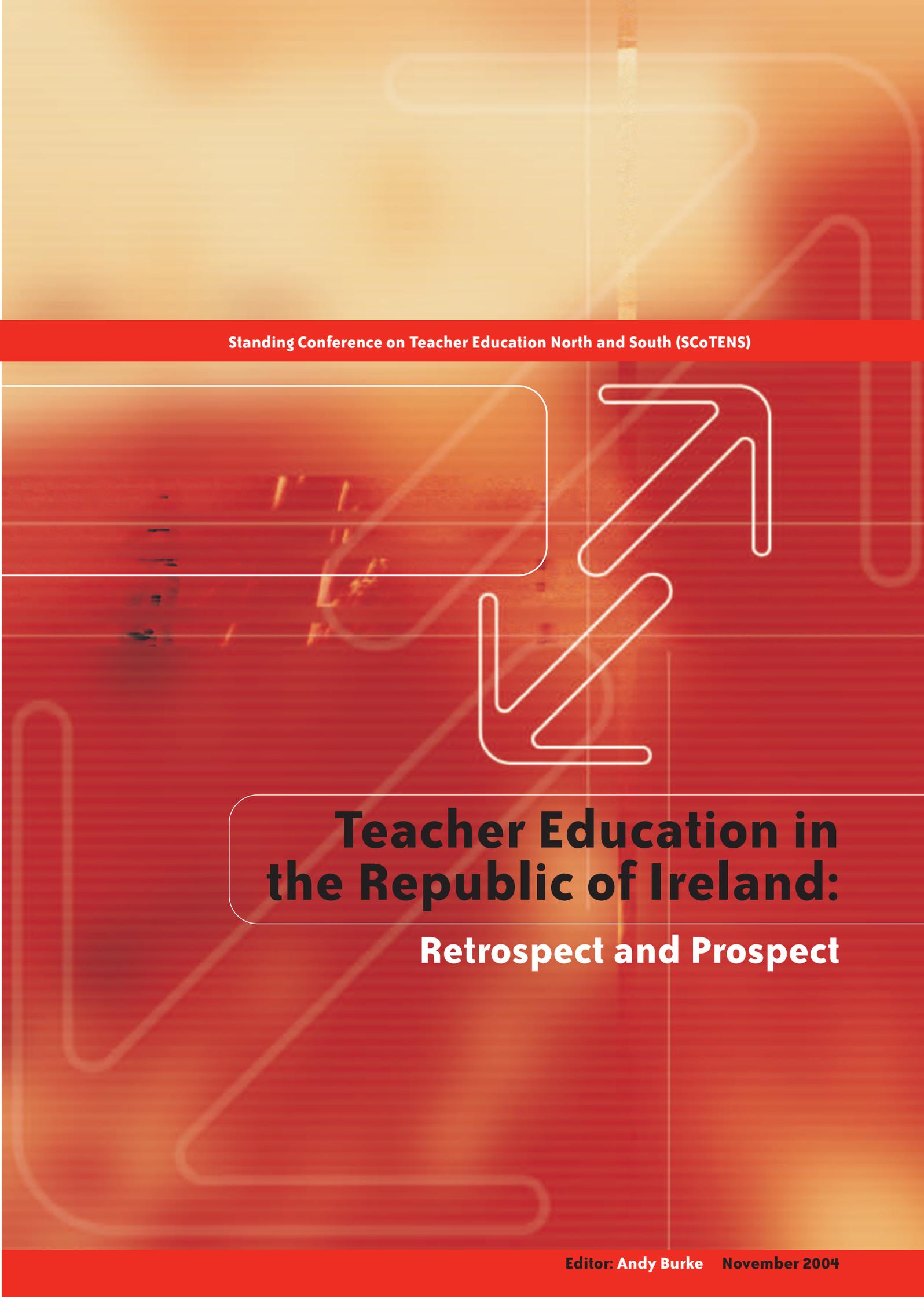


**Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS)**



**Teacher Education in  
the Republic of Ireland:  
Retrospect and Prospect**

**Editor: Andy Burke November 2004**



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### **ABOUT THE STANDING CONFERENCE ON TEACHER EDUCATION, NORTH AND SOUTH (SCoTENS)**

The Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS) was formed in 2002. It emerged from discussions between teacher education representatives and the Department of Education and Science in the Republic of Ireland and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland, who had indicated that they were prepared to give financial support to promote North-South co-operation in teacher education on the island of Ireland.

The following are the agreed objectives of SCoTENS:

- Provide a supportive framework for collaborative research and professional activities on teacher education, North and South;
- Hold invitational conferences on themes of mutual interest to teacher educators, North and South;
- Provide seed funding for North-South research projects on teacher education issues;
- Promote position papers on issues of mutual concern to teacher educators, North and South;
- Use its good offices to assist in obtaining funding for approved research activities;
- Support exchange arrangements between teacher educators for approved purposes, as part of its concern to strengthen existing inter-professional and inter-institutional linkages;
- Establish and maintain a website which will incorporate several forms of computer-mediated communication in relation to educational developments in research, North and South;
- Act as an agency for advice or consultation by policy makers in the Departments of Education of both jurisdictions.

The current joint chairs of SCoTENS are Professor John Coolahan and Professor Anne Moran.



## FOREWORD

In May 2000 an invitational North/South conference of teacher educators took place in Belfast. It was sponsored by the Departments of Education in both jurisdictions and was jointly chaired by Prof. John Coolahan of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and Prof. Harry McMahon of the University of Ulster. The intention was to encourage and further develop discourse among and collaboration between teacher education professionals across the island of Ireland. It was hoped that the initiative would facilitate the identification of areas of common concern and open avenues for ongoing co-operation, research and development. Out of this conference came the formation of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS).

