and reduced stress for principals. Poor administrative support, in particular, was associated with higher stress levels among principals. Principals were also more likely to report feeling stressed where they considered teachers in their school to be less open to new developments and challenges. Good quality school facilities also mattered - principals in very old school buildings experienced higher stress levels than other principals. In addition, there were lower levels of job satisfaction among principals who described school facilities as 'poor' or only 'fair'. On the basis of this study, the ESRI researchers recommended that continued attention should be given to the design of new school buildings and to retrospective refurbishment of older ones (Darmody et al., 2010).

Teacher motivation

Given the number of studies that focus on teacher stress, the question remains 'why do people enter teaching?' Studies in the UK, (Spear 2000, cited in Morgan et al, 2010) US and Australia (Sinclair 2006, cited in Morgan et al, 2010) show that teachers enter teaching for reasons to do with the intrinsic nature of the work. These include working with children to enhance their lives, the intellectual challenge, job satisfaction and helping others. At the other end of the scale, research indicates that absence of support structures (Johnson and Birkenhead, 2003, cited in Morgan et al, 2010), low influence on their work (Stockhard and Lehman, 2004, cited in Morgan et al, 2010), poor leadership, low earnings, low status and image of teaching (Kyriacou and Kune, 2007, cited in Morgan et al, 2010) and job dissatisfaction (Scott 1999, cited in Morgan et al, 2010) are the main reasons why teachers leave. Cochran Smith (2004, cited in Morgan et al, 2010) suggests that teachers need school conditions where they are supported and have opportunities to work with other educators in professional communities. They also need differentiated leadership and advancement possibilities along with good pay for what they do. The above factors lead teachers to experience success in their work environment.

What makes teachers tick?

In a recent study, Mark Morgan looked at what keeps teachers motivated on a day to day basis (Morgan et al, 2010). In this study, the authors traced routinely encountered affective episodes in a survey sample of 749 recently qualified primary teachers in Ireland using a questionaire, a diary covering the events of a week and judgements of frequency and intensity over a school term.

The study sought to fill in the blanks between the highs and lows experienced by teachers in their professional lives. Morgan defines affective episodes as follows:

- Occuring everyday,
- Coloured by a positive or negative feeling,
- Normally triggered by an interaction involving teachers professional work and identity,
- Having a beginning marked by the triggering of a feeling and end with the dissipation of that feeling, and
- Having the potential to recur routinely.

Crocker and Wolfe (2001) and Crocker and Park (2004), both cited in Morgan et al (2010) suggested that people have a constant need to seek self esteem in the domain in which they have invested their self worth.

Morgan et al. attempted to quantify the affective significance of events in terms of effective intensity (positive, negative or neutral) and frequency. Three distinctions are seen as being of particular signifiicance:

1. The issue of teacher lack of motivation due to the undermining effects of negative events or due to the absence of sustaining positive experiences,
2. The focus on teacher perception of causes rather than with ultimate origins of social movements. Events related to self or school staff are more significant than any others.
3. The frequency and effective intensity of experiences is of particular important in teachers' lives. Studies of stress have underlined the negative effect of minor but recurring events (hassle) while job satisfaction is enhanced by repeated but ordinary events.

The importance of affective significance

Morgan suggests that there is a direct relationship between positive experiences and efficacy. The focus is on classroom events which influence a teacher's persistence, resilience and enthusiasm for the job. A teacher's commitment to remain in teaching, to move to another school or to quit depends on experiences of success at classroom level and on supportive structures in his/her schools. The study focused on the first five years of teaching because of the higher frequency of teachers leaving in this period.

According to the study, the overall pattern indicates that proximal events (classroom and school levels) have a higher significance than national or global levels. The findings indicate that classroom events have a stronger signifiance than school, national or global events. Positive and negative happenings are not a mirror image of each other. The presence or absence of positively framed events is by far the stronger contributor to teacher commitment and efficacy. The frequency of positive versus negative events is seen as more significant than the affective intensity of such events. The occurrence of positive experiences had a stronger impact than the absence of negative experiences (Kitching et al, 2009). Positive events have the capacity to alleviate the impact of negative ones and can be seen as a basis for resilience

when things go wrong. In terms of affective significance teachers' perceptions that they make a difference at classroom level stem directly from the motivation to enter teaching.

Policy implications

The study suggests that restructuring and reforms in education can work if accompanied by a clear focus on the existing intrinsic motivation of teachers. This motivation is to be seen in terms of students' engagement and learning accompanied by frequent feedback to new teachers on the quality of their work. The ethos of performativity and the setting up of accountability structures have negative consequences in terms of loss of morale and job satisfaction.

Studies in the UK by Perriman (2007) and Troman (2000), both cited in Morgan et al (2010), reveal fear, anger and disaffection among teachers after experiences of inspection and delegation of responsibility at local level. Sugrue, cited in Morgan et al (2009), warns that the publication of school inspectors' reports is evidence of an increase in performativity and accountability being demanded from teachers in Ireland. Sugrue also suggests that the Irish system should pay close attention to the relationship between teacher motivation and the ethos of performativity. Teacher commitment is linked with student learning. A survey of 100 schools and 300 teachers in the UK revealed that measures of teacher commitment were associated with higher levels of achievement by students (Day, 2007). In a constantly changing educational environment there is a need to devise a way of matching teacher motivation with the new demands and obligations that arise at different stages of their careers. There is also a need to continue to support teacher professionalism.

The Morgan survey indicates clearly that the *absence* of positive experiences rather than the occurence of negative events undermines commitment and efficacy. Events at micro level impinge most strongly on motivation and the importance of particular experiences was crucially more related to frequency rather than intensity. The major implication was that positive events fortify motivation and resilience even though negative events may be inevitably experienced. Teachers can cope with negative experiences at micro level and perceptions of change at macro level provided that positive episodes (e.g. strong relationship with students) are constantly experienced. Cochran Smith (2003) suggests that efforts to restructure schools and motivate teachers through test results or similar threatening factors have very negative effects. A better approach might be to strengthen and reward teachers' efforts to care about their students.

Supporting teacher wellbeing

There are a number of provisions and policies in place which pertain to the wellbeing of teachers in schools. These range from sick leave arrangements to policies dealing with assaults on teachers. These policies are outlined under various circulars which have been issued by the DES. They include the following:

- 32/2007 – Teacher Absences
- 60/2010 – Sick Leave Scheme for Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools[1]
- 40/1997 – Assaults on Teachers / School Employees

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[1] Circular 036/2012 - Self Certified Paid Sick Leave Arrangements For Registered Teachers – updated this.

These arrangements provide for teachers' general wellbeing by providing for time off and recovery time in the event of an illness. Bereavement leave is also provided for in the event of the death of an individual related to a teacher.

According to the Health and Safety Authority, 'Bullying can be carried out by supervisors, managers, subordinates, fellow employees, customers, business contacts or members of the public' (HSA, 2007, p.6). In a school context, this translates as principal, senior members of staff, fellow teachers, ancillary staff, representatives from other agencies involved with the school, (SENO, EWO, Inspectorate[2]), parents or other family members of children at the school. Under Section 60 of the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, all employers, not just schools, must put in place practices and procedures for identifying and preventing bullying at work (HSA, 2007, p.2). Having clear procedures for dealing with such incidents can relieve a lot of the worry and anxiety associated with them. It is often the lack of procedures and the frustration that arises from lack of action that can cause as much stress as the incident itself.

Harassment is closely related to bullying and whilst it is illegal and should not be tolerated in the workplace, it does not fit the definition of bullying. To assist in differentiating the two, it is worth considering that harassment is governed by equality legislation and is predicated on the person being a member of one of the nine categories specified within the anti-harassment legislation. Bullying is legally distinct from harassment as bullying behaviour is not predicated on membership of any distinct group (HSA, 2007). Many schools have also adopted the INTO *Working Together* document for promoting positive staff relations and for having procedures in place to deal with issues should they arise. Recognising the need for a harmonious working relationship between teachers and parents, the INTO and Primary School Management reached agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents against teachers.

There are a number of different schemes and support groups available to promote and enhance the wellbeing of teachers in the classroom. These include:

Employee assistance service - Carecall

The DES, through Carecall, provides an Employee Assistance Service (EAS) to provide teachers and their immediate family members with access to free and one-to-one confidential counselling and to assist in coping with personal and/or work issues. The service is available to teachers whose positions are funded by the Department of Education and Skills, their spouses or partners, their dependants above the age of 16 and mother/father where appropriate. The vision of Carecall is to 'maximise individual and organisational wellbeing, with a focus on providing support programmes and addressing real issues affecting individuals' wellbeing both in the workplace and in their personal lives' (Carecall, 2012). Carecall contends that it has already helped to 'promote personal wellbeing in over 350,000 people across the whole of Ireland' (ibid).

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[2] Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO), Education Welfare Officer (EWO), the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate.

Medmark

Medmark4teachers is the occupational health service dedicated to schools and teachers. The service operates on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills to ensure that their duty of care under the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005 is met and adhered to. The aim of Medmark is to provide 'schools and teachers with a well-co-ordinated and managed medical assessment system, a supportive resource, so as to ensure the health and safety of those at work within the teaching system' (Medmark, 2012). Medmark also addresses the 'medical fitness to teach' around the following requirements:

- to ensure health, safety and well-being of teachers,
- to ensure the health, safety, well-being and educational progress of students,
- to provide an efficient service, which will facilitate learning for students,
- to manage any risk to the health of teachers which may arise from their teaching duties including ensuring that those duties do not exacerbate pre-existing health problems,
- to ensure the health and safety of other teachers and support staff is not adversely affected by a colleague being medically unfit, and
- to enable all, including those with disabilities, who wish to pursue a career in teaching to achieve their potential within the bounds of reasonable adjustment.

Medmark contends that carrying out medical fitness to teach assessments can achieve the following:

- ensure that the health of teachers is being looked after,
- manage any sickness absence issues and ensure that teachers are fit to teach in the job that they are employed to do,
- correct any issues at work which may be related to the illness of the teacher, and
- promote health, safety and well-being in the teaching community.

(ibid, 2012)

Professional associations and bodies

Many associations and bodies provide professional support to teachers and principals. Some of these include:

- INTO - Irish National Teachers' Organisation
- PDST - Professional Development Services for Teachers
- SESS - Special Education Support Service
- ILSA - Irish Learning Support Association
- IATSE - Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education
- IPPN - Irish Primary Principals' Network

INTO special interest groups

The INTO also promotes to its members a number of groups which may have a positive impact on teachers' wellbeing. The Separated Teachers' Support Group was founded in 1988 and offers support, friendship, social outings and meetings on relevant topics to all separated, divorced, widowed or single parent teachers. The STSG believes that the most important benefit of their group is that it gives members a chance to meet others in similar situations to themselves in a friendly, confident and supportive setting. The LGBT group was founded in 2004 and provides a forum and support for lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers within the INTO.

Concluding statement

This chapter noted how most studies about teacher wellbeing tend to focus on teacher job satisfaction and stress. The role of the teacher has irrevocably changed over the last fifty years. Studies have found workload, role overload, increased class size, pupil behaviour and lack of support from management as causes of stress. Despite occupational stress people still enter teaching to help and enhance the lives of their pupils. Classroom and school level events have a higher level of significance for teachers than national or global events. The support of management, principals, colleagues, parents and pupils leads to greater satisfaction level amongst teachers. In addition teachers and principals need to be supported professionally to meet the demands of a changing education environment.

The chapter also detailed some of the supports, both professional and personal, which are available through different agencies and bodies to promote and enhance teacher wellbeing in the classroom.

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Promoting and enhancing pupil wellbeing in the classroom

Introduction

T his chapter explores some of the practices in schools that promote and enhance the wellbeing of pupils. These practices may occur on a formal or informal level. Some of the practices that occur are a direct result of the implementation of school policies, many of which have a legislative requirement. Other practices derive from the implementation of wellbeing programmes. This chapter will also examine some of the wellbeing programmes that have been introduced in schools.

Wellbeing policies

Many policies that pertain to the wellbeing of pupils are implemented in schools. These policies may be curricular or pastoral in nature.

Curricular policies

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

The Education Act (1998) states:

> A recognised school shall promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.

To provide for social and personal development and health education, a new subject SPHE was introduced when the Revised Primary School Curriculum was launched in 1999. SPHE has been seen as the bedrock of the revised primary school curriculum. SPHE is an important subject for the development of citizenship and more importantly children's citizenship. The aim of SPHE is to foster personal development and the health and wellbeing of the child. It also aims to help the child create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society. In addition, SPHE aspires to nurture self-worth and self-confidence within pupils and places a particular emphasis on developing a sense of personal responsibility for one's own behaviour and actions. To implement this subject successfully schools were required to develop a curricular policy. SPHE is a stand-alone subject with a guideline of 30 minutes per week. An INTO Education Committee

survey found that the vast majority of respondents (96%) see SPHE as being very important or somewhat important. According to the NCCA, in order for SPHE to be effective it should be implemented in a combination of ways including the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere, discrete time and   integrated learning. The SPHE curriculum states:

> The curriculum is structured in such a way as to treat the social, personal and health dimensions of the child's life in an integrated manner. It provides for the development of a broad range of values, attitudes, skills and understanding relevant to the child's health and wellbeing, to other people, and to the society in which he/she lives. This foundation will inform the child's actions, behaviour and decisions in the many situations that he/she may encounter and have to deal with as part of everyday life and living.
>
> (NCCA (2012) www.curriculumonline.ie)

The SPHE curriculum is divided into three strands and some strand units or topic areas. These include:

Myself
- Self-identity
- Taking care of my body
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection

Myself and others
- Myself and my family
- My friends and other people
- Relating to others
- Making decisions

Myself and the wider world
- Developing citizenship
- Media education

The SPHE curriculum, along with the ten other subjects, is mandatory in all schools. Circular 0022/2010 issued by the DES exclusively refers to the SPHE curriculum and reiterates the importance of teaching the curriculum in its entirety. It states:

> School management, principals and teachers have a duty to provide the best quality and most appropriate social, personal and health education for their pupils. They also have a duty to protect pupils in their care at all times from any potentially harmful, inappropriate or misguided resources, interventions or programmes.
>
> (Circular 22/2010, p.1)

The SPHE curriculum is often referred to as the 'hidden curriculum' as many aspects of it are addressed through the ethos of the school and through the day-to-day interactions between pupils and teachers. It is how we 'walk the walk' rather than 'talk the talk'. Pupils pick up on internal staff relationships in a school, they respond to the behaviour that is modelled to them by the adults they come in contact with each day. Teachers must be conscious of modelling the behaviour they are hoping to see the children use. Respecting each child's opinion and valuing their contribution to class discussions send a message to children that they matter and that this is how they should treat others.

A number of support programmes have been developed to support schools and assist teachers in implementing the SPHE curriculum. These have been prepared by such bodies as local health boards, National Road Safety Authority and An Bord Bia. Programmes which deal with child safety include the following:

- The Stay Safe Programme
- Bí Folláin
- Walk Tall

The Stay Safe Programme teaches children how to handle dangers in certain situations but in particular the areas of bullying or physical and sexual abuse. Children are encouraged to stand up for themselves and the central message of all lessons is to confide in a responsible adult, who can be trusted, when faced with any situation that makes the child feel uncomfortable. Children are encouraged to tell and to keep telling.

The Walk Tall Programme, which is a substance abuse prevention programme, fosters the pupil's self-esteem in order that he or she might have the confidence to make the correct choices when faced with the temptation of drugs or alcohol. Schools need to be pro-active in giving children the skills to prevent abuse happening in the first place. Both these programmes give children the language and skills to protect themselves in potentially dangerous situations. *Bí Folláin* is also a programme on social and health education, dealing with topics such as growth and development, healthy eating and personal hygiene.

Some resources developed to aid teachers to implement the SPHE curriculum include the following:

- Be Safe Be Webwise- safety on the internet,
- Aqua Attack – water safety resources and activities from IWS,
- Sneeze Safe – online interactive games and activities on the correct usage of tissues to prevent the spread of germs,
- Safety Centre – Personal safety worksheets – a series of printable worksheets based on safety in a number of different everyday situations,
- Food Dudes – Healthy Eating Programme promoted by An Bord Bia,
- Development Education Ireland – dealing with the topics of human rights, justice, equality and inequality, race, poverty, exclusion, disadvantage, discrimination and many other issues,
- Kid's Health, and
- Cool Food Planet – healthy eating.

The principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE is active learning. Some active learning strategies espoused in the SPHE curriculum includes the following:

- drama activities,
- co-operative games,
- pictures, photographs and visual images,
- discussion,
- written activities,
- the media and information and communication technologies, and
- looking at children's work.

The methodologies espoused in the SPHE curriculum, such as circle time and collaborative learning, are conducive to establishing good relationships both between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves. This in turn should have a positive impact on both pupil and teacher wellbeing in the classroom.

Physical education

The Primary School Curriculum (1999) reaffirmed Physical Education as a subject in its own right. The PE curriculum states:

> Through a diverse range of experiences providing regular, challenging physical activity, the balanced and harmonious development and general well-being of the child is fostered
>
> (PE Curriculum, 1999, p.2).

To achieve the stated aim of the PE curriculum which is to encourage children to lead full, active and healthy lives, it is divided into six strands, as follows:

- Athletics,
- Dance,
- Gymnastics,
- Games,
- Outdoor and adventure activities, and
- Aquatics.

The curriculum allows for one hour per week to be spent on physical education. Even though schools have well developed policies in relation to PE, many teachers find implementation challenging due to the lack of the necessary resources and the nature of the physical environment. INTO research previously found that that over half of Irish schools do not have a PE hall so lessons are weather dependent. The INTO argues that:

> Action is needed to make sure that the status and profile of PE in schools is raised. The Department of Education and Skills needs to show a real commitment to developing PE as a core subject in primary schools.
>
> (INTO, 2011)

Pastoral policies

Formal policies to promote and enhance wellbeing

There are many formal pastoral policies within schools that have a wellbeing dimension. Some of these policies cater specifically for the wellbeing of pupils whilst others directly relate to teachers. There are a few policies that have a crossover dimension between pupils and teachers.

Child protection policy

It is mandatory for all schools to comply with the child protection procedures that are prescribed by the DES. A revision to the procedures took place by way of Circular 65/2011 issued in September 2011. All schools were informed that the revised procedures were based on *Children First-National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011.* Circular (65/2011, p.2) states the following:

All schools must have a child protection policy that adheres to certain key principles of best practice in child protection and welfare and all schools are required to formally adopt and implement without modification, the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

Each school must provide confirmation to the Inspectorate during a Whole School Evaluation (WSE) that they have adopted these procedures without modification. These child protection procedures impact on children's wellbeing by requiring schools to report allegations of abuse to the appropriate authorities. It is a requirement for principals in their report to the Board of Management to have a section on child protection. In addition schools may often become involved in family welfare conferences. These conferences are held where there are issues that may impact a child/young person's wellbeing and they must come up with a safe plan for implementation. It is also a requirement, per Circular 63/2010, that all persons being recruited to teaching and non-teaching positions be vetted.

Code of behaviour

It is a statutory obligation for all schools to publish a Code of Behaviour, under section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. The Act requires the school code of behaviour to be prepared in accordance with the guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) in 2008:

> The code of behaviour is the set of programmes, practices and procedures that together form the school's plan for helping students in the school to behave well and learn well. The code of behaviour helps the school community to promote the school ethos, relationships, policies, procedures and practices that encourage good behaviour and prevent unacceptable behaviour. The code of behaviour helps teachers, other members of staff, students and parents to work together for a happy, effective and safe school.
>
> (NEWB Guidelines for Schools, 2008, p.2)

The code translates the expectations of staff, students and parents into practical arrangements that will help to ensure continuity of instruction to all pupils. It helps to foster an orderly, harmonious school where high standards of behaviour are expected and supported.

Teachers are entitled to work and pupils are entitled to learn in a safe environment, free from danger or threats. The code of behaviour of a school aims to ensure that this is possible. While the code of behaviour must be in accordance with the NEWB's guidelines for schools, there is still a certain amount of scope at individual school level for implementing rewards and sanctions relevant to their own context. Schools employ many reward systems at individual, group, class and whole school level. The aim of these rewards is to promote positive behaviour and prevent inappropriate behaviour, so that schools are proactive rather than reactive. Some examples of these rewards include 'golden' time, prizes, nights off homework or extra play time. According to the NEWB guidelines (2008, p.43):

> The quality of relationships between teachers and students is one of the most powerful influences on student behaviour. For many students, their teachers are a major source of support, adult empathy and pastoral care, and are hugely significant figures in their lives. As adults and professionals, teachers have a strong capacity to develop good relationships with

students, and a greater responsibility for the relationship. Mutually respectful relationships balance warmth and empathy with objectivity, professional detachment, fairness and consistency.

Studies involving teachers at all levels in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have provided significant evidence which found that 'workload and pupil misbehaviour make demands on teachers that result in work stress and reduce job satisfaction' (Teacher Support Network, 2009, p.23). A good code of behaviour that is evident and practised consistently throughout the school can impact positively on the wellbeing of both teachers and students. Teachers know that if they adhere to the code they are both supporting and being supported by other staff members, the principal and the BoM.

The school should also explore ways of reviewing the quality of relationships in the school from time to time. This can be done formally through questionnaires and discussion groups, suggestion boxes, tutor groups or Circle Time, as well as through informal day-to-day communication in the school' (NEWB, 2008, p.43). The guidelines recommend the involvement of students in devising, drafting or revising the code of behaviour and state that they [students] 'are more likely to support a code of behaviour when they have helped to develop it' (ibid, p.16). They also maintain that 'relationships of trust between teachers and students can grow stronger through the process' (ibid, p.16). The guidelines contend that through their involvement, students can

- hear directly from teachers about what is needed for teaching and learning,
- experience being part of a collective effort to make sure the school is a good place to teach and learn,
- learn about taking personal responsibility for their behaviour and for each other's wellbeing and the wellbeing of the teachers,
- learn essential skills of listening, negotiating and managing differences, and
- have their experience, insights and expectations recognised and used.

The guidelines also stress the importance of parental involvement in drafting and reviewing a code of behaviour. They argue:

The code of behaviour will be more likely to work well where parents have meaningful ways of contributing to the development or review of the code. Their involvement will draw on their expectations, insights and experience. It will help to underline their responsibilities for their children's behaviour (ibid, p.16).

They maintain that joint work between parents and staff in the development of the code of behaviour can

- give parents insight into what teachers need in order to be able to teach effectively,
- equip parents to reinforce at home the messages about learning and behaviour that are conducive to a happy school,
- help parents to have a strong sense of pride in the school and ownership of its work, and
- help to ensure that parents give consistent messages to students about how to treat others.

The involvement of parents is crucial as it can contribute to the positive wellbeing of teachers. A survey involving 11,787 teachers in Northern Ireland found that 34.6% of them cited a 'lack of parental support on discipline' as a cause of unwanted stress at work (Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2002, p.25).

Anti-bullying policy

All schools are also legally obliged to have an anti-bullying policy. As with the code of behaviour, involvement by all partners in drafting and reviewing this policy can ensure greater cooperation with it. While it can be a separate policy, it must be read in conjunction with the code of behaviour. In addition, account needs to be taken of more recent legislative and regulatory changes and reference is also made to issues of contemporary concern such as racist bullying, text bullying, cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying. The DES have a sample anti-bullying policy and review template on their website and the term bullying encompasses both bullying and harassment.

School attendance

Since the commencement of the Education Welfare Act in 2000, schools are obliged by law to submit a report to the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) on the levels of school attendance. This provision allows schools to monitor and track school attendance. By doing so, it keeps schools informed as to the general wellbeing of its pupils. Frequent and high absences may indicate health problems with pupils or point toward financial problems within the home which prevent pupils from attending school. There may also be some other underlying issues from the pupils' home environment which causes a high level of absenteeism. The HSCL teacher also plays a role in supporting pupil school attendance.

Informal practices in schools

In addition to the many formal policies schools also have many informal practices within schools to advance pupil wellbeing. These can include breakfast or homework clubs. Whilst these initiatives are mainly prevalent in DEIS schools due to the necessary funding and personnel being provided, non-DEIS schools manage to provide such services from their own budget and resources. In addition, lunches are often provided by teachers or the parents association and these are discreetly given to pupils. Schools also make second hand uniforms available to those families who may not be able to afford a new one. The book rental scheme is another common practice that helps to alleviate financial hardship. In addition, school tours are often funded through parent association fund-raising or board of management contributions so that no child will miss out as a result of not being able to afford the trip. Schools can be very creative and inventive when it comes to ensuring that no child misses out because of personal circumstances.

Wellbeing programmes

There are a large range of programmes available that assist in the promotion and enhancement of pupil wellbeing in the classroom. Needless to say, as strongly suggested in the Teachers' Guidelines for SPHE, the culture and atmosphere of the classroom and the school and how well SPHE is integrated across the curriculum will enhance the impact of any programme used. The following are some of the programmes which are widely used in Ireland, North and South.

Zippy's Friends

Zippy is an imaginary stick insect, the main character of *The Zippy's Friends* programme which is designed to promote the emotional wellbeing of children aged five to eight years of age. The programme consists of a number of stories, and is based around a group of children, their families and friends and of course Zippy. The aim of the programme is to develop the child's coping skills. The following themes are addressed in the stories: feelings, communication, making and breaking relationships, conflict resolution, dealing with change and loss and general coping skills. Prior to implementing the programme teachers undergo a training session. They are provided with a teacher's manual and teaching materials. The activities are child-centred and designed to engage the child in active-learning.

In 2008, the programme was piloted in 30 DEIS schools in the West of Ireland. It focused on junior classes over a two year period. An evaluation of the programme was carried out by the Health Promotion Research Centre, NUI Galway. The research concluded that the programme was successfully implemented in the Irish schools and had a number of significant and positive effects on both pupils and teachers. It found:

> The programme significantly improved the emotional literacy and coping skills of the children, reduced their hyperactivity levels and led to improved relationships in the classroom.
> (Clarke and Barry, 2010, p.7)

The feedback from the participants in the programme was largely positive. One teacher remarked that the programme 'builds their self-confidence and improves relationships with peers. It equips them with tools to overcome difficult situations, therefore has a positive influence on their academic achievement' while another stated that he/she felt 'very lucky to be part of Zippy and the whole area of improving the mental health of children' (ibid, p.12). Children too were also positively disposed to the programme. One child liked 'when we had to share our feelings' where another learned 'you can transform your feelings, if you're feeling sad you can transform it to feeling happy' (ibid, p.11).

The S.A.L.T. Programme

S.A.L.T. stands for Stop, Ask, Listen, Talk. It was devised by Fiona McAuslan, a recognised conflict resolution expert. She has an M.A. in Conflict Resolution from University College, Dublin and has partnered with Drumcondra Education Centre to create conflict resolution skills training for the Irish education system. This programme was specially developed for the Irish curriculum and complements the key strands of the SPHE (Primary) Programme: Myself, Myself and Others, Relating to Others, Myself and the World. Through the programme children learn to recognise conflict and learn the skills to deal effectively with it. The programme focuses on building the children's capacity to develop and access their own skills when dealing with difficult and emotional situations. The teacher is provided with a manual, resource materials, posters and a DVD to implement the programme.

Friends for Life

This programme aims to help children and teenagers cope with feelings of fear, worry, and depression by building resilience and self-esteem and by teaching cognitive and emotional skills. The programme was developed in Australia but has been adapted to local use in Canada, Germany, The Netherlands, U.K., Norway, Portugal and Ireland. The programme is acknowledged by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and research has found that 'up to

80% of children showing signs of an anxiety disorder no longer display that disorder after completing the program. This effect has been confirmed at up to 6 years post treatment' (Friends for Life, 2012).

Incredible Years

The Incredible Years Programme is, 'a classroom-based intervention designed to reduce conduct problems and promote children's pro-social behaviour by strengthening teacher classroom management strategies' (McGilloway et al. 2010, p.5). The programme is based on the principles of behaviour and social learning theory. The Incredible Years Programme was devised in the United States. The following statement is on their official website:

> The Incredible Years, our award-winning parent training, teacher training, and child social skills training approaches have been selected by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention as an 'exemplary' best practice program and as a 'Blueprints' program. The program was selected as a 'Model' program by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP). As such, the series has been subject to numerous randomized control evaluations, evidenced excellent effectiveness, and attained high overall ratings. The program has been recommended by the American Psychological Division 12 Task force as a well-established treatment for children with conduct problems.

Archways, an organisation established to promote and train personnel in The Incredible Years programme, have suggested a whole school approach in the implementation of the programme. In addition, they believe that there should be consistency of approach among teachers, other staff, parents and all professionals involved in the delivery of the programme. The training for teachers and other personnel takes place over six days. The programme is suitable for four to 12-year olds and can be rolled out in a school as a general preventative programme or as an intervention programme. The rationale behind Incredible Years is that disruptive children seek attention, either negative or positive, and the adults dealing with this behaviour need to learn a skill-set to deal with it. The following areas are emphasised during training:

- Positive Communication
- Limit-Setting
- Problem-Solving
- Anger-Management
- Communication with Parents
- Teacher Support Networks (www.archways.ie)

In 2010, research was carried out in a number of schools in the Limerick area which piloted the Incredible Years programme. A summary report prepared for Archways found that the conduct of the children in the intervention programme improved when compared to the children in a control group. Teachers who had received training reported using fewer negative strategies, such as threats and shouting, when dealing with unacceptable behaviour and replacing them with strategies such as modelling good behaviour. The report found the following:

> This led to improvements in the classroom environment, including a reduction in teacher reported stress and negative classroom management strategies, as well as fewer incidences of disruptive behaviour amongst pupils in the classroom. Some improvements were also seen in

teacher reports of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the intervention group children when compared to their control group counterparts including, in particular, a significant reduction in emotional symptoms. Teacher reports also underline the acceptability and benefits of the programme to teachers and possibly other staff within the Irish education system.

(McGilloway et al. 2010, p.5)

Teachers reported a fundamental change in the way they approached classroom management since completing the programme (McGilloway et. al). One teacher stated 'I've kind of stopped commenting on 'don't do that' and the negatives, and more on the positives...I think that's the main improvement' (ibid, p.18). While acknowledging some shortcomings in their research, McGilloway et al. were encouraged by their findings and believe that the use of the Incredible Years programme could have 'important implications for educational policy and practice in Ireland' (ibid, p.5).

Circle Time (Jenny Mosley)

Circle Time is perhaps one of the most often used approaches to deal with social problems and behaviour issues in Irish classrooms. It is a teacher friendly method used regularly by teachers, in particular when teaching SPHE. Devised by Jenny Mosley over 25 years ago she claims that Quality Circle Time 'has proved successful in promoting better relationships and positive behaviour, two of the most effective improvements to both learning and the smooth and harmonious running of a school' (Mosley, 2012). Circle Time meetings for children involve games, activities and listening and speaking practice. The following are the key elements of the programme:

- Improving the morale and self-esteem of staff,
- Listening systems for children and adults,
- The Golden Rules: a system of behavioural rules for children,
- Incentives: a weekly celebration to congratulate the children for keeping the golden rules, and
- Sanctions: the partial withdrawal of the Golden Time incentive.

A Restorative School

Restorative practice in schools developed out of the field of restorative justice and hence was seen as a way of managing behaviour and conflict within the classroom or school. However, this approach is more about building a caring and respectful school community, where the ethos lends itself to having the more difficult conversations in a way that builds that community. Difficult behaviour and disengagement of many of our students leads to a search for programmes, and initiatives to manage these. Restorative Practice provides tools to manage these challenges in ways that lead to more positive engagement and improved relationships. This happens in the context of the whole school working toward improved relationships at all levels. It is in the context of adults modelling relationships that young people learn about empathic, caring relationships. Restorative Practices are a range of proactive and responsive ways of working together in classrooms and across the whole school. When harm happens, the restorative questions / conversations explore the harm, identify who has been affected and ask how the harm can be repaired. This process invites the telling of the story, ownership of harmful behaviour, responsibility towards those harmed and the support to repair that harm. Having high expectations of all students to the best of

their ability, engaging them in a process where each person gets a voice and helping them to understand the process, all lead to a perception of fair process. The conversations involved may be on a one to one basis, small group or classroom circle. In cases of serious harm the conversation will take on a more formal nature, involving students, teachers and parents. Schools report that this approach helps in the following ways:

- Yard issues - *'the issues are not coming into school anymore'*,
- Classroom – *'check-in circles give students a chance to feel others care'*,
- Behaviour issues – *'children walk away happy from an incident when they get a chance to sort it out'*,
- Parents – *'I changed the way I talk to my children and things stay calm'*,
- Teacher – *'this helps keep me calm and I leave school less stressed and I've become a better listener'*,
- Student - *'It has helped me when I have had a fight with a boy in our class. A teacher asked us those questions and after we had answered them and listened to both sides of the story I felt better'*, and
- Principal – *'students are able to understand more about the impact of their behaviour on others. Before this they knew what to say, but they didn't really understand, and couldn't empathize with anyone else's pain. They understand more now.'*

Inherent in implementing Restorative Practices in a school is an emphasis on improving emotional literacy, an enhancement of respectful listening, and an explicit reflective practice taken on and reviewed regularly. The full implementation of Restorative Practice in a school can take a few years as it gradually becomes 'the way we do things here'. This is not a new programme; it is more a philosophy that guides the interactions within the school and the wider community. Information for all staff so that an informed decision can be made is the first step in becoming a restorative school or in improving the restorative nature of the school. Many schools are very restorative in ethos and day-to-day living, and the Restorative Practice approach helps to make that more explicit and reflective.

Roots of Empathy

The Roots of Empathy Programme, founded in 1996 by Canadian, Mary Gordon, has proven to be a very successful programme in the schools where it has been implemented. As a result of government support and generous donations it has flourished across Canada reaching almost half a million children to date. In recent years it has been introduced in the United States, New Zealand, The Isle of Man, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and in all cases on a pilot or phased basis.

Among the goals of the programme are the development in children of empathy and emotional literacy skills, the reduction in levels of bullying, aggression and violence and the preparation of children to be responsible citizens and responsive parents. The values of the organisation include empathy, caring, respect, inclusion, diversity, infant safety and the power of parenting.

At the centre of the programme are the 'tiny teachers' (babies) who with their mothers or fathers, help introduce and develop the skills of empathy in young children. Over a school year, and with the support of a Roots of Empathy Instructor, children observe the interaction of the baby and parent, observing and learning about the needs and social demands of the infant. This model of experiential learning leads to the child becoming familiar with his/her

own emotions and how better to deal with them. It also develops social skills and enhances interaction with others (Gordon, 2009). Research findings on the Roots of Empathy Programme indicate decreases in aggression and increases in pro-social behaviour amongst the children experiencing the programme.

The following are some of the findings of a study done in British Columbia in schools where the Roots of Empathy Programme was implemented:

- Teachers reported a significant decrease in aggressive behaviour by students in Roots of Empathy programs, in contrast to an increase in such behaviour by members of the control group over the same period.
- Children who completed Roots of Empathy were much more likely to report pro-social behaviour in their classroom peers, recognizing acts of kindness such as sharing, helping and understanding.
- Roots of Empathy participants significantly improved in their ability to understand the baby's emotions, independently generating possible causes for the baby's crying (Roots of Empathy).

The following are the words of two students who experienced the programme in Canada and the United States:

> If Roots of Empathy was taught everywhere in the world there would be no war or bullies. Everyone would be able to respect and understand their own feelings and also other people's feelings. Roots of Empathy would be able to change the world making peace and there would be no harm. I think that it could change the world forever (ibid).

> Roots of Empathy can teach the world that it's not okay to hurt someone. Everyone is special and they should be treated kindly. Just because someone is doing something bad doesn't mean you have to do the same thing just to act cool. Someone can be different than you ... Don't judge them. (ibid).

The Roots of Empathy Programme was first introduced into the Republic of Ireland in 2011. The HSE West and Barnardos are supporting the implementation of the programme and planned to bring it to up to 1,000 children in the Dublin and Donegal areas. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the South East Health and Social Care Trust have been responsible for bringing Roots of Empathy to 28 Classroom in Northern Ireland.

Concluding statement

This chapter explored some of the policies and practices which are prevalent in schools to promote and enhance pupil wellbeing. Since the introduction of the Revised Primary School Curriculum in 1999, there has been a greater focus on the general wellbeing of pupils. Curricular policies have been devised in schools to promote the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of pupils. There are very clear procedures in place that schools must follow in relation to child protection. The chapter also detailed some of the wellbeing programmes that are available and that are used by some schools in the Republic and Northern Ireland.

5

Wellbeing in the classroom – Findings of INTO Research

Introduction

In order to obtain the views and opinions of teachers about Wellbeing in the Classroom, the Education Committee of the INTO formulated a series of key questions for focus group discussions. An invitation was issued to a selected number of schools in a number of INTO districts. Administrative principals, teaching principals, teachers in urban and rural settings, those with many years of experience and relatively new teachers, mainstream teachers and special needs teachers were involved in the research. These focus group discussions were held during May 2012 in Donegal, Dublin, Limerick, Sligo and Cork. In addition to the focus group discussions some telephone interviews were also conducted. With the permission of the participants the interviews and focus group discussions were recorded. Transcripts of the interviews were produced and analysed and the findings are presented in themes. These themes include positive dimensions of wellbeing and motivators, stress factors, coping mechanisms and pupil wellbeing. Recommendations in relation to wellbeing based on an analysis of the transcripts are presented in the chapter six.