To further the above initiative, Prof. Anne Moran of the University of Ulster and Dr. Andy Burke of St. Patrick's College, Dublin undertook to organise two follow-up conferences on the initial education, induction and continuing professional development of teachers, North and South. The first conference took place in Belfast in November 2000 and the second in Dublin in November 2003. Most of the colleges of education and university education departments, North and South, were represented at both conferences.

The Belfast conference was hosted jointly by the University of Ulster at its Jordanstown campus and by St. Mary's University College, Belfast. The first day was devoted to a description and discussion of the integrated model of teacher education operating in Northern Ireland, and the support mechanisms and materials for same. Day two involved visits to first- and second-level schools in the forenoon and an open discussion on the entire experience in the afternoon.

The Dublin conference was hosted by St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, and St. Mary's College, Marino. It followed a pattern similar to the earlier Belfast conference. A series of presentations, followed by question and answer sessions, took place on the first day while visits to schools and other institutions of particular interest to participants were arranged for day two.

The papers presented at the Dublin conference provide a valuable overview of teacher education (initial, induction and inservice) in the Republic of Ireland, its current status and future prospects. The presenters are among the most experienced and respected educationalists in the country and have been at the heart of developments within the system for many years. In view of this, SCoTENS decided that the papers should be made available in printed form to a wider public.

The editor would like to extend a sincere word of thanks to the following: SCoTENS for its support and encouragement; Andy Pollak and his colleagues at the Centre for Cross Border Studies for advice on and assistance with the preparation and printing of this publication (and to Leslie Stannage Design of Belfast for designing it); St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra and St. Mary's College, Marino for jointly hosting the Dublin conference at which the enclosed papers were delivered; Prof. Anne Moran who was a member of the two-person SCoTENS Teacher Education Sub-Committee which organised the Belfast and Dublin North-South conferences; and, most important, the authors for their excellent papers and their patience with a nagging editor.

The SCoTENS Teacher Education Sub-Committee has been expanded and is continuing its work. Professor Anne Moran resigned from the committee due to pressure of other commitments. The members of the current committee are: Barry Burgess (University of Ulster), Andy Burke (St. Patrick's College, Dublin), Claire Connolly (St. Mary's University College, Belfast), Rose Dolan (National University of Ireland, Maynooth), and



Jim Gleeson (University of Limerick). The next North-South teacher education conference is planned for Dublin in early 2005. The theme chosen, which is of particular interest to teacher educators North and South, is *Primary to Post-Primary: Continuity and Discontinuity – Implications for Teacher Education*.

There is a strong consensus that the two North-South conferences held to date under the auspices of the SCoTENS Teacher Education Sub-Committee have been successful; that they have provided a welcome forum for the discussion of common interests and the sharing of professional wisdom, and that there is considerable potential for further development.

Andy Burke  
Editor  
November 2004

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Padraig Cannon** has been Director of Teaching Practice in Coláiste Mhuire, Marino since 2000, having previously lectured for two years in the Teaching Practice Department, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. The primary focus of his postgraduate study has been the area of whole school evaluation. More recently he has been involved in collaborative research projects on issues pertaining to Teaching Practice. He co-presented at the Spring '04 ATEE conference in Estonia on a comparison of Teacher Education in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

He is a founding member of the *Partners in Education* programme - a third level initiative with the Pushkin Prizes Trust that develops student teachers' creativity and imagination through the arts and writing. He is a member of the Trinity B.Ed. Review committee and the North-South Directors of Teaching Practice Study group.

**Professor John Coolahan** was Professor of Education at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth until summer 2004. He is author of a number of books, has published over one hundred articles in Irish and international journals, has edited several compilations of articles on education, and has lectured extensively in Ireland and abroad. In his public service capacity, Professor Coolahan has acted as adviser to the Department of Education and Science on a wide range of initiatives over fifteen years. He was a member of the Post-Primary Review Body in Northern Ireland (2000-01). At international level he has had extensive engagement with the OECD and the European Commission on educational policy issues. Professor Coolahan is past president of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland, past editor of *Irish Educational Studies* and former chairman of the Academic Committee of the Association of Teacher Education in Europe. He has contributed to and co-ordinated many international conferences on teacher education.

**Professor Sheelagh Drudy** is Head of the Department of Education, University College Dublin. Her particular area of expertise is the sociology of education. Her publications include books and papers on the influence of social class and gender on educational participation and achievement. Her current research is on entrance to the teaching profession. Her publications include: *Schools and Society in Ireland*, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1993 (with K. Lynch); *Gender Equality in Classroom Interaction*, Kildare, NUIM, 1999 (with M. Uí Chatháin); *Education Provision and Support for Persons with Autistic Spectrum Disorders: the Report of the Task Force on Autism*, Dublin, the Stationery Office, 2002 (with the Task Force); *Men and the Classroom*, London, RoutledgeFalmer, forthcoming (with M. Martin, M. Woods, J. O'Flynn).



**Emer Egan** is an Assistant Chief Inspector working in the Policy Support Subdivision of the Inspectorate at the Department of Education and Science. From 1994-2001, Emer worked as a Senior Inspector in the In-career Development Unit of the Department. Since September 2003, she has been assigned as manager of the Business Unit *Teacher Education* where she is responsible for the management of inspectorate involvement in policy advice and development in respect of first and second-level initial teacher education, induction and in-career development; the implementation of school and teacher curriculum support programmes and initiatives; the recognition of teacher qualifications at first and second levels; and the establishment of the Teaching Council.

**Dr. Jim Gleeson** taught at post-primary level in Dublin and in his native Tipperary. He