Positive dimensions of wellbeing and motivators

During the focus group discussion the participants were asked to consider the factors that sustain them in their role as teachers and/or principals and that keep them motivated. An analysis of the transcripts found the area of greatest satisfaction and fulfilment for teachers is seeing their pupil's progress. This progress can be academic, social or emotional. One participant remarked that *'growth in [a child's] self-esteem'* was one factor which sustained him in his job. Another participant maintained how *'impacting on the child positively and feeling they are growing with you in the classroom environment'* can lead to more positive sentiment in the teaching profession.

Engaging pupils in their learning was another positive dimension and motivator for teachers. One participant commented that this is *'a day when the kids are actually interested in what you are doing and participating and seem to be following what is going on ...'* From an analysis of the transcripts, a recurring theme that emerged was for teachers to have the opportunity to teach in the way that was planned with as few interruptions as possible. This theme was also to the fore for principals, particularly for the teaching principal. One teaching principal remarked a positive dimension to the day is 'a day with few interruptions or minor ones that don't interrupt what you have planned to teach next is a good day for me as a teaching principal'. This is also similar to an administrative principal who stated '...*when you get through your list that you have drawn up for the day and you've ticked them all off ...*

it's a satisfying day.' These comments suggest that teachers and principals set their own targets and strive to meet them over the course of the working day and week. Failure to meet these targets can often lead to feelings of guilt and dissatisfaction.

An examination of the transcripts also found that affirmation from colleagues also sustains and motivates teachers in their roles. Many of the participants agreed that affirmation from colleagues, principals and even parents increased feelings of positivity in individuals and staff. The importance of the principal in affirming the work of teachers was also evident. One of the participants remarked, *'we thrive on affirmation from a colleague next door, a parent or even a child, but particularly from the principal'*. Another stated, *'we all like being praised, we don't get a lot. We do need it. Principals should be very affirmative towards their staff'*. Not only do teachers wish to be affirmed in their roles but principals too also expressed their wish to be affirmed. One principal expressed the view, *'a good day is when I get positive feedback from the pupils, staff and parents as well, when everything is going smoothly in the sense that work is going on well and that there is a mix of work and fun'*.

All focus groups and participants commented on the need for good staff relations, from the informal exchanges in the staffroom to the more supportive roles that can be offered by colleagues and principals to sustain and motivate them in their roles. One participant noted:

> ... the ten minutes before school starts most of us go into the staff room and there is usually a bit of banter, coffee and a joke and actually it sets you up for the day…that does give you a feel good factor and you are off on a positive note.

Most teachers spend up to thirty or even forty years plus working in the school environment, be it in the classroom, the area of learning support, resource and/or in the office as principal. The enjoyment of teaching, interaction with the children, fresh ideas, continuing professional development, change, variety and the support and friendship of colleagues were identified as being positive dimensions and motivators. In addition, being professional and valuing oneself and the profession were suggested as ways of keeping motivated. Continuous professional development is one important way of sustaining teachers. One participant stated, *'you have to be willing to renew yourself professionally, you have to keep up to speed with what's happening and constantly be reappraising what you are doing and trying to re-identify[sic] yourself as a professional'*. Another remarked, *'stay professional, stay up with what is currently required educationally from the children's point of view but at the same time you must allow yourself to shift and change and be flexible'*.

In addition to continuous professional development, some of the participants noted that doing special activities such as sports, drama or choir, either in class or as extra-curricular subjects could be very rewarding, and sustained and motivated them. These types of activities allowed the teacher to share their own talents leading to an increase in their self-worth.

> ... to keep going for thirty or more years you would have to be open minded and willing to change.

From an examination of the transcripts the motivator of holidays is more absent than present. It was mentioned at only one focus group and only as a non-motivating factor. Despite the increased pressures on teachers and principals, many still argued that the job was still particularly rewarding. One participant remarked 'it's a great job. I came into

teaching in my mid/late twenties and had other jobs before then. I was never as happy as I am now... It's a rewarding job'.

Stress factors

Kyriacou defines teacher stress as 'the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher' (2001, p.28). During the focus group discussions the participants were asked to identify causes of stress which could impact negatively on their wellbeing in the classroom. There was a great deal of uniformity in the responses from the participants, regardless of their school setting or part of the country they were located. From an analysis of the transcripts it would appear that confrontation, between staff, pupils or parents, was a significant source of stress for principals and teachers alike.

According to the participants it was evident that parents could be a source of stress for teachers and principals. Some of the participants were of the view that there was a lack of understanding amongst some parents in relation to the composition of classrooms. As one contributor commented *'those parents who don't understand that their child is one of many in a class.'* Being approached *'at the front door by an irate parent who has an issue and insists on it being dealt with immediately'* can negatively impact on teachers. Parents did not necessarily have to call to the school to cause teachers to experience negative emotions as one participant opined, *'parents' attitudes can contribute to a bad day, even a note sent in by a parent can have a bad effect on morale.'* Young and newly qualified teachers felt that they were not getting enough support in situations where parents were aggressive and unreasonable. Not only did confrontation with parents cause teachers stress but also confrontation and tension with other staff members. It was clear from the transcripts that confrontation which was left unresolved could lead to upset amongst teachers and principals.

Disruptive pupils and school discipline were also mentioned as sources of stress for teachers. While it was accepted that discipline issues arose in schools, the perceived lack of disciplinary measures and support was raised by some of the participants as being stressful for teachers. Inconsistency in the implementation of the school policy on the code of behaviour was also a source of frustration for one of the participants. One participant claimed, *'some members of staff are not singing off the same hymn sheet with regard to the school rules and I always feel like the baddy'.*

Catering for the needs of a more diverse range of pupils was referred to by a number of the participants as an issue which impacts negatively on their wellbeing. This stemmed from the efforts of teachers to meet the pupils' needs with diminishing resources. Trying to be all things to everybody was a source of stress. As one participant remarked, *'the demands of the job and the different aspects you have to be ... teacher, counsellor, psychologist etc ... be all those and wear all those hats and we don't feel qualified'.*

As already noted, having constant interruptions and not having the day go as planned nor progressing through their plans in how they would like could also cause teachers stress. This could impact on teachers' personal lives. As one participant remarked, *'you carry some guilt home, when you didn't get something done and then you bring school home with you.'*

A lack of resources for pupils with special needs was cited by principals as a major source of stress. One administrative principal remarked:

> It is such a battle getting resources for these children, you have to fight for everything that should be an automatic entitlement ... you expect other professionals to take your opinion on board but that doesn't happen. Someone else's opinion, who observes the child for maybe an hour, is given more weighting and credence than your opinion...and you know these children, you know their needs, you are dealing with them day in day out, all year...The hours spent on paperwork, phone calls etc. end up being futile.

Therefore, it could be argued that the current climate of reduced financial resources where principals are struggling to make ends meet, leads to increased levels of stress.

Constant change and uncertainty in the current climate was mentioned by one of the participants as being very stressful. An increase in workload was also cited as a source of stress by many of the participants. Teachers stated that the requirements for paperwork from the DES and school management on top of an already overloaded curriculum caused difficulties for principals and teachers. A lack of clarity around expectations from DES inspectors was also cited as a common source of stress particularly amongst NQTs. One participant opined that,

> They (the DES) have taken the certainty out of the job, you are constantly getting advice about what you should be doing ... and if having done all the preparation and all the in-service and you prepare your work you still feel you are not certain that's what they're looking for.'

An NQT described the uncertainty and lack of clarity as 'mind-boggling':

> You go into a staff room and there are different stories, different methods…you need this plan, that plan … you don't know where to start ... you can't teach effectively until you have all this paperwork ... if there was less paper work teachers would be much better in the classroom.

Another NQT who had attended an induction workshop programme bemoaned the lack of clarity and clear guidelines given at the module on planning.

Isolation in the job can also be a cause of stress for some teachers. One participant remarked, *'sometimes I think the problem is that you spend so much of your time isolated at school, the only adult with 30 kids, you get ten minutes at a time to talk to a few other people'.* One teaching principal described her job as *'the loneliest job in the world.'* She feels that, despite lip-service from the DES about the role of the in-school management team and the BoM, the principal is ultimately the one who is responsible. She maintains, *'the buck stops with you … it starts with you and it ends with you and you are responsible for everything in-between.'* She described constantly feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work she has to do and in particular the paperwork requirements from the DES and also in relation to school planning, classroom planning and preparation.

Some external factors can also be a source of stress for teachers. Some participants complained that the negative portrayal of the profession in some sections of the media has impacted on them. This media portrayal is increasingly reflected in parents' attitudes towards them. The perception that schools can 'cure society's ills' is another cause of stress. The implementation of external programmes can only serve to create more work for teachers

in an already over-loaded curriculum. One teacher described a bad day as '*a day when you do more parenting than teaching.*' These indicators are also similar to those found in the Teacher Unions Stress Survey conducted in 1991 (Moroney, 2007, p.293-4). The sources of stress arising from the focus group interviews are broadly in line with the sources cited by Travers and Cooper (1996), Benmansour (1998) and Pithers and Soden (1998) in Kyriacou (2001). They indicate the main sources are:

- Teaching pupils who lack motivation,
- Maintaining discipline,
- Time pressures and workload,
- Coping with change,
- Being evaluated by others,
- Dealings with colleagues,
- Self-esteem and status,
- Administration and management,
- Role conflict and ambiguity,
- Poor working conditions.

(Kyriacou, 2001, p.29).

Marks et al. (2005) argue that stress is the primary cause of psychological distress and physical illnesses, resulting in millions of lost working days worldwide every year. However, some teachers are more adept with dealing with stress, and the coping mechanisms deployed by these teachers are outlined in the next section.

Coping mechanisms

Ogden (2000) contends a number of factors mediate the stress/health relationship, including coping styles and social support. To minimise and deal with stress, individuals, including teachers, often utilise their own coping mechanisms. Kyriacou contends 'individual coping strategies fall into two main types: direct action techniques and palliative techniques' (Kyriacou, 2001, p.30). Direct action techniques are where teachers adapt and may acquire new knowledge, skills or work practices. (ibid, p.30). According to Kyriacou, palliative techniques 'do not deal with the source of stress itself, but are aimed at lessening the feeling of stress that occurs' (ibid, p.30). An analysis of the focus groups and interviews, found a number of coping mechanisms were used by teachers and principals nationwide to minimise and deal with stress. Indirect references were made to both direct and palliative techniques.

Firstly, teachers felt that communication in a supportive environment was essential. Cropley and Steptoe (2005) suggest that social support presents itself in two forms – received support (or actual support) and perceived support (or support that is potentially available). *'Offloading', 'venting' and 'talking things out'* with a partner at home, a colleague at work or indeed a group within the staffroom allowed teachers to de-stress and stay calm. Kyriacou contends 'simply sharing problems or engaging in some social activity with colleagues during break periods can effectively help dissipate the feelings of stress (2001, p.31). For some teachers, they needed the reassurance or advice of a second opinion. 'Collegiality' was deemed to be an important factor. Teachers enjoy shutting the staffroom door and being afforded the luxury of discussing their classroom/professional issues with their colleagues. Young/new teachers found this particularly helpful and often seek the advice and reassurance of more experienced teachers. One teacher, who had spent years in other professions before teaching, suggested that in comparison to other careers, teachers are extremely supportive to one another - giving advice or offering to 'take' a difficult child for a few minutes.

Some teachers felt they were more privileged if they had a partner at home with whom they could talk to or if they were a parent. For those with partners, they expressed concern for teachers who were single and did not have someone to 'bounce' their stress off. As parents, some teachers acknowledged that they were privileged with more time off (due to paternity/maternity leave etc.) and that such time away from the classroom was important to reduce possible stress levels.

Humour was also frequently mentioned as a positive coping tool, *'a laugh can brighten a dark day'*. Being able to laugh things off or to compare 'war stories' reassured teachers and allowed them an opportunity to vent their feelings. One participant remarked, *'humour - it's the best de-stressor, you have to come out and see the funny side of things. In the staffroom we have a good laugh and great craic and forget about things'*. For some, conversation with adults during lunch time was very appealing. For others, a cup of tea and ten minutes to sit down is enough to help them relax and cope with their day.

Interestingly, a supportive principal for teachers or a supportive staff for principals was valued by all teachers. In terms of small schools versus big schools, some felt that it was easier to talk things out among a big staff than in a school of two teachers where one teacher must always be on yard supervision. However, it was also pointed out that a positive atmosphere with one teacher is more preferable than a negative one with a staff of twenty. Socialising was deemed to be an important coping mechanism throughout the interviews, with many teachers highlighting the benefits of staff nights out or events.

Having a life outside of school was mentioned by most teachers as a way to de-stress, cope and perhaps avoid stress. Exercise, socialising, music, hobbies were mentioned as distractors and opportunities to leave school at school after 3 o'clock. It was noted that teachers spend all day looking after others. Therefore, it is essential for their own wellbeing that they spend time looking after themselves also. As one participant put it, *'often we go on and talk about the wellbeing of children which is vitally important and is our primary role but if you do not look after teacher wellbeing how can you expect those individuals to look after a child's wellbeing?'* Some teachers teaching in rural areas stated that they enjoyed the long, peaceful drive to and from work, which allowed them to wind down from a stressful day before they arrived home. Others achieve this by taking a long walk when they go home *'to clear the head'*.

Stress was described in these interviews as being 'personal'. Certain amounts of stress were internalised and some people were not aware of their own stress. The relationship between stress and ill health, and how one impacts on the other, has been explored in a number of recent studies (Cropley and Steptoe, 2005; Cohen, Tyrrell and Smith, 1991; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend, 1974). It is not surprising that teachers often become ill at the start of school holidays, when their body and mind begin to wind down.

Pride can get in the way sometimes in relation to stress. Some teachers do not like to admit that they are stressed or that they are not coping. But an administrative principal pointed out that teachers are only human. Teachers must realise that if stress catches up with them, they are entitled to seek help. Other colleagues should be aware of this. In terms of resilience, some teachers cope better with stress than others. This may be due to them having better support available to them, both at home and in school.

Other coping mechanisms that were mentioned included positive affirmation from the Department, from principals and from parents (or in the case of principals, from the Department, staff and parents). Teachers liked to feel valued, and seek reassurance that they are doing the best they can. Clearer guidelines from the DES were requested throughout the interviews and the ambiguity of what was expected from teachers was seen by many as a stressor. Networking was deemed an important outlet for principals in reaffirming their belief in themselves and in their decision making. Teachers like to be able to use their talents within the school and to be encouraged by their staff to do so. Such practice encourages these teachers' self- belief and feeling of self-worth.

Pupil wellbeing

An analysis of the transcripts found that teachers have a strong sense of responsibility towards their pupils. Teachers not only look after pupils' learning but they also try to ensure that their wellbeing is enhanced. Many teachers view this as part and parcel of their day. One participant remarked, *'if you didn't care for their [pupils] wellbeing, you wouldn't be a teacher'*. Teachers tried to ensure that pupils are included in activities and often paired them off with 'buddies' so that they were not isolated and alone in activities either in the classroom or on the yard. Teacher stress may arise from this care and concern since teachers often see themselves as being limited in what they can do to sort out matters between children or to influence children's home situations.

Encouragement was seen as a very important part of a teacher's job when dealing with children. Teachers can bring out hidden talents in their pupils through drama, creative writing and dance, for example. These activities are great for building self-esteem particularly in shy children. Encouraging words and affirmation can mean a lot to these children and their parents. In addition, teachers can give children a chance to shine. They must seek opportunities for all to experience success. This can be facilitated by being flexible in terms of the sports/activities that are organised for the children. School rules need to be relaxed to accommodate the child who cannot or will not participate in the 'accepted' sporting activities. One principal highlighted the importance of the principal meeting and greeting pupils on the way in each morning and knowing them by name. A teaching principal who was interviewed, found the need to highlight the importance of parents supporting and being interested in their child's development and learning.

There is a need for the support services to be more actively involved in supporting pupil wellbeing. It was reported that teachers who had contact with the Childhood and Adolescent Mental Health Service often found difficulty in ensuring that pupils received adequate support. There was a perceived lack of support there for the teachers who may need advice and back up but who have no qualification in mental health. These teachers have to draw on their inner empathy and understanding. Teachers feel that they need advice and support from external agencies to support and enhance pupil wellbeing. As one participant commented, *'you are just expected to get on with it and do it yourself'*.

The focus group interviews identified a need for teachers to listen actively to what they as teachers are saying and how they are speaking to children in order to avoid negativity. They need to be aware if they are being over-strict, unfair and/or inconsistent in their dealings with children, maybe treating pupils differently or holding a grudge against certain children/families. Children pick up on this and it can damage the atmosphere in the school.

Teachers should be constructively critical and affirm children as often as possible. Teachers must also be role models for the children, demonstrating how best to interact with each other. They must teach children to problem solve and to resolve differences in a positive manner. Pupils will learn that they can resolve disputes with a minimum amount of mediation by the class teacher.

The focus group interviews recommended the introduction and implementation of programmes to support pupil wellbeing on a national level. At the moment many of the programmes are being piloted in schools or are only implemented for a period of time. There needs to be more funding made available to enable all schools and teachers to implement these programmes on an annual basis. One participant remarked that *'the Incredible Years Programme was seen to be very effective in validating pupils through its compliment circle. When the programme is presented as a whole school approach it brings about a change of mind set and is positive and affirming'*.

Concluding statement

This chapter presented the findings from the focus group discussions and interviews which were conducted by members of the Education Committee. It is evident that what sustains and motivates teachers in their roles is seeing the progress that their pupils make. Furthermore, the affirmation of their work by others and in particular the principal continues to motivate them. Principals, also need affirmation from those around them. Having good staff relations along with humour in the staff room sustains teachers over a longer time period. Continuous professional development was seen as important in allowing teachers to rejuvenate, to grow and to adapt in their roles.

Confrontation between pupils, parents and staff was seen by many as a major cause of stress for teachers. Along with trying to cater for an increasingly diverse range of needs, workload and pupils who are disruptive are other stress factors mentioned by teachers. Lack of clarity of the requirements was a cause of anxiety, particularly amongst NQTs. In addition, isolation was cited by some of the participants as another stress factor.

Whilst there may be stresses and strains in the teaching profession the participants have identified strategies to cope with them. These include engaging in dialogue with others, having a supportive staff and principal, positive affirmation, making time for hobbies and activities outside school, and having support in their personal lives.

There were a number of suggestions made by teachers and principals to support and enhance the wellbeing of pupils in the classroom. The suggestions included positive encouragement and actively listening to pupils. In addition, it was felt that the introduction and implementation of programmes such as *Incredible Years* and *Roots of Empathy* would be beneficial in enhancing pupil wellbeing in the classroom.

6

Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This discussion document '*Wellbeing in the Classroom'* has explored both teacher and pupil wellbeing. The different types of wellbeing (physical, emotional, spiritual or occupational) can be hard to define. Research which has been undertaken to measure subjective wellbeing has found that Ireland as a nation still ranks quite high in life satisfaction surveys and indices.

The initiation of change which positively impacts on the wellbeing of children has been a slow and arduous process since the foundation of the state. Since the ratification of the UNCRC in 1990, the pace of change for children's rights has accelerated. Many pieces of legislation which pertain specifically to children have been enacted. Curricular changes have also seen an increased focus on children's wellbeing. Since the introduction of Curaclam na Bunscoile in 1971 and the Revised Primary School Curriculum in 1999, there has been a stronger emphasis on pupil wellbeing in the classroom. Subjects, policies, programmes and practices are being implemented to ensure the promotion and enhancement of pupil wellbeing. In addition, many schools now implement wellbeing programmes such as *Incredible Years* and the *Roots of Empathy*.

The relationship between adults and children has also changed in the last ninety years. Actively listening to children and giving credence to their voices is much more of a feature than it was heretofore. While significant progress has been made there is still much more that could be done to ensure that the voice of the child continues to be heard.

Teacher wellbeing is influenced by teacher stress and job satisfaction. The Education Committee focus group and individual interviews found that teachers have a tendency to feel guilty. This guilt stems from a perception of not being able to meet the diverse range of demands placed upon them in the 21st century classroom.

A number of recommendations were made by the focus groups in relation to the promotion and enhancement of both pupil and teacher wellbeing in the classroom.

Recommendations for pupil wellbeing:

- Listen actively to pupils. Teachers can pick up quite a lot from what their pupils are saying.

- Encourage pupils as much as possible to help build their self-esteem. Teachers should be critical in a positive way and affirm their pupils as often as possible. In addition, it is also important to reward positive pupil behaviour.

- Teach pupils to problem solve and resolve differences in a positive manner.

- Introduce items such as breathing exercises and meditation to relax and calm pupils.

- Schools should be provided with adequate resources and funding to implement the Revised Primary School Curriculum 1999. This is particularly pertinent for the implementation of the P.E. curriculum. The physical wellbeing of pupils should not be weather dependent.

- All pupils should have an opportunity at some stage during their primary school years to become involved in programmes that support their wellbeing. At present not all schools or pupils are aware of or have access to programmes specifically geared towards the emotional wellbeing of pupils, and which support the SPHE curriculum.

- There needs to be a multi-disciplinary and inter-agency approach to dealing with pupils who present with difficulties e.g. social or emotional difficulties. It should not be left to the school and indeed teachers to solve all problems.

Recommendations for teacher wellbeing:

- Teachers need to undertake continuous professional development in order to keep abreast of the latest developments in education and the increasing demands of the 21st century classroom. Continuous professional development (CPD) also provides teachers with an opportunity to renew themselves professionally. CPD can sustain teachers in their roles. Schools need to promote and support CPD among their staff.

- Change is a constant factor in our lives and indeed schools. Teachers need to be open to change and adapt to this change accordingly. However, teachers should be supported in adapting to change at their own pace and not have unsuitable change imposed. More training and professional development needs to be provided in areas such as behaviour management, conflict resolution, restorative justice and bullying.

- Schools should be supported in developing a culture of openness and collegiality. This would diminish teacher isolation and provide for open discussion/dialogue and support. There is also an identified need for staffs and colleagues to affirm one another in the roles they undertake. Principals also need positive affirmation. Schools should adopt and implement the INTO Working Together document in this regard.

- Parents are our partners in education. Schools need to have policies in place to support and encourage parental involvement and for dealing with challenging situations involving parents.

- Teachers need to recognise their limitations. Teachers feel a sense of guilt through the perception of not being able to meet all the needs of pupils during the day. However, it would be of benefit to teachers and indeed teaching principals if there were fewer interruptions to the teaching day.

- In addition to the workshop programmes as part of the National Induction Programmes for NQTs, NQTs also require support at school level. The provision of a mentor or other supports in this regard would be beneficial. Capacity in the system to promote mentoring support as part of a holistic induction programme should be enhanced over the next five years.

- Teachers should make time for themselves outside of school and try to avoid bringing the job home with them.

- Providing opportunities for staff to come together in a non-work setting or environment should be encouraged.

- All courses, including summer courses, should have a personal well-being dimension to them.

- INTO, at a local level should consider establishing support groups within branches and districts. In addition, these could be in the format of online discussion boards.

- During challenging or difficult times teachers should seek advice and support from others, for example, the principal, a colleague or friend or from external supports such as the Employee Assistance Service. The Irish National Teacher's Organisation also provides support to teachers facing challenging circumstances.

- Maintaining a sense of humour and making time for oneself, greatly enhances ones wellbeing.

Concluding statement

Undoubtedly, there has been a seismic shift in the rights of children in Ireland in the last twenty years. This change, coupled with curricular and societal changes, has created a new dynamic in the classroom for both pupils and teachers. Teachers are now aware of the need to give expression to the rights of children, to react and respond appropriately to the needs of their pupils, to set clear and fair boundaries and to develop empathy. Children for their part must respect the responsibilities and boundaries of the classroom environment. While this document has looked at aspects of teacher and pupil wellbeing separately, it is undeniable that the wellbeing of teacher and pupil is inextricably linked. The interdependent nature of the relationship means that improving the classroom experience for one has a positive impact on the other. The challenge for all is in acknowledging and achieving that balance.

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APPENDIX I

The S.A.L.T. Programme
(Stop, Ask, Listen, Talk)
Creative Solutions to Conflict for Primary Schools

We have been using the SALT programme in our school since it was first published in 2008. Before publication the programme was taught in our school on a pilot basis.

The SALT programme is an excellent resource and fits in perfectly with the SPHE curriculum. In our school we teach the programme in discrete lessons to the children in senior infants, first and second classes every October. In the senior classes (3rd-6th) the main messages and skills of the programme are revised and discussed in SPHE lessons in October each year.

The SALT programme teaches children that conflict is a natural occurrence in life and that dealing with conflict does not necessarily have to be a negative experience. The programme calls on teachers and children to look at conflict as a learning opportunity. The simple four steps of Stop, Ask, Listen, Talk are reinforced throughout the lessons. The SALT programme encourages children to negotiate their way through conflict. Negotiation skills come very naturally to some children; others need more help and the stories and role play opportunities really help to teach children how to successfully negotiate their way through a conflict. The programme aims to teach the children to view conflict as a mutual problem to be solved, rather than viewing conflict as one person against another. The SALT programme is hugely interactive and collaborative. The children enjoy the lessons as the lessons are good fun.

There is a number of key conflict resolution techniques taught through this programme. Children are encouraged to use 'I' statements rather than the accusatory language that can prevail in conflict situations. They are taught various strategies to control their anger and the importance of calming down before trying to sort something out. The programme also promotes a high level of self-awareness, children are encouraged to ask themselves the question 'Can I deal with this or do I need help?' The pack comes with a Teachers' Manual, a Resource book and posters to support the lessons. It is well laid out and very 'user friendly'.

Although we don't formally teach the SALT programme in the senior classes in the school the teachers reinforce the main messages and you will frequently hear teachers or children advise someone to 'try SALT' and that is a message that is clearly understood by everyone in our school. The SALT programme really encourages children to be independent and to work things out for themselves if they can. It promotes the use of negotiation which should form the basis of conflict resolution strategies used in a school. If children learn to negotiate

successfully there is less need for teachers to have to mediate or arbitrate in a dispute. SALT is not used in isolation or as the only form of conflict resolution in the school. There are times when mediation is necessary. We found that the SALT programme led us very naturally towards Peer Mediation as the children's conflict resolution skills improved.

We find the SALT programme to be very successful and have incorporated it into our SPHE curriculum plan. The SALT programme has helped to create a positive school climate and encourages the children to communicate calmly with each other in times of conflict.

Appendix II

Incredible Years Programme

I am a teaching principal of a small urban school, the kind that does not fit into any neat profile. We are not small rural disadvantaged, not large urban DEIS. We are located in a fairly big housing estate on the edge of town. Few of our parents are from professional backgrounds, family breakdown and social problems are rife and at times our community can seem frustratingly disaffected from the education process.

We are at present a four teacher school with three SNAs and enough resource teaching and learning support hours to maintain two full-time and one shared SEN teacher. When I first joined what was then a new school as a fresh-faced NQT in 1986, the community could be described as professional upper middle class. I taught classes of up to 45 pupils and remember well the sense of delight when my class size dropped to a mere 39! But in more recent years with class sizes in the 20's, I have often looked back and thought that classrooms were easier places back then. Pupils sat quieter, teachers gave orders which the general body followed; everybody did more or less the same thing all day. The teacher was king or queen in his/her own classroom with no support but on the other hand no disruptions. The sheer size of your personality carried each day.

These days, we have quite a few pupils with diagnosed Emotional Behavioural Disabilities (EBD) and a good few others with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Our classrooms are busy with a flow of traffic in and out and a variety of things going on at the same time that would make your head spin at times. And on a difficult day a disruptive pupil can bring the whole lot crashing down.

I was first introduced to the Incredible Years programme by our local NEPS psychologist and School Completion project workers, but I have to confess that I was sceptical that any programme could make much difference. We were already operating a power and penalty points system with treats, homework passes and Golden Time as rewards. Red/yellow cards were administered by the principal when things needed a firmer hand. I was no stranger to detentions and even suspension when the need arose.

However, my two youngest teachers decided to give the course a go and from the very first morning after the night before I was impressed by their level of enthusiasm and the wave of ideas that they were bringing back to the staffroom. Each week they had 'homework', a strategy that they had to try out with their class for the week, a new skill to practise. They were all seemingly small things but they were delighted with the resulting behavioural change they were witnessing in their classrooms.

When I got a call from my local Education Centre asking me to train as a trainer for Incredible Years Programme, I jumped at the chance to see first-hand what all the fuss was about. At the back of my head, I really thought it would take a seismic shift to teach this old dog new tricks! When I tell you that the tutor had me literally eating out of his hand after the first day (sticker rewards and tiny chocolate treats surely couldn't have such a profound effect on a rather cynical grown adult!), you will feel as incredulous as I did.

There are so many aspects of the course but the thing that resonated most with me early on was the notion that not all children understand what they are being praised for or indeed being punished for. Seems so obvious now but after one day of thanking and praising individuals for sitting nicely in their chairs or looking up when I spoke and doling out stickers galore, I immediately saw a change in the dynamics of the class. And it wasn't just 'well done Anthony for looking at me', I got in the habit of describing in more detail: 'look at Anthony, he's really paying attention to me. I know he is listening because his eyes are looking at me, his hands and feet are still and his mouth is closed'. Tiny miracles started to occur around the room, even with pupils who were not normally inclined to divine inspiration! I gave out a drawer-full of stickers in the space of a few days but was repaid handsomely when I asked the children if they noticed any difference. 'Your voice is different, Miss!' was the immediate response from an observant 8 year old. He was right. I had stopped using my giving out tone and had become softer. But I wasn't being walked on; the children had begun to anticipate my praise and were actively seeking it.

Next was the skill of trying to change one small thing at a time, particularly with a difficult pupil. Rewarding a child with severe ADHD every time he sat on his chair was far more effective than constantly drawing negative attention when he didn't. Learning each new skill with Incredible Years training was helped along greatly by the vignettes, little video clips, from real-life classrooms with pupils just as tricky as mine. Critiquing how they handled a situation was a great learning platform. It struck me that once we qualify and are let loose in our own classrooms, we rarely if ever, get a chance to see how someone else manages a class. Little tricks and skills could be disseminated so easily if we did.

There's a lot more to the programme. You could go big into circle time and the use of puppets, learn how to manage timeout effectively and learn how to visually control noise levels. We have introduced many of the principles of the Incredible Years Programme throughout the whole school. We called it the CARA club, which stands for Caring and Respectful Attitude but obviously had a double meaning with the Irish for 'friend'. We put a stamp book and rewards system in place for every child. We held an assembly each Monday morning to introduce the theme for the week and dish out the rewards for the week before. For the first week every adult in the school tried to catch pupils simply walking nicely. Thanks to the lesson plan for assembly every child knew what 'walking nicely' meant. The following week we introduced 'sitting nicely' followed in subsequent weeks with 'using the quiet hand', 'saying please and thank-you', 'being kind' etc. A new notice board adorns our entrance hall and pupils who received enough stamps were mentioned with pride on the Principal's Prize list. Posters were put up reminding the pupils of the new theme each week. And most importantly of all, *all* the adults and children in the school knew what was expected. The mystery theme was a great week where the adults knew what the pupils were being rewarded for but the pupils had to work it out!

The whole experience did make me think back to my own time in training college and wonder why we were never taught these skills. But that was a different age and kids and teachers were different then. I always believed in a positive approach to behaviour management but the Incredible Years Programme taught me the skills to make it a way of life in the classroom. As well as a calmer more orderly school, I do believe the children are less cranky, are nicer to each other as well and without doubt happier at school. When we meet for assembly each morning now, I simply raise my hand say 'show me five' and within a second the whole school falls quiet - even the new junior infants! There's no doubting that it takes quite a bit of energy to be upbeat and positive all the time and admittedly, the old-fashioned roar doesn't disappear overnight! But the obvious benefit is a more positive learning environment for the children and a more positive working environment for the teacher.

Appendix III

List of Useful Resources

Archways- http://www.archways.ie/

Carecall- http://www.carecallwellbeing.ie/

Circle Time- http://www.circle-time.co.uk/

Friends for Life- http://www.nbss.ie

Health and Safety Authority- www.hsa.ie

Incredible Years- http://www.incredibleyears.com/

Irish National Teacher's Organisation- www.into.ie

Irish Learning Support Association- www.ilsa.ie

 Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education- http://irishassociationofteachersinspecialeducation.com/

Irish Primary Principals' Network- www.ippn.ie

Medmark- http://www.medmark4teachers.ie/

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment- www.ncca.ie

National Education Welfare Board- www.tusla.ie

Primary Schools Sports Initiative - http://pssi.pdst.ie/clickme.html

Professional Development Services for Teachers- www.pdst.ie

Restorative Justice- http://www.restorativejustice.org/

Roots of Empathy- http://www.rootsofempathy.org

S.A.L.T. Programme- http://www.fipi.ie/

SESS-Special Education Support Service- www.sess.ie

Social, Personal and Health Education- www.sphe.ie

Zippy's Friends- http://www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/teachers/zippy-s-friends-teachers.html

Part 2

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Proceedings of the Consultative Conference on Education

November 2012

Athlone

7

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Presentations

Dympna Mulkerrins, Cathaoirleach, Education Committee

On behalf of the Education Committee, I would like to welcome you all, particularly those delegates attending for the first time, to the 2012 Consultative Conference on Education here in Galway.

Very briefly I will outline the role and function of the EDC - referring to some of the research carried out by the Committee since the millennium. According to the INTO Rules and Constitution, the Education Committee advises the CEC on such educational matters as are remitted to it by the CEC; the committee also addresses educational matters as it deems necessary and relevant at particular times. The Education Committee always strives to inform and direct INTO education policy.

In that regard the EDC seeks:

- to anticipate developments in education and to be relevant and responsive to the needs of primary teachers;
- to engage in research that will impact on teaching and learning; and
- to meet with other agencies involved in educational policy and research in order to put forward the case of the primary teacher at every opportunity.

The Committee has a three year term of office, and consists of 16 members, one representative from each of the 16 INTO electoral districts. An annual report is submitted for Congress, following its approval by the CEC.

The Committee is currently working with the over-arching theme of 'Teaching in the 21st Century'. This broad framework allows us to focus with greater intensity on the issues that affect the teacher in an ever-changing environment.

Since the millennium we have addressed many topics relevant to teachers in the 21st Century, for example, ICT (2000), Managing Change (2001), Religion (2002), Language (2003), Whole School Evaluation (2004), Early Years Learning (2005), Teacher Education (2006), Teaching Methodologies (2007), Transitions (2008), Assessment (2008), Arts and Creativity (2009), Learning Communities (2010), and Literacy (2011).

The Education Committee continue to research many other topics – not just those that are presented at Conference – and among those we are currently considering are Numeracy, Early Childhood Education and School Self-Evaluation. We also continue to consult with members on what topics they would like to see presented at an Education Conference and it is in response to delegates attending previous Education Conferences who prioritised Wellbeing as a topic that we are considering this issue this year.

The theme of Wellbeing in the Classroom was obviously seen by teachers as an important one that merited attention and we are now delighted to be able to present an opportunity for you, as teacher delegates, to identify and reflect on strategies that might promote and enhance both teacher and pupil wellbeing.

In preparation for this Conference, members of the Education Committee have worked hard over the last 18 months reading, researching, drafting and editing, in addition to holding focus groups and interviews, towards producing the comprehensive discussion document you all received last week. It is hoped that the document will assist you in your reflections and deliberations today and tomorrow.

While strategies to promote teacher and pupil wellbeing can be developed and implemented separately, as the President has noted, every teacher here would agree that they are two sides of the one coin. The interdependent nature of the pupil/teacher relationship means that the wellbeing of one influences the wellbeing of the other. The challenge for us all is acknowledging and achieving that balance.

Bainigí taitneamh agus tairbhe as an gComhdháil. Go raibh maith agaibh.

Pat Collins, Education Committee, District 4

My brief is to deal with the wellbeing of pupils and teachers. The University of Washington has identified eight different areas of wellbeing. The first of those is our physical wellbeing - which speaks for itself - how we are in our own bodies and what our state of health is. The second one refers to our emotional wellbeing, how well we deal with emotions, how well we deal with situations and crises which arise. The third one is environmental wellbeing which refers to our ability to deal with our environment and be conscious of how our environments impact on us. The fourth area is financial wellbeing because, given what has happened to teachers and to the whole economy in the last couple of years, we have to be aware of balancing the books. Intellectual wellbeing is also an issue, as is our ability to challenge ourselves and to think critically. Emotional wellbeing is our ability to deal with situations on that level, and spiritual wellbeing is not synonymous with religion but it does have an element of religion in it, it is closer to our spirituality and our ability to find meaning and purpose in life and our place in the universe. The next one is our social wellbeing - our ability to have a social network and to identify key relationships. Surprisingly we are ranked seventh out of 27 in a recent EU poll[3] in terms of life satisfaction with 77% of people reporting that they were having more positive experiences in the average day than negative ones[4.] One of the people who has been keeping an eye on this is Maureen Gaffney, and one of her comments in a recent book was that the greatest benefit of optimism is that it counteracts the corrosive effects of pessimism.

In relation to child wellbeing, there has been a raft of legislation in recent years. Throughout the 1990s and the early years of the new millennium, there were various pieces of new legislation enacted which enhanced the rights of the child particularly since the passing of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. I suppose the four most significant things that have happened in recent years are – the National Children's Strategy (2000), the setting

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[3] 2010 Gallup World Poll
[4] 2011 OECD Better Life Index.

up of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children (2004), the appointment of the first ever cabinet-level Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Frances Fitzgerald, March 2011) and the recent referendum which inserted Article 42A into the constitution (November 2012) which recognises children as full citizens of the country.

If we look at the curricular areas, the two areas in particular that stand out are the 1999 Curriculum with the introduction of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and the number of programmes which enhance the delivery of the SPHE programme.

In addition there are a number of ancillary programmes that have supplemented SPHE, some of them you will get to experience during the course of this conference. Some of them are indigenous programmes and some have come from Australia, Canada, England and America.

Teacher wellbeing
Looking into the past, for a long time teachers were paid by results and this put huge pressure on teachers as the bread on the table was dependent on the results attained in their classrooms. The teacher's authority was rarely questioned and there was a sense of fear in the classroom. If you remember, up to 1982 corporal punishment was used extensively - and it wasn't always used for misbehaviour, it was sometimes used for academic behaviour. The inspectors did not have a benign approach to teaching or to teachers and very often acerbic comments were made by inspectors following their visits to schools. Sometimes comments were left in ledgers and documents to be seen by others and of course there was a huge emphasis on academic achievement since the primary cert (which finished in 1977) was like the Leaving Cert., in that it was probably the last exam that most children would sit and it was extremely important that children did well in the Primary Cert.

The teacher's position was unquestionable and there was sometimes a conspiracy of silence and cover-up. Corporal punishment was the norm and children were at the bottom of the food chain. Abuse was common, verbal, physical, emotional, psychological and sexual. And there is probably nobody in this room that hasn't at some stage witnessed some of those situations and it is impossible for us not to be affected by what we saw and what happened.

There were also exceptional teachers. There were teachers we knew and respected and to those teachers we owe a debt of gratitude, maybe because of their kindness or empathy, their ability to communicate or *educere* which is what education is all about, their great artistic talent or their ability to think outside the box. I'm thinking of the type of teachers that I have had myself and like the one in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, 'and still they gazed and still the wonder, grew that one small head could carry all he knew'.

I got this quote recently from a collection of stories from a school that was celebrating its centenary and the title of the book was aptly 'Meeting the Scholars Coming Home' –

> I never subscribed to the theory that your school years were the best years of your life but despite the harsh regime we did have fun at school and learned a little along the way.

What about teacher wellbeing? Previously there was very little interest in teacher wellbeing, you were just expected to get on with the job. But with all the changes in primary education,

with the change in roles and responsibility of teachers, a sense of greater accountability, and the changes in society where there always seems to be a programme that can be implemented in primary schools to solve the ails of society, there are greater expectations placed on children. A media that are intensively critical and more intrusive, the comparisons that are made at national and international level and of course the introduction of technology, these all have had an effect on teachers and teaching.

What about supports for teachers? For quite a number of years there has been an Employee Assistance Scheme in operation. At the moment it is operated by CareCall and at a medical level Medmark is also available. We had the setting up of the Separated Teachers Support Group, the Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Teachers Group (LGBT), and the recognition of the existence of adult bullying. Adult bullying doesn't just involve teachers and principals, it involves boards of management, parents, inspectors and some outside authorities. And perhaps in terms of support for teachers, the most unsung group within the INTO are the Benefits Funds Committee, who do great work for people who have suffered from medical or financial problems or who have found themselves on hard times.

On the positive side, according to European research, in Ireland, teachers have the second highest level of support among parents. Teachers are seen to have an above average commitment to the workplace and above average feelings of trust and fairness. There are of course high levels of job security or there were in the past, and teachers show a high level of educational vision.

In conclusion, the best part of teaching is that it matters. The hardest part of teaching is that every moment matters every day.

Karen Devine, Education Committee, District 5

In order to obtain the views and opinions of teachers about 'Wellbeing in the Classroom', the Education Committee of the INTO formulated a series of key questions for focus group discussions. An invitation was issued to a selected number of schools in a number of INTO districts. Administrative principals, teaching principals, teachers in urban and rural settings, those with many years of experience and relatively new teachers, mainstream teachers and special needs teachers were all involved in the research. These focus group discussions were held during May 2012 in Donegal, Dublin, Limerick, Sligo and Cork. In addition to the focus group discussions, some telephone interviews were also conducted. With the permission of the participants, the interviews and focus group discussions were recorded. Transcripts of the interviews were produced and analysed and the findings were presented in themes. These themes include Positive Dimensions of Wellbeing and Motivators, Stress Factors, Coping Mechanisms and Pupil Wellbeing.

During the focus group discussion the participants were asked to consider the factors which sustain them and keep them motivated in their role as teacher and/or principal. An analysis of the transcripts found the area of greatest satisfaction and fulfilment for teachers is seeing their pupils progress. This progress can be academic, social or emotional.

One participant remarked that 'growth in [a child's] self-esteem' was one factor which sustained him in his job. Another participant maintained how 'impacting on the child

positively and feeling they are growing with you in the classroom environment' can lead to more positive sentiment in the teaching profession.

From an analysis of the transcripts a recurring theme which emerged was for teachers to have the opportunity to teach in the way that was planned with as few interruptions as possible. This theme was also to the fore for principals, particularly for the teaching principal. One teaching principal remarked that 'a day with few interruptions or minor ones, that don't interrupt what you have planned to teach, is a good day for me as a teaching principal'. Similarly, an administrative principal stated '... when you get through your list that you have drawn up for the day and you've ticked them all off ... it's a satisfying day.' These comments suggest that teachers and principals set their own targets and strive to meet them over the course of the working day and week. Failure to meet these targets can often lead to feelings of guilt and cause them to be dissatisfied in their roles.

An examination of the transcripts also found that affirmation from colleagues also sustains and motivates teachers in their roles. Many of the participants felt that affirmation from colleagues, principals and even parents increased feelings of positivity in individuals and staff. It became apparent from an analysis of the transcripts how important it was for the principal to affirm the work of teachers. One of the participants remarked, 'we thrive on affirmation from a colleague next door, a parent or even a child, but particularly from the principal'. Another stated, 'we all like being praised, we don't get a lot of it. We do need it. Principals should be very affirmative towards their staff'. Not only do teachers wish to be affirmed in their roles, principals also expressed their wish to be affirmed. One principal expressed the view, 'a good day is when I get positive feedback from the pupils, staff and parents as well, when everything is going smoothly in the sense that work is going on well and that there is a mix of work and fun'.

Most teachers spend up to thirty or even forty years working in the school environment. The enjoyment of teaching and interacting with the children, fresh ideas, continuing professional development, change, variety and the support and friendship of colleagues were identified as being positive dimensions and motivators. In addition, being professional and valuing oneself and the profession were suggested by respondents as ways of keeping motivated.

From an examination of the transcripts, the motivator of holidays is more absent than present. It was mentioned only at one focus group and then as a non-motivating factor. Despite the increased pressures on teachers and principals many still feel that the job is still particularly rewarding. One participant remarked 'it's a great job. I came into teaching in my mid/late twenties and had other jobs before then. I was never as happy as I am now ... It's a rewarding job'.

During the focus group discussions the participants were asked to identify causes of stress which can impact negatively on their wellbeing in the classroom. There was a great deal of uniformity in the responses from the participants, regardless of their school setting or what part of the country they were located. From an analysis of the transcripts it would appear that confrontation, between staff, pupils or parents, is a significant source of stress for principals and teachers alike.

According to the participants it is evident that parents can be a source of stress for both teachers and principals. One contributor commented 'some parents don't understand that their child is one of many in a class.' Being approached 'at the front door by an irate parent who has an issue and insists on it being dealt with immediately' can negatively impact on teachers. Parents do not necessarily have to call to the school, however, to cause teachers to experience negative emotions as one participant opined, 'parents' attitudes can contribute to a bad day, even a note sent in by a parent can have a bad effect on morale'. Young and newly qualified teachers feel that they are not getting enough support in situations where parents are aggressive and unreasonable.

Not only does confrontation with parents cause teachers stress, but also confrontation and tension with other staff members. It is clear from the transcripts that confrontation which is left unresolved can lead to upset amongst teachers and principals.

Catering for the needs of a more diverse range of pupils was referred to by a number of the participants as something which impacts negatively on their wellbeing. This can stem from the efforts of teachers to meet the differing pupils' needs with diminishing resources - trying to be all things to all men. As one participant remarked, 'the demands of the job and the different roles you have to play ... teacher, counsellor, psychologist etc.' can be stressful as you don't feel properly trained to deal with a lot of these issues.

Findings from other studies

The sources of stress cited by our participants are broadly in line with those cited by other studies into teacher stress which indicate that the main sources of teacher stress are the following:

- Teaching pupils who lack motivation;
- Maintaining discipline;
- Time pressures and workload;
- Coping with change;
- Being evaluated by others;
- Dealings with colleagues;
- Self-esteem and status;
- Administration and management
- Role conflict and ambiguity;
- Poor working conditions; and
- Coping Mechanisms.

An analysis of the focus groups and interviews found a number of coping mechanisms were used by teachers and principals to minimise and deal with stress.

Firstly, teachers felt that communication in a supportive environment was essential.

'Offloading', 'venting' and 'talking things out' with a partner at home, a colleague at work or indeed a group within the staffroom allowed teachers to de-stress and stay calm. 'Collegiality' was deemed to be an important factor. Teachers enjoy shutting the staffroom door and being

afforded the luxury of discussing their classroom/professional issues with their colleagues. Newly qualified teachers found this particularly helpful and often sought the advice and reassurance of more experienced teachers. One teacher, who had spent years in other professions before teaching, suggested that in comparison to other careers, teachers are extremely supportive to one another; giving advice or, for example, offering to 'take' a difficult child for a few minutes

Having a life outside of school was mentioned by most teachers as a way to de-stress, cope and perhaps avoid stress. Exercise, socialising, music and hobbies were mentioned as distracters and opportunities to leave school at school.

Humour was also frequently mentioned as a positive coping tool, 'a laugh can brighten a dark day'. Being able to laugh things off or compare 'war stories' reassured teachers and allowed them an opportunity to vent. One participant remarked, 'humour - it's the best de-stressor, you have to come out and see the funny side of things. In the staffroom we have a good laugh and great craic and forget about things'.

Pupil wellbeing

Teachers have a strong sense of responsibility towards their pupils. Teachers not only look after pupils' learning but they also try to ensure that their wellbeing is enhanced. Many teachers view this as part and parcel of their day. One participant remarked, 'if you didn't care for their [pupils] wellbeing, you wouldn't be a teacher'.

Encouragement was seen as a very important part of a teacher's job when dealing with children. Teachers can bring out hidden talents in their pupils through drama, creative writing and dance. These activities are great for building self-esteem particularly in shy children. Encouraging words and affirmation can mean a lot to these children and their parents.

There is a need for the support services to be more actively involved in supporting pupil wellbeing. Teachers cite a lack of support for those who may need advice and help with difficult situations. These teachers have to draw on their own inner empathy and understanding, 'you are just expected to get on with it and do it yourself'.

In conclusion, we need to heed the advice offered to us by the air-hostess, as we embark on a flight. They will emphasize the importance of putting on your own oxygen mask first before helping others. Although this might seem somewhat counterproductive at first glance, this advice underlies an important principle: You can't help others if you don't first help yourself.

Dr Sarah Fitzpatrick, NCCA

Wellbeing as a starting point for curriculum … and everything else!

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon on the topic of well-being in the curriculum. As we were all getting up and out this morning, my little girl who is six and in senior infants, wanted to know what I would be doing today and tomorrow? When I said I would be meeting with teachers and principals to talk about '*being well*', she was concerned that you would all be very busy rushing around and may not have *any* time for talking. But I said it would be after school. Still, there were a few things that bothered her. She thought I might not be the best person to talk about teachers being well having used up all the tissues in the kitchen nursing a cold this past week. But mainly she was concerned to know if we would be working very hard today and tomorrow because '*…there's a lot going on in school, Mam. Don't forget the parent teacher meeting next Thursday afternoon… and you need to find out about the Christmas Annuals and send in the money so teacher can order them… and the photos will be arriving on Tuesday… and we haven't put Christmas concert into the diary yet!*' With so much happening in schools at this time of year, her advice was, most of all, to '*make sure the teachers have a cup of tea and put their feet up!*' I told her not to worry that a famous person (Woody Allen) once said that showing up for an event was a lot of the job already done… and here we are.

I think my job this afternoon is twofold. Firstly, we'll see what we learned from a consultation over the last year which identified wellbeing as a key priority for primary education (NCCA, 2012). Then, before wrapping-up we'll briefly look at the theme of wellbeing in *Aistear* (NCCA, 2009a), the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework for all children from birth to six years.

Wellbeing and primary priorities

Our consultation on priorities for primary education began last April. The Draft Plan for Literacy and Numeracy had noted the need for the primary curriculum to respond to changing issues and concerns and to clarify priorities (DES, 2010, p.25). Discussion of proposed curriculum changes at primary had focused almost entirely on the areas of language and mathematics. Specific targets for revising the primary curriculum were subsequently outlined in the Strategy (DES, 2011) and focused on the areas of language and mathematics and on revisions to the entire infant curriculum 'to ensure consistency with the *Aistear* framework and to support and facilitate the integrated teaching of subjects' (DES, 2011, p.54) with revised material to be 'available progressively' for all revisions from 2014. Our online call for priorities for primary education was open to anyone who wished to have a say. It was guided by the belief that children's primary school experience is much more than the sum of the individual parts - curriculum subjects - and that any review of literacy and numeracy must also consider the child's primary school experience in terms of the overall curriculum. The invitation to 'have your say' provided an opportunity to take stock of priorities for primary education by focusing on what should matter for childhood 'the season of the mind's possibilities' (Lyotard, 1992, p.116) and our children today. This is the invitation which issued in April (Table 1):

Table 1. Invitation to 'Have your say' 04/2011

> Have your say about the purpose of a primary education.
> What do you think it's for?
> In 100 words or less tell us what you think. Contributions welcome in Irish or English.

The invitation was revised at the end of November 2011 to reflect the prioritisation of literacy and numeracy in primary schools in the Strategy (DES 2011a) and the corresponding circular to primary schools (DES 2011b) in November 2011.

Table 2. Revised invitation to 'Have your say' 11/2011

Have your say about priorities for the primary curriculum. In addition to Literacy and Numeracy, what should our curriculum priorities be at primary? In 100 words or less tell us what you think. Contributions welcome in Irish or English.	Labhair amach agus inis dúinn faoi thosaíochtaí churaclam na bunscoile mar a fheictear duitse iad. Mar aon le litearthacht agus uimhearthacht, cad iad na tosaíochtaí ar cheart dúinn díriú orthu sa bhunscolaíocht? I gcéad focal nó níos lú roinn do thuairimí linn. Fáilteofar roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge nó i mBéarla.

In both cases, respondents were asked to also complete an open text-box which began 'I am responding as a … (e.g., Parent, Principal, Teacher, Student) / Tá mé ag teacht i dteagmháil mar … (Tuismitheoir, Príomhoide, Múinteoir, Dalta)'.

Of the 960 email responses received, teachers represented three-quarters (75%) and parents represented less than one quarter (23%). A small cohort, (4%), were both teachers and parents. Six priorities for primary education were identified across the 960 responses, using 25% of respondents as a cut-off. Table 3 shows a cluster of priorities at the top; the first four priorities each had a similar number of respondents (36% to 39%). The second cluster of priorities in fifth and sixth place, were noted by 10% fewer respondents. The next most frequently cited priority, ICT (17%), was not included because responses, when coded, included a range of priorities for ICT (i.e., skills, equipment and communication) which were included in the top six priorities. The next most frequently cited priority, to address curriculum overload, was noted by 10% of respondents.

**Table 3. Primary priorities in order of total respondents**

Rank	Priority *Primary education should…*	Total n=960	
1	help children to develop skills and dispositions through a broad education	370	39%
2	help children to be good communicators.	358	37%
3	**help children to be well.**	**347**	**36%**
4	help children to develop literacy and numeracy skills.	346	36%
5	motivate and engage children.	249	26%
6	nurture children's sense of identity and belonging.	237	25%

Perhaps the first thing to strike you about the findings is that curriculum areas or subjects aren't specified in answer to the question about what matters most in primary education; we'll return to this finding in a moment. Before we do, let's take a look at the third priority, wellbeing. Four priorities for wellbeing were reported across findings – happiness and confidence; emotional wellbeing and resilience; spiritual wellbeing; and health and fitness. We'll look now at some indicative responses for these four wellbeing priorities.

1. Wellbeing responses which prioritised happiness and confidence called for primary school education to help children to be happy and to develop their confidence.
    - 'enable children to be happy, caring, confident' (Parent);
    - 'open the [children's] minds, hearts, eyes [and] feelings … to the vast possibilities of the world and how to make them relevant to their own lives' (Other: Lecturer);
    - 'develop in children a sense of self-esteem as something that has an ebb and flow and that needs on-going nurturing both in themselves and others around them' (Principal).

2. The second group of findings for wellbeing prioritised developing children's emotional wellbeing and resilience. Responses called for primary education to help children to deal with overwhelming emotions by being able to make sense of them and work their way through them. Findings noted the importance of helping children to overcome stress including stressful points of transition or change and other stressful experiences.
    - 'give children techniques for dealing with overwhelming emotions' (Parent);
    - '[develop children's] coping skills to enable them to overcome stress and deal with day to day problems' (Teacher);
    - '[help children] develop a positive outlook on life as well as a curiosity and a 'give it a go' attitude' (Principal and Parent).

3. The third group of responses prioritised spiritual wellbeing. As Pat Collins noted earlier, responses grouped together for spiritual wellbeing didn't reference any single religion, but instead focused on mindfulness, spirituality and civics. Pat Collins mentioned financial wellbeing from the University of Washington's report in his presentation earlier, and this is questioned in the last quotation below.
    - 'introduce children to mindfulness' (Parent);
    - 'learn more about spirituality and civics and not necessarily a particular religion' (Teacher);
    - Individuals who have a well-developed sense of spirituality live happier and more successful lives. If the Celtic tiger years - the boom and the bust-have taught us anything it's that the pursuit of money and material things do not bring with them happy lives' (Teacher).

4. Lastly, responses coded health and fitness called for primary education to help children to appreciate the importance of, and link between, physical activity and diet. This priority was highlighted by one-fifth of all respondents (n=960).
    - 'help children see the link between physical activity and diet to the quality of their lives both physically and mentally' (Teacher);
    - 'So many children badly need physical activity to learn to work in teams, build team skills, learn co-operation and to keep active and fit' (Teacher);
    - '[help children] to enjoy sports and develop healthy bodies while they are young for their lives ahead' (Teacher).

Taking a step back from the wellbeing findings to look again at the final six priorities (Table 3), many of the other priorities could also be considered aspects of wellbeing. For example, the vision of the 'Learning for Well-being' Consortium of Foundations in Europe has identified wellbeing as an overarching priority for education which includes 'communication and relationships' and 'participation and engagement' (Kickbusch, 2012, p.28-32).

Figure 1. Learning for Well-being Framework (Kickbusch, 2012, p.29).
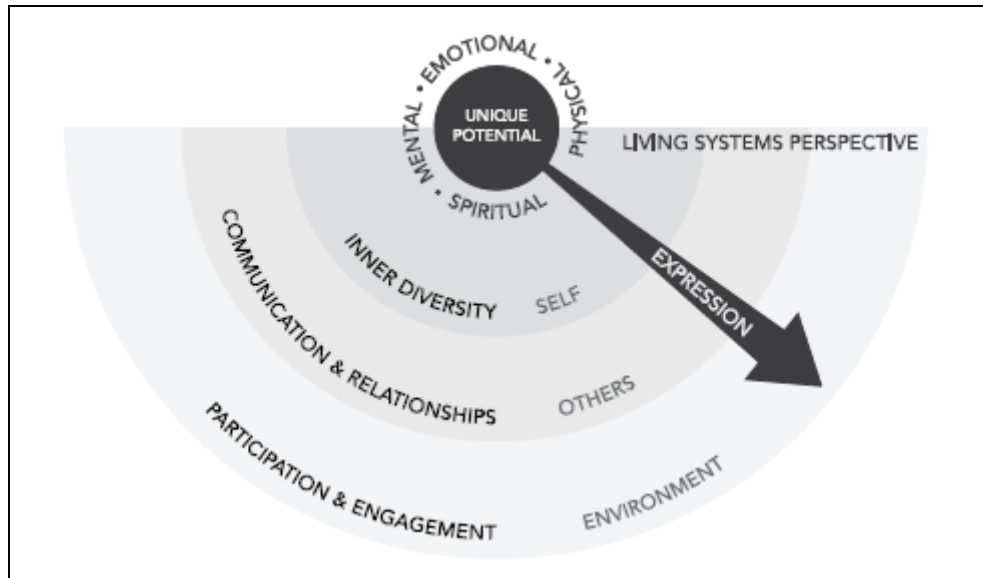
When we look again at the six main priorities, it could be argued that findings for communication (the second priority) and for identity and belonging (the sixth priority) include important dimensions of wellbeing. Let's take a brief look at what respondents said for these two priorities as they relate to wellbeing.

Following the Framework above (Figure 1), findings for the communication priority support a social dimension of wellbeing. Respondents prioritised helping children to develop a range of skills to get along with others.

- 'It [school] also is a forum for learning the social skills we all need to get along - turn taking, fairness, respect for difference' (Parent and Teacher);
- '[develop children's] social skills - conflict resolution, negotiation, compromise, empathy, compassion... more important for success than any academic skill' (Parent);
- 'It [school] is as much for the friendships that are formed and the social learning attached as the academia' (Parent).

Likewise, findings for the sixth priority, identity and belonging, supported the idea of social wellbeing through helping children to develop their sense of self relative to others. This included helping children to understand and appreciate their own and others' talents and skills and how to use them to benefit others.

- '[help children] to gain an understanding of their talents and to develop them for their own benefit and for the benefit of others' (Parent, Principal);

- 'increase, not diminish, each child's sense of capability and lovability and provide a secure base for all children especially those at risk of harm or neglect in their home lives' (Teacher);
- 'Primary education is so much more than literacy and numeracy. After all they may forget the things you taught them but will never forget how you made them feel' (Teacher).

Taking a step back from the wellbeing findings to look again at the six priorities (Table 3), you'll notice that with the exception of 'literacy and numeracy' (fourth priority), curriculum areas and subjects did not feature significantly in the top six priorities. There are two points of note. One is the limitation of the analysis (Table 4) because our questions did not ask respondents to prioritise curriculum areas or subjects. The second is the peculiar case of findings for Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

Table 4. Curriculum areas and responses, in order of priority

Rank	Curriculum area	n	%
1	Language (excluding 'literacy only' responses)	233	24%
2	Social, environmental and scientific education (SESE)	171	18%
3	Arts education	165	17%
4	Physical education (PE)	149	16%
5	Mathematics (excluding 'numeracy only' responses)	112	12%
6	Social, personal and health education (SPHE)	51	5%
7	Religious education	29	3%

While only 51 (5%) of the total number of respondents noted the value of SPHE in primary education (Table 4), a significant number of additional respondents (n=203), listed at least one of the three elements of SPHE (social; personal and/or health education) in their responses. When we include these three elements of SPHE, we see that 264 (28%) of all respondents noted social, personal and/or health education as priorities in their responses (Table 5).

Table 5. Curriculum areas and responses when SPHE = social + personal +health

Rank	Curriculum area	n	%
1	Social, personal and health education (SPHE)	264	28%
2	Language (excluding 'literacy only responses)	233	24%
3	Social, environmental and scientific education (SESE)	171	18%
4	Arts education	165	17%
5	Physical education (PE)	149	16%
6	Mathematics (excluding 'numeracy only responses)	112	12%
7	Religious education	29	3%

This apparent mismatch - between the low ranking for SPHE in Table 4 and the high-ranking for dimensions of SPHE in Table 5 - is interesting because there's a sense in the findings that primary education is expected to engage with issues that may have their origins in the home and outside of the school but nonetheless become children's starting point for learning in school. There's a parallel between these findings for wellbeing and SPHE, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs in which he argued each have essential needs (i.e., physiological needs,

safety needs) that are fundamental to satisfying higher-level needs such as love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). For children whose basic needs for sleep or food aren't met at home, findings point to the very real challenge for teachers to recognise and respond to the diversity of children's needs in our large primary classes. Wellbeing is so essential for children's growth and development in primary school that it is foundational and fundamental to almost everything else. While the 1999 curriculum broadened to include SPHE as a new subject, these findings point to a greater significance for dimensions of SPHE and children's wellbeing as we look to priorities for the future.

The six priorities reflect six fundamental areas for children's development in primary school. Many of the priorities could be described as dispositions, i.e.; enduring habits of mind and action (*Aistear*, 2009, p. 54). These focus on helping children to develop life skills; be good communicators; be well; engage in learning; and develop a strong sense of identity and belonging. Wellbeing is also recognised as key for learning and development in early childhood; wellbeing is one of four themes in *Aistear*. It is also important in post-primary education where 'staying well' and 'being personally effective' are key skills of Junior and Senior Cycle, respectively. Dimensions of the key skill of 'being well' in the Junior Cycle Framework are very similar to those discussed here and include 'being healthy and active, social, safe, spiritual, confident and positive about learning' (DES, 2012, p.10).

Wellbeing in Aistear

Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009) was published a decade after the primary curriculum. *Aistear* is for all children from birth to six years, in the range of settings, including infant classes in primary schools. *Aistear* defines a framework of this type as a scaffold or support which helps adults to develop a curriculum for the children in their setting (NCCA, 2009b). It defines curriculum as all the experiences, formal and informal, planned and unplanned in the indoor and outdoor environment, which contribute to children's learning and development (NCCA, 2009a, p. 54). *Aistear* emphasises holistic and integrated learning: Children learn many different things at the same time. What they learn is connected to where, how and with whom they learn (NCCA, 2009a, p. 10). As such, the Framework presents children's learning through four interconnected themes rather than developmental domains (e.g., emotional, social and physical development) or subjects (e.g., Physical Education, Music and English).

Wellbeing is one of the four themes in *Aistear*, along with identity and belonging; communicating; and exploring and thinking. *Aistear* tells us, 'the theme of wellbeing is about children being confident, happy and healthy' (NCCA, 2009a, p.16). *Aistear* has four aims for wellbeing and I think they reiterate what we heard from Karen Devine and Pat Collins earlier (NCCA, 2009a, p. 17):
Children will...

- be **strong psychologically and socially**;
- be as **healthy and fit** as they can be;
- be **creative and spiritual**; and
- have **positive outlooks** on learning and on life.

The adult's role in nurturing young children's wellbeing is described in *Aistear* (NCCA, 2009a, p.21-23):

The adult …

- helps children to predict and cope with changes, transitions and stressful life events;
- approaches conflict situations calmly, models positive behaviour and creates opportunities for children to share and take turns;
- promotes good health and encourages children to make healthy choices;
- listens to and discusses things in-depth with children;
- plans quiet times and sets up a space for thinking and reflecting;
- promotes citizenship and social justice with children and respects them as young citizens; and
- appreciates children's efforts, identifies their individual strengths and abilities and helps them to cope and to try again when they experience failure.

The roles outlined above are for infant teachers but when we see them now they seem relevant to us all.

The next phase of curriculum development focuses on language, mathematics and the entire curriculum for infant classes. Our experience with *Aistear*, our engagement with school networks and learning from curriculum reviews, provide some signals and signposts for the direction of changes ahead.

One area of development focuses on dispositions. In recent years debate about what is or should be of lasting value in education and learning has highlighted the importance of dispositions (Dunphy, 2008). Dispositions are a key and explicit part of the 'content' of children's early learning and development as set out in the themes, aims and broad learning goals in *Aistear*. The Framework defines dispositions as enduring habits of mind and action; 'a disposition is the tendency to respond to situations in characteristic ways' (NCCA, 2009a, 54). One question following our 2009 PISA results for 15-year olds, focused on the high incidence of 'missingness' or unanswered questions and asked why our students hadn't persevered and completed all test items. Persevering in the face of difficulty is one of many dispositions in *Aistear*; others include showing curiosity, acting on interest, taking responsibility, and so on. Future curriculum developments should include a greater celebration and acknowledgement of the time needed to help children to develop these dispositions by naming them explicitly but embedding them in learning outcomes.

I think the Framework will also influence the new Primary Language Curriculum. Here, there is a significant difference between the Framework and the Curriculum. The '99 curriculum for English and Gaeilge focuses on mastery of the verbal form in the early years whereas *Aistear* takes a look at both verbal and non-verbal communication. *Aistear* emphasises the importance of supporting children's emergent literacy—enabling them to see themselves as, and to want to take-on the roles of, readers and writers long before they can do this in the conventional sense. Emergent literacy lays important foundations for later success and is important not just for first, but also for second language learning.

Given the structure of the primary curriculum in the same curriculum areas and subjects for all children, and the four themes of *Aistear*, the question arises about how appropriate a 12-subject curriculum is for young children of 4-6 years of age. In our work with schools, when

we've asked this question, we haven't heard strongly that we do need 12 discrete subjects. On the contrary, teachers have told us that it is easier to connect learning when there are fewer pieces to put together. Teachers have also called for a clear path to progression with particular milestones identified and support for helping children to progress from one milestone to the next.

The need for curriculum contents to be clear and accessible for teachers was a key finding from our reviews and subsequent work with schools to unpack overload (NCCA, 2010). Approximately 10% of respondents to the call for primary priorities focused on this issue and asked for the curriculum to be more accessible and more practice-focused in the next phase of revision. As curriculum change is also underway at Junior Cycle, the next phase of curriculum development across sectors provides a first opportunity for cohesion and continuity beginning with one curriculum structure (i.e., the same curriculum skeleton or specification) for primary and junior cycle. English is the first of the new junior cycle subjects to be introduced in September 2014 and we are working to a similar timeframe for developing the new Primary Language Curriculum for the first four years (junior infants to second class). A curriculum structure with similar strands for primary and junior cycle seems important to support continuity and progression for children through the system. And thinking of those very first years in primary school, I agree with Anne Fay's suggestion to question the suitability of our names for these years — Junior and Senior Infants — and to acknowledge the need for more appropriate titles to refer to the identity of the first two years in primary school.

Looking at the time, and bearing in mind that the 6-year old at home was quite insistent that you'd have time for a cup of tea, I'll finish with a copy of the poster which arrived in your schools recently. I'd like to thank you again for hanging up the poster in your school and for visiting our website for updates on the primary developments at www.ncca.ie/primary. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you this morning about wellbeing in the primary priorities and in *Aistear*. I wish you a wonderful conference and enhanced wellbeing in the coming days and when you return to school.

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Deirbhile Nic Craith, Senior Official

Good afternoon Delegates.
Before we head into our discussion groups, I would like to refer to three issues which you will be exploring in your discussions. Pupil Wellbeing, Relationships, and given that teaching in the 21st century is our overarching theme in recent education conferences, I'll say a few words about the link between teacher wellbeing and teacher professionalism.

Pupil wellbeing

I would like to pick up on Sarah Fitzpatrick's reference to the wellbeing theme in the primary curriculum. It is certainly reassuring that both teachers and parents who responded to the NCCA's invitation, prioritised children's wellbeing as a central element in primary education. In your discussion groups you'll have an opportunity to tease out the challenges associated with supporting and enhancing children's wellbeing. If we take one message from the recently held referendum on children's rights, it is that children should be heard. Caring for our pupils is a core part of our teaching, and this is clearly felt by teachers in the Education Committee's research as outlined by Karen Devine. We need to be mindful of how these harsh economic times might be influencing the lives of pupils outside school.

I think we face particular challenges in our infant classes, as the President has mentioned. We must work towards ensuring that our infant classes provide the right learning environment for 4-6 year old children – addressing issues such as curriculum, school buildings, class size and resources. There have been many developments in early childhood education in the last number of years – such as Aistear and the free pre-school initiative. The Minister for Children has also commenced the process of preparing an early years' strategy for children from birth to six. The work of primary teachers in our infant classes has to be central to these developments. We have a wealth of experience in teaching 4-6 year olds.

Relationships

Teachers' work involves intensive personal interactions, often in crowded conditions, with large numbers of pupils who are frequently lively and energetic. Teachers are also increasingly interacting with colleagues, with parents and with other members of the school community. This requires a lot of emotional energy. How these inter-relationships work has a huge impact on both teacher and pupil wellbeing as demonstrated in the Education Committee's research.

Professionalism

We should never underestimate the importance of wellbeing in teachers' lives and careers. Teachers' psychological wellbeing is about how teachers think and feel. I'm drawing here on the work of Jennifer Nias, who argues that the emotional lives of teachers are at the core of their professionalism, determining how they respond and react to events both within and outside the classroom. Teachers' wellbeing is therefore a collective concern. And it's why the Education Committee chose wellbeing as a theme for this year's conference.

Teachers are passionate about their work. They invest their sense of 'self' in their teaching, closely merging their personal and professional identities. Their self-esteem is very much linked to their sense of professional self-efficacy. Teachers experience wellbeing when they are acting consistently with their beliefs and values. When external demands prevent teachers from pursuing their 'real work' of teaching, their wellbeing is affected. So why is this important?

Sandra Leaton Gray described teachers in England as being 'under siege' because of a plethora of reforms that impacted negatively on teachers' wellbeing and sense of professionalism. I don't believe that this is the case in Ireland at present. But the implementation of educational policies has to take into account the wide range of personal and professional identities and motivations of teachers.

Today, teachers in Ireland are faced with many opportunities in their professional roles. Whether it is supporting our newly qualified colleagues and passing on our wisdom through school-based induction, or sharing knowledge and expertise gained throughout our teaching careers with student teachers, or reviewing and reflecting on our practice as part of school review or self-evaluation, it is how we respond to and engage with these opportunities that determine whether or not such developments support our personal and professional wellbeing.

Since the establishment of the induction Project in 2002, teachers have shown how, when given time, space and support, mentoring new colleagues can enhance their sense of personal and professional wellbeing. In the Partnership with Schools Project, St Patrick's College pioneered a structured partnership with a number of schools with a view to enhancing the teaching practice experience of student teachers. In this project, teachers have also shown what's possible when supported and given time and space.

Changes in practice at school level must be allowed to evolve. If teachers' wellbeing is threatened, change will be resisted. The Department's guidelines on school self-evaluation are due in schools in the next week or so. The process of carrying out reviews of our work and using such reviews to plan, both at whole school and class level, is not new, and has been an integral dimension of school development planning. How these new guidelines will impact on teacher wellbeing will depend on how we respond to them. If they are seen as a support to build on current practices in schools regarding self-review and evaluation, they have the potential to enhance our professional wellbeing. But if they are seen as an imposition, leaving no discretion to schools and leading to a massive increase in workload, they will be detrimental to teachers' professional wellbeing. Perhaps the key is in the word 'guidelines'. We should treat them as such.

The work of Jennifer Nias and Sandra Leaton Gray make it quite clear that a loss of control over their own work and a loss of autonomy to make professional judgments at school and class level have a negative impact on teacher's personal and professional wellbeing. However, we do live in an era of accountability. Acting responsibly, with integrity, and justifying our decisions coherently should go without question. Let us hope that the Self-Evaluation guidelines will be a support rather than a hindrance in this process.

If we find ourselves continually reacting to external changes, we run the risk of losing the ability to construct our own type of professionalism, grounded in our own personalities and interests. We must rise to the challenge of shaping educational developments as they occur, becoming activist professionals both at school level and through the INTO at national level where the voice of teachers is brought to the policy table.

As stated in *Aistear*, children need to feel valued, respected, empowered, cared for, and included. This is equally true for teachers. Teacher wellbeing is a professional necessity. To place the development of teacher wellbeing in the forefront of our concerns is ultimately to safeguard children's education.

Bainigí sult agus tairbhe as an gcuid eile den Chomhdháil.

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Moya O'Brien, ICEP Europe

The Flourishing Teacher, Cultivating and Sustaining Wellbeing

Good evening everyone. I would like to thank you for a brilliant attendance here this afternoon but also for the positivity and good humour that you bring with you. Since I got here this afternoon, I can't help but be impressed by the people that I have met, the nice comments that they have made and the positive energy that they have generated.

What I would like to talk to you about this evening is the flourishing teacher, and while I am not a teacher myself, I come from a long line of teachers - my sister and brother are teachers, my mother was a teacher and my grandfather was a teacher and my great-grandfather was a teacher so I have been fairly well immersed in teaching since I was very small. But also for the last 10 years I have had the privilege to work alongside some of the best teachers in this country and to work with them in areas such as positive psychology. So this is what I would like to bring to this discussion this evening. I think the Education Committee should be commended on their very impressive document - I had a chance to read through it during the week and I have to confess that having read it, I had to take out a whole load of my slides as they were covered in that document.

So the focus that I would like to take this evening is the contribution of psychology, and in particular positive psychology, to how we can flourish within our lives.

Why is this an important area and why is it a focus now? I don't need to tell you and I'm not going to go into the details of the current economic climate and recession that radio and television bombard us all with on a regular basis. But the reality is that it has an impact on teacher's lives and on the lives of the children that they teach in their classroom and the people you are meeting in your personal life. None of us have escaped the recession and our children in the classroom are bringing some of those issues and stresses into the classroom with them. This is one of the main reasons why we need to focus on it now. We need to focus on flourishing because we need to shift the negative energy and we need to empower ourselves and take control of what we can do in terms of our own mental health and in terms of our own wellbeing. If we take control of our own wellbeing, this has an impact on our class but it also has an impact on the school and community. The latter half of this talk will focus on practical strategies for doing that.

What exactly can positive psychology contribute to this discussion? For a long time we've thought that happiness was an outcome, but actually we know now that happiness is causal and brings multiple benefits. Now this isn't just 'Pollyanna' talk, this is actually grounded in research - benefits such as longer, healthier lives, resilience, success, social engagement, recovery from trauma, enhancing learning and creativity, problem-solving, all of that has research behind it - very sound research and big research studies. The whole study of positive psychology came from Martin Seligman, he was president of the American Psychological Association and he chose happiness and positive psychology as the core theme for his presidency. Seligman challenges us - in the past psychologists have taken a strength focus and we always looked at moving people from the negative / minus five to zero. What Seligman is saying is that zero isn't enough, feeling okay isn't enough. We need to study what

moves people on to plus five and to flourish, to grow and thrive in their lives. So that was the whole basis of positive psychology. Looking at some of the research that it has generated, and there are lovely stories behind the various pieces of research but I don't have a whole lot of time to go into the detail of those, but I will share a few of them with you at the moment. For example, there was a study that was conducted in the University of Milwaukee where they were actually studying Alzheimer's and what they did was find records of nuns that had entered the noviciate in the 1930s and they went through those records to see what were the positive emotions that were contained in their initial letters of application i.e. the reason why they joined the noviciate. And they found that personal essays that scored high on positive emotion - expressions of happiness, interest, love and hope - that those nuns actually lived 10 years longer. Okay folks, adding 10 years to your life by being happy? I'll have it any day.

In terms of recovering from trauma, a lot of work had been conducted on undergraduate students because they are a captive audience and it is very easy to conduct psychological research with undergraduates, but some of the researchers had studied the undergraduate psychologists and they looked for optimists and pessimists and there is good news there. They went back after 9/11 to see what the impact of 9/11 was, and what impact optimism had. What does it help us with? They actually found that all of the people that they were able to contact from the original study were fairly traumatised and devastated by 9/11, but that the optimists came back quicker, they bounced back faster. So we know that happiness and optimism increase our resilience and this is a very important point for the students that you are working with as well as yourselves. I suppose optimism is an interesting thing, but the good news is that while all of the optimists remained optimists 20 years later, some of the pessimists became optimists – so that is the good news - optimism can be taught and it can be learned.

It also boosts creativity and enhances problem-solving and a number of experiments have been done in this area, but the most interesting one that I find is some work with hepatic surgeons; they divided them into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received chocolates and the control group didn't. They gave them very difficult problems to solve and the impact of that positive emotion generated by the generosity of receiving chocolate and by them having the pleasurable experience was that the experimental group solved more of the problems. I'm fascinated by this. I'm fascinated by how positive emotion can help children learn, can increase their creativity and can open them up. That is one of my messages to you this evening, in times of recession it is very easy to shut down and close yourself off, it is very easy to say that I can only cope with myself and look after myself. But actually what we need is to reach out, we need to make connections and become more creative and we need to actually make a concerted effort to reach out to other people because this will help us all recover.

I want to talk a little bit about Parker Palmer who is a very inspired teacher educator in the US and he talks a lot about the emotion of teaching. I think this is critical and it has to come into this discussion and this debate on wellbeing because teaching is about relationships, it is about being in that classroom and being present at the moment and he has talked about authentic teaching and what that actually is. Teaching is value-laden - you are bringing your own beliefs, your own background, your own preferences and biases, you are bringing all of those into the classroom with you and so we have to talk about the emotions and the beliefs and about all those aspects of teaching which aren't commonly referred to. I suppose it is

interesting, you can have a prescription and you can say to people this is what you do in a classroom but it is very difficult to prescribe the relationship. I'm a behavioural analyst so I like to get very objective definitions of behaviour, but it is very difficult to objectify relationships, to objectify how you interact with the students that are in your room and the communication and the whole milieu, if you like, within the classroom. Parker Palmer talks about the courage to teach and it is a very interesting idea and I was puzzled by it - what is it about? What do you mean by courage, what is courageous? He says that the courage to teach is about being yourself, it is about being authentic. I spoke to my sister during the week who has retired after many years of teaching in a comprehensive school in the UK and I talked to her about this. I said, talk to me about emotions and teaching and talk to me about authenticity and teaching who you are. She said to me, I will give you an example: one day I was in the class and things were going very badly for me and there was one kid in particular who was driving me mad. I work in close connection with Mrs Parker next door so I said 'John, go next door to Mrs Parker', and he said to me 'What will I tell her Miss?' and I said 'Tell her Mrs O'Brien is having a bad day and her nerves are at her'. And he said 'Right so' and off he went happy because it wasn't his problem she was taking ownership for her behaviour and she was being authentic in that moment in terms of her emotions. Another example that I would like to share with you, I was at a Christmas concert and a newly qualified teacher - it was her first year of teaching - was in the audience, she taught in that particular school but she didn't teach junior infants. And halfway through it, it all got too much and one of them was nodding off in the front row and I was kind of admiring him really that he could sleep through the carols and the noise but she picked him up and he fell asleep in her arms and I thought that was lovely. Because she connected with his needs and with him as a person, regardless of who else was there she reached out and did something, and again that is another example of the emotion in teaching, the connection, the relationship that I really like and impressed me.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about Maureen Gaffney. She recently published a book on flourishing, and she talks about these aspects: in order to flourish we need connection and again that is about relationships. We also need challenge, we need something to provoke us, something to move forward to, to pin our hopes on, to set goals and achieve. We also need autonomy - we need to feel that there are things within our control and there are decisions that we can make and I'll talk about this in a moment when I talk about stress and some of the decisions that we can make for ourselves in terms of stress and stress management. Maureen Gaffney also talks about using our talents and strengths. I think in teaching we get an opportunity to do that. It is easy to incorporate your talents and strengths and to share your interests and to engage students in some of the things that you find interesting. But we all operate in a system There is a programme in Australia called Mind Matters which is mental health at secondary level (they have a good website and I would recommend it as there are a lot of resources on it, even though it is second level). This is where the teacher – the flourishing self, the thriving self - works and operates. There is the interpersonal, and that is about connecting and communicating with people; there is the professional, which is about working and learning, how we operate in our classroom, how we work and how we learn; there is the organisation, which is enabling and sustaining, how the school promotes professional development, how the school supports the teacher in terms of policies, procedures, and in terms of helping teachers to reflect on their practice because by reflecting on your practice, you can connect and you can become that authentic teacher.

I want to move on a little bit and talk more about the good news from positive psychology. I think following is a surprising finding. There is a set point for happiness and all of you will know that. There are individuals who are just happy, they are born happy as babies - there are those babies that just sleep when they are supposed to and awake when they are supposed to and they are very easy to soothe and they are very good at self-soothing. Then there are the other youngsters who are more irritable and don't seem to follow any pattern. So there is a set point for happiness but that is only 50%. Now 10% is circumstances and again the research on this is fascinating. They have researched lottery winners after winning the lotto and for those of you like me that haven't yet won the lottery, you return to your original level of happiness after a few months, so if you are not happy to begin with the lottery isn't going to do it for you either.

But we can actually increase our own happiness by intentional activities. A large 40% of our happiness is down to our own activities, to our conscious effort, practicing positive thinking and optimism, investing in social connections, living in the present. A lot of the time our worries are about what happened in the past or what is going to happen in the future. Also, research supports the fact that physical fitness does have an impact on our overall wellbeing and happiness. Finally, committing to personal goals and managing stress effectively are vital, so we'll talk in a few minutes about how we might increase that intentional activity - what we can actually do to increase our happiness. A lot of it is under our control.

Going back again to positive psychology and the lessons that we can learn, just think about what wellbeing means to you, what are the things that you feel make you happy, what are the things that make you feel that life is worth living, that things are going well. What makes you flourish, what can bring you from zero to plus five. Seligman originally talked about the pleasurable life, which refers to those things we like to indulge in occasionally like chocolate or glass of wine or whatever it is that you take pleasure in, and he says that they are important in moderation. They do improve our overall wellbeing and we shouldn't feel guilty about them.

The engaged life is about the connections that you are making and the connections within your life: the connections in your community, in your hobbies and pastimes and what actually gives you energy. The meaningful life is the sense that you are making out of your life and again for teachers, often times their role as a teacher is related to the meaning in their life and they see that they are here to help and support students, they believe in what they do, they believe in education and they believe in their role as a teacher. But I suppose there is more to life than just these three factors and later on Seligman's theory developed into this more elaborate form which is PERMA. He has added in a number of things, all of which impact on our wellbeing and our happiness.

The first one is positive emotions and these are contagious. If there is a child in your classroom who is in good humour it lifts the humour of everyone in the classroom, if there is a child in your classroom who is down it can bring down the whole humour of the classroom. When you smile at people, most often they will smile back. Positive emotions are contagious and we need to increase positive emotion in our lives, increase laughter, increase smiling, increase positive exchanges, increase making positive comments, making a deliberate effort to be positive and making positive comments to people. Rule out 'but' from your vocabulary, for instance.

I suppose the other interesting thing is engagement, and when we talk about engagement we talk about flow. Flow is a concept that comes from occupational psychology and it has been around for quite a while. Flow is when you are so engaged with what you are doing that time flies past - you really have no concept of where you are or what you are at. You are almost in a daze, you are so entranced and engrossed with what you are doing. For all of us there is some area that we find that flow, but if you are having difficulty identifying flow or what creates flow in your life, Seligman has talked about signature strengths and he developed a list of signature strengths from all of the world religions and world cultures. He went out and researched what people value and came up with lists of signature strengths and he actually has them on his website - you can do a questionnaire on his website, he has an Irish database and a UK database but it will give you immediate feedback on what your signature strengths are, and then think about how you might use those to create flow in your life.

Positive relationships, here again there is very interesting research on active-constructive responding (ACR). A lady called Shelly Gable wanted to research how you could predict what couples would stay together, and so for those of you who are still looking for a partner out there, this is the key. They found that the one thing that kept couples together was how they responded to each other's positive news. And she called this active-constructive responding. So that is when you come and say 'guess what, I did really well – I ran 10km' and your partner says 'that is absolutely terrific, you're amazing, we are going to have to celebrate that', that is active-constructive responding, so you can practice that to increase your wellbeing. And if you are looking for a partner make sure they have that ACR, or an optimist will do.

Meaning in your life, again for some people that is religion, it's spirituality, for other people it is why am I here? What am I doing here? How can I make a difference? It is a connection to religious groups, political parties, whatever it is, even connection to a family can bring meaning in your life.

And finally, accomplishment. Seligman says we need to strive, we need to work, we need to be persistent in achieving our goals and that will help us with accomplishment but it will also increase our wellbeing.

So they are the areas in which we can build and help ourselves to flourish. Now, the practical activities, I have 10 tips now for cultivating happiness. All of these are well researched - I haven't just picked these out of a hat. The first one is to reach out to make social connections because we know that people who are resilient have a very good social circuit, they have a lot of support and supportive people around them.

Gratitude exercises - the research would say that once a week, thinking of three things that you are grateful for or practising gratitude daily would also increase your happiness but once a week is sufficient and again this is something that you can practice with your students to help them increase their happiness.

Getting to flow, I just spoke about that a moment ago and it is amazing how there are things in our life that we really do find engaging and pleasurable and yet we don't find time to do them. Well we need to find the time to do them.

Increase positive emotion, I spoke about that a moment ago - emotions are contagious - positive emotion, even retelling a positive story can give you the same kind of a lift as experiencing that positive emotion the first time around.

Practice mindfulness: some of you may be familiar with mindfulness, some of you may already practice mindfulness, but just staying in the here and now, just what is going on at this moment at this minute rather than letting our heads race to what we have to do next or what we didn't do.

Change your thinking - we all have an automatic record in our head, it is tied into our core beliefs and sometimes our core beliefs are helpful and sometimes they are not. So our core beliefs might be something like 'life should be fair, life should be easy' and they trigger thoughts and it is like a record playing in your head and you can get very easily sucked into a negative cycle of thinking and so, stop that record, change your thoughts - if they are not helpful, get rid of them.

Manage your stress. There are two aspects to stress management. One is managing your physical stress so finding some way to use up adrenaline and the other is mental stress. Think about thoughts that contribute to your anxiety, we call them hot thoughts, and try to substitute those thoughts that spin you out of control and make you very anxious for cold thoughts.

Increase pleasure and increase mastery. That comes from Beck and his cognitive theories on depression where he say that people who are depressed don't have a whole lot of pleasure in their life and they don't experience mastery. So stop to say you did a good job, you achieved what you were going to achieve without just galloping on to the next idea.

Practice compassion.   We are our own worst critics. Nobody needs to be critical of you as they can't do a worse job on it as you do yourself. But you need to let go of that - it is not helpful and it is not useful. In the States they talk about harnessing the healthy mental coach so what's the script that makes you feel 'yeah I can do it'. 'I can come back from this'. 'I can keep going here'. 'I can get past this'. That's the script that you need in your head. The other activity for compassion is to think about if the shoe was on the other foot - if a friend came to you and described the situation that you were currently in what is it that you would say to them? That is probably much more compassionate than what you are saying to yourself right now. So again just be aware of that and change the script in your own head.

Setting goals, we need to set goals. We need to monitor our steps in achieving those goals both in our personal life but also in our professional life with some of the students in our classrooms. We need to acknowledge that we have small goals and we are monitoring how we are getting there and we are acknowledging every success. Positive thinking can be very powerful here as well, and this has come into the whole area of sports psychology, visualising a positive outcome, visualising winning a race. Similarly you can visualise goals from your own personal life whatever they might be or goals for that student in your classroom.

Finally, embrace spirituality and find that meaning, find the reason that you feel you are here, what you have to contribute and really hold on to that.

I just want to finish up very briefly by going back to what I talked about at the beginning - the key factors in a flourishing school. Again if you think about it, it is about working and learning, it is about supporting the staff and students to achieve a goal. Flourishing schools demonstrate good leadership and are supportive of all staff, develop strong peer connections/group support and certainly the teachers in my life would emphasise that. They celebrate achievements, small and big, and they make individuals feel competent. They are reaffirming of individuals and their practice.

The flourishing classroom is an emotionally safe place and what I mean by that, is that it is safe to have feelings, it is safe to have emotions, it is safe to be different, and it is safe to voice your opinion. The flourishing classroom creates positive emotion, it has a positive atmosphere. Emotional literacy is taught and this is one of my very big themes. If a child has a learning difficulty or a learning difference we teach to it, if a child has a behaviour problem or can't function emotionally or socially, we also need to teach that – we need to identify it and teach to that. The flourishing classroom values individual differences and it builds connections rather than competition, cooperative practice, cooperative learning rather than pitching one student against another.

So finally, just to finish up …
The authentic teacher and the flourishing self, what I would advise you to do is make that emotional connection, have that courage to teach, take on the challenges, set goals for yourself within your life. Make decisions and feel in control. There is a lot going on out there that we have no control over, but one thing we can control is how we respond to those situations. Finally, use your talents and strengths and I will leave you with the words of Parker Palmer (2007) 'teaching is the greatest act of optimism'.

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Michael Finneran, Mary Immaculate College

Playing At and Imagining Being Well: Reflections and Challenges

Good afternoon everyone. It is my great pleasure and privilege to be here. I think my mother is more excited about me speaking here today - she is not here today but she is a retired principal and lifelong member of INTO and she's excited that her son is finally going to work.

It is fascinating at the moment in Ireland that there are a number of big education conferences in any given year and this is the second one that I have been to in 2012. The first one was an organisation called SCoTENS which is the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South and it was a teacher education conference. The theme for the SCoTENS conference was 'Creative teachers for creative learners' and I was fascinated by that, because the previous theme had been literacy and numeracy and I struggled to imagine how the organisation had segued from literacy and numeracy into creativity. But as the conference went on I began to understand it. I was equally fascinated when I found out from talking with Deirbhile Nic Craith and other colleagues, that the theme for the INTO conference was going to be Wellbeing. I think it is fascinating that we as a community of educationalists in the most austere of times and most difficult of times, in the most depressing of times are thinking about what we need to do better and we're thinking about the people – ourselves and our students - and how we can manage better. We are not just thinking about the nuts and bolts, we are thinking about the wholeness of what it means to be human and what it means to be engaged in the process of teaching and learning. So that is just a small observation to begin with.

I congratulate the INTO and the Education Committee for having the bravery to go with a theme like wellbeing. I'm not an expert on wellbeing, I would dare say I'm not very much an expert about anything but when I started thinking about the theme of wellbeing and where I might slot into the theme, it actually made a lot of sense to me. So I've titled my talk *Playing at and imagining being well*, so I've changed wellbeing around a bit, because for me, 'wellbeing' suggests a kind of passive state. It suggests that it's kind of like being bored or being hungry, it suggests passivity. When I began to break down wellbeing, I began to figure out that being well is something that we have to work at. So what I am going to try to do for the next while is to throw out some challenges as to how we might be better at being well.

I am going to start by talking about something that I know best and that is myself. Listening to Moya's talk yesterday and her sense of where wellbeing fits in the psychological understanding of humanity, one thing that came through from the presentation was the importance of 'us', who we are as individuals and who we are as teachers. I suppose I teach who I am - I make no bones about it - so when I began to think about what I was doing today I realised that I see the world and I see this conference in two particular ways. So wellbeing for me is about this:

> Well-being in primary education
> Caring for children's well-being is about attending to their physical and emotional welfare. It is about inducting them into a life where they will be wholeheartedly engaged in all kinds of worthwhile activities and relationships, defined generously rather than narrowly.
>
> <div align="right">Alexander, R. Ed (2010),</div>

This is a very provocative idea for us as teachers - that we define what we do generously. I think we do it intuitively, I think by our nature we have to give, we have to see the world in generous measures, but to actually articulate that is a challenge sometimes. I really like this understanding of wellbeing, it really gave me a handle, along with the wonderful document that was prepared by the Education Committee, on this idea of wellbeing.

I am an Arts educator. I'm passionate about drama and theatre in the lives of young people. I'm passionate about the arts in teacher education in terms of teacher formation but that it not all. I'm not going to talk just about the arts today as I want to cast the world and my understanding of wellbeing in the world a little bit wider and I want to play a little bit with what it might mean to define what we do as educators generously rather than narrowly. I want to look at a couple of ideas that are perhaps a little bit more ephemeral and a little bit more indistinct. You won't find them in schemes, you won't find them that often in policy documents or in attainments targets and things like that. So that is my take on wellbeing.

There is a wonderful book by Parker Palmer that Moya spoke about earlier and I very much relate to it. I don't buy into all of it, but I very much relate to aspects of it and I love this quote:

> The claim that good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher might sound like a truism. By identity and integrity I do not mean only our noble features or the good deeds we do, or the brave faces we wear to conceal our confusions and complexities. Identity and integrity have as much to do with our shadows and limits, our wounds and fears as with our strengths and potentials (p. 13).

As teachers, we are all so good at that, we are all social actors. No matter what has gone on, we all go into the class and put on a brave face and try to get on with it and try to do what we do best. But of course we cannot conceal all the aspects and all the elements of what is going on in our daily lives and that's why I like what he says here in the end - *Identity and integrity* ... We are who we are and we can't change that. There are things about ourselves that we don't like very well and there are things that we don't particularly admire but we can change as the power to change clearly lies within, and we certainly teach that. No matter what kind of a brave face we put on in the morning, we still teach who we are.

So there is more to me than an arts educator. I live in a house; I have a wife - a very tolerant lady - who constantly teaches me how to dance. I'm defined at home by my dual passion of my love of Munster rugby and Roscommon football. In my house I have lots of books, most of which I haven't read and I leave them around the house in piles. The master of my house is my dog, and if I take him out for a two hour walk tomorrow morning he might start talking to me again. My wife (and my dog) plays a huge part in my wellbeing. And as the years have gone by and I've taught more, I understand more and more how all of those things affect me – as a matter of fact, if Roscommon win, which happens frequently, I'm in better form – it's as simple as that.

So I teach in a school, and although my school is a slightly bigger school, as a teacher educator I am foremost a teacher, I'm an academic, a researcher, I'm a policy maker, I'm an administrator, I'm a number-cruncher. I do all those kinds of things and one of the great ironies of working in academia, is that as the years go by, you spend less and less time teaching. This sometimes happens that the best teachers become principals and end up in

the office all day. In my case, I like to think that I am a half decent teacher but I was promoted and now I have responsibility for our new Bachelor of Education programme, and part of my regret and tension in my life is around the fact that I don't see my students as much as I used to.

My school for me is defined by a number of things. It is defined by the beauty of the campus, and if you haven't been to Mary I in a number of years, you probably wouldn't recognise the place – we have an amazing campus. Beauty isn't a word you hear very often in education, it is almost a word that we are afraid to mention in some respects but I was down looking at all your comments and suggestions on what it means to be well, and many people mentioned 'sunset over Loop Head' or a 'walk in a forest park on a Sunday morning' or 'a beautiful picture'. Don't underestimate the power of beauty or don't underestimate the power of pets. The power of the beautiful surroundings that you work in and the impact they have on your wellbeing and the wellbeing of the lives of the people you teach and the people that you work with is significant. I feel better going to work as I work in a physically beautiful place and I'm very open to spaces. I have the opportunity to work with some astonishing students who make me well, they keep me sane, they keep me grounded, they challenge me, they provoke me and they ask me questions. They are astonishing and they are key - the same way that the children in your classrooms are the key to your wellbeing, so are my students the key to my wellbeing.

Part of my wellbeing at the moment is that we have opened a new theatre in the college. We had the Abbey theatre in Limerick two weeks ago for a week to open the theatre with the *Plough and the Stars* and that's important. My passion for drama and my passion for theatre are key to my wellbeing. Passion is another word that we don't hear too often with regards to wellbeing; don't be afraid to show your passion, it is what keeps me going on a day to day basis. So they are all the parts of my school. When I was trying to think about my school and Mary I and break it down, it struck me that there are lots and lots of facets to my wellbeing and being well.

- Being well at school
- Experiencing success
- Relationships – with colleagues, children & parents
- Beauty of the work environment
- Value fit – feeling a sense of identity
- Being in a community
- Respect for your voice
- Having a passion and sharing it
- Having and realising ideas
- Taking chances and failing safe

In order to be well, I have figured out that it is absolutely imperative and important for me to experience success. I need to do well at my job in order to be well. I need to be told that I am doing well. We all know that intuitively if you have had a major blow out with someone you are not going to feel well for a period of time afterwards no matter how skilled you are at conflict resolution or at handling difficult and demanding situations. The beauty of the work environment, I have mentioned already. The importance of fitting in, value set, feeling of belonging, that is a struggle for all of us at the moment, particularly when there are huge and very fractious debates going on around patronage when schools might be on the cusp of

amalgamating, or people are moving or going onto panels. My own institution has gone through an unbelievable amount of change over the fourteen years that I have worked there, it is virtually unrecognisable to the place that I went to work in. And we are struggling, as are most educational institutions in this country with our identity and what it means to be Mary Immaculate College of Education and Humanities in 21st century Ireland. How do we change the nature of our institution, our institutional identity, our institutional culture in order to fit in 21st century Ireland? Being in a community is massively important to my wellbeing. Respect for my voice, having a passion and realising ideas and these last two I want to zone in on.

The last one is massively important to me - it's this notion of taking chances and failing safe. Sometimes we work in environments where we perceive that it is not permissible to take a chance; we perceive that it is not permissible to fail or to be seen to fail by others. I would categorise all of this in terms of the idea of play. I don't think we play enough; I think we have alienated play in adult life and I think we stop teaching children to play, act your age, he's a bit of a player, she's playful, ah, he is only playing a game, stop playacting. We demonise play, we associate play with infantile and childish behaviour, whereas actually the opposite in entirely true. Play is seminal to who we are and what we are. I have had the great pleasure and privilege of your company over the last day and I've seen you at play. I think it is a wonderful thing and I think it is a fantastic sign of your organisation that you can create a space in which you can talk and engage in discourse but also in which you can play. Alienation from play causes us great difficulty in adult life, because it leads to unwillingness on our part to take a chance. It leads to unwillingness on our part to even mess, to do things a little bit differently and ultimately it leads to unwillingness on our part to fail. For every time that we succeed, we fail, and if we don't create environments in which we can fail safely, that is not a situation for being well.

I would go further and say that play is seminal to who we are as people and who we are as citizens. This notion of citizenship it is a major problem in this republic at this moment, because in some respects, our democracy has failed, but if it has, we as the citizens failed our democracy. Neelands argues that:

- Play takes place in the space between people;
- the child is able to experiment with vulnerability and surprise;
- the presence of the other, which can be very threatening becomes play;
- play teaches people to become capable of living with others without control because play might seem like it has no boundaries, but it has very distinct and important rules;
- in play there is the fiction of initial equality of power;
- a primary function of art in all human cultures is to preserve and enhance the cultivation of the play space;
- and citizenship founded in play is lost in work.

I suppose one of the two points that I want to leave you with is that we need to play and it is not just about being well or about failing and failing safely. It is about being citizens and learning how to make sense of what our role is within this world, and learning what it is to be one of many people in a community who has an important role in that community.
What might play look like – well the obvious stuff – games, the arts; the less obvious stuff – taking chances – both teachers and staff and being playful.

Play is at the heart of what it means to do drama, music, visual arts, dance, film and so forth. But there is lots of less obvious stuff out there, like taking chances - both teachers and staff. Being playful, I came across some wonderful quotes about creative teachers and these are teachers talking about each other ... (Granger, Barnes and Scoffman, 2004).

> 'her desire to make a difference is infectious'; 'he doesn't put up professional barriers and is relaxed'; 'when they work together they bounce ideas around and often disagree'; 'she is very playful and is always asking questions of herself'; 'he admits that he is unsure and is always seeking out new stuff'; 'in a way he joins in like one of us'.

That was teachers talking about the teacher they admired most in their schools. So that is one of the pillars that I want to leave you with.

The other one I would argue for and argue very strongly, is that we need to imagine and create a little more, that we need to place more emphasis on the importance and the process of translating imagination into a creative act. Imagination for me is the coming up with the idea, creativity then is enabling that idea and realising that idea. They are seminal to our wellbeing, that process, that sense of pleasure that you have when you make something - be it a tray of buns, or you have finished washing the windows that you have put off for some time or when a child is working with Lego and they make something, that sense of accomplishment that can come from creativity. As teachers, we can model creativity in our classroom and, coming back to the failing thing, it is a big thing that we need to fail publicly and be seen by our pupils to do so. We need to innovate and change and we need to respond to the world around us and make meaning of the mess that we are always in and man is always in a mess. I think there is fallacy out there, that as humans and human beings we are always at the pinnacle of evolution, we always imagine that our civilisation is perhaps the most advanced of every civilisation where it isn't really, it is just different. And as human beings we are constantly trying to make sense of the world that we are in and the act of imagining and creating are seminal to the self of who we are and what we are.

Moya spoke about flow, and the positive psychology of flow, yesterday. Creativity exists somewhere between risk and safety. It is always between innovation and tradition, between imagination and reality, between play and discipline, convergent and divergent thinking, and so on. It is not easy and it is not often tangible and I think as teachers, it is very hard at times to assess it, to plan for it, and to report why and how it is happens in our classrooms but it is absolutely vital to being well.

Coming towards the end, but it is important because the brief that Deirbhile handed to me was to provoke you and try to locate some of these ideas within the context that we are in. The Teaching Council is a massive presence in my life now. I spend a lot of time making our work as teacher educators more transparent and accountable for the Teaching Council and that places demands upon us. We are struggling with a changing Ireland; we are struggling with changing communities. Once upon a time you were able to define yourself in one shape or form as teaching in Scoil X or being from West Kerry or South Waterford, now the notion of geographic communities in Ireland is diminishing and changing. Lots of our existing ideas of communities are dying but new communities are emerging, and trying to identify those communities and trying to identify where we belong and who we belong to is difficult. Also, the proliferation of technology has been huge; when I did my B.Ed. I didn't have email, I

didn't have a mobile phone, and I seemed to get on. I now get 120 to 130 emails a day. I'm sure many of you get the same and that is stressful. So these are massive challenges in our lives and I don't have the answers, there are no answers to all of these things - but what I do know is that we should try to create new ways of dealing with these challenges. The world is not going to change back to where it was, so the only thing we can do is to imagine how we locate ourselves in the world and to continue to play at finding solutions. That for me is the only way in which we can be well.

So returning to me, I will leave you with this idea that being well is in your hands, and that we need to play at being well and co-create our futures with our children.

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Discussion Groups and Workshops

Collated Report of Discussion groups

All conference delegates were assigned to a discussion group where there was an opportunity to consider and debate the issues raised both in the conference documentation and by the presenters. Each discussion group had a set of prepared questions to prompt discussions, and a summary of the discussions is presented here.

What is Wellbeing?

There were many definitions offered by the delegates in the various groups. The following is a selection of quotes:

> Feeling well, feeling good about oneself, coping with pressure and being happy.

> Having a balance in life between one's physical and emotional needs ... It is important that the positives far outnumber the negatives in our lives.

> If you are in a good place emotionally it will result in positivity in other areas of your life.

> Being well enough to perform your duties with confidence, assertive enough to express opinions/feelings and supportive enough to listen to the opinions of others.

In general, the delegates felt that ownership of responsibilities and decisions was pivotal to feelings of confidence and competence.

Relationships

Delegates felt that wellbeing depended on the 'spirit of the school'. A school atmosphere of positivity where praise is given regularly and respect is shown to others would help greatly in creating a feeling of wellbeing amongst staff and pupils. Some delegates felt that pupil-teacher relationships were suffering because of the current results-driven agenda. This push for measurable results puts pressure on subjects such as art, music and drama. These are the subjects which could help build relationships between pupils and teachers. One delegate said that 'We cannot forget the welfare of the children and get buried in paperwork'. All agreed that the culture of the school was driven by the principal who should be supportive and understanding of the staff. One delegate suggested that it was important that the principal knew each child's name and that each child knew the names of all the teachers. It was acknowledged that this was difficult in a school with 20 teachers or more. There was general

agreement that a spirit of collegiality and a good support structure for staff members were vital factors in creating teacher wellbeing. It was pointed out that a support structure could include an appreciation by the staff of the workload of the principal in the school. The Parents Association and Board of Management also had a roll in fostering the wellbeing of the teachers and the pupils in a school. It was felt that the Board and parent body could acknowledge the contribution of the teaching staff to the general wellbeing of the school community. Many delegates stated that good communication with parents was vital if schools were to enlist their cooperation in helping their children's progress and wellbeing in our schools.

Pupil Wellbeing

Delegates noted that school policies were important to pupils' wellbeing. Policies which covered bullying, discipline, healthy eating and physical fitness were regarded as vital to the children's progress. Having school liaison and a policy of inclusion for those with special needs were also highlighted as of vital importance to the children's wellbeing. The importance of SPHE in establishing the child's sense of place in the school community was discussed, and delegates highlighted the lack of time given over to the subject. There was general agreement that while teachers could be very positive role models on health issues and boost children's feelings of wellbeing, parent and home influences have a greater impact. A child-centred learning environment was vital to children's wellbeing. The wellbeing of the teacher and the class were closely interlinked. School mission statements placed primary emphasis on the holistic development of the child and teachers should never lose sight of this despite pressure from the DES for improvements in standardized test scores. Educational results were just part of teachers' starter goals.

Teachers' Wellbeing

One delegate stressed the importance of the home/work balance and pointed out that in recent years, teachers have had a vastly increased workload with a constant stream of documents on literacy and numeracy, SSE and assessment putting huge pressure on teachers' time and energy. Another quoted Tony Humphries who stated that ' tired and stressed-out teachers cannot perform to the best of their ability. What you haven't got you cannot give'.

Some delegates suggested that the INTO should be more concerned about the health and welfare of teachers. Croke Park hours should be used for staff self-development and wellbeing. A facilitation in 'teacher wellbeing' was suggested as a great idea. One school had such a facilitation for four sessions over four weeks and the staff benefitted greatly. It was suggested that clusters of small schools in an area could come together for sessions with a facilitator.

Many delegates suggested that positive feedback from the principal and colleagues was very important for teachers' wellbeing. Teachers should take the time to acknowledge colleagues and help them to feel good about themselves. As one delegate stated, 'we should model good behaviour and let the children see how we respect and care for our colleagues'. As well as nurturing and praise, delegates also saw the need for a time to 'vent', when necessary, to offload mounting stress. The staffroom needs to be a place of support and understanding.

It was felt that more support and training needs to be provided for dealing with very difficult children and it was agreed that schools should have support strategies to help teachers cope.

It was felt that good communications with parents can help to encourage cooperation and better relationships with them.

There was concern that the increased workload was leading to isolation of class teachers who abandoned staff rooms at lunchtime to catch up on preparation and assessment in the classroom. NQTs need mentoring and also a supportive environment in the school. They need to feel that they can call on the experience of the principal and senior colleagues if necessary.

Early Childhood

Many teachers felt that proper liaison between the playschools and primary schools was essential for the wellbeing of the children and the infant teachers. Principals drew attention to the fact that schools faced a dilemma when under pressure for numbers to maintain jobs. This pressure conflicted with the desire to have small numbers in infant classes and some schools took in children who were just four years of age as a result. One infant teacher complained that preschool authorities were not alerting primary schools about children with learning or behavioural problems. This meant that teachers of infants were presented with unidentified difficulties every September. It was generally agreed that there was a need for far more interaction and transfer of information to ensure a seamless transition. It was also suggested that there was a need for more involvement and cooperation between the health and education systems. Teachers of infants felt that their wellbeing would be greatly enhanced if there were more occupational therapists and speech therapists working in schools to support the teachers. There was also a discussion on the role of graduates with qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education in the education of children between three and six years of age. It was noted that ratios were much smaller in the pre-school sector than they were in the primary schools. A discussion then also took place on whether primary teachers should specialise in various areas including infant teaching.

Stress

One group listed issues that impact negatively on teachers' wellbeing. Included were unwarranted and unnecessary parental input, the lack of of support in managing challenging children, dealing with bullying (including cyber-bullying), class size, the results-driven approach of the DES and a lack of a sense of fulfilment.

It was pointed out that teachers should be aware that they cannot be perfect. Managing the days when things don't work out as intended is seen as very important to a teacher's wellbeing. Colleagues can help each other by being supportive and affirming in their comments on each other's work.

Major stress factors in the lives of teachers are curriculum overload and the lack of time for preparation, consultation and reflection.

External pressures such as inspectors' visits increase the pressure on time as school policies and plans must be updated and preparation and assessment of class work suffers. One

teacher stated that they were considered 'human doings' not human beings. Teachers tend to react and act rather than think things through. Teachers are acting as psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers and need to step back and prioritise and organise in a way that best suits their teaching and their wellbeing. One delegate stated that teachers should be prepared to stand up and say 'we can't do everything but I am doing my best'. Another mentioned that teachers should not be afraid to say no rather than altering their priorities to please and satisfy others. There was a general feeling that teachers would benefit from time out to meditate quietly and recharge their batteries. Many of the delegates stated that the conference itself was a huge contributor to their feeling of wellbeing as they got to share ideas and strategies with colleagues. One delegate suggested that the DES should organise similar days for schools around the country.

Workshops

In addition to participation in the discussion groups, all delegates got the opportunity to attend two workshops. The workshop presenters and their subject areas are listed below:

- Anne Caulfield: *Mindfulness for teachers*
- Danielle Abraham: *The Incredible Years*
- Kathleen Tan: *Roots of Empathy*
- Róisín Uí Fhearraigh: *Restorative Practices in Primary Schools*
- Deirdre MacIntyre & Moya O'Brien: *Hope, Optimism and Resilience: A practical workshop*
- Niamh Clarke: *Psychological Wellbeing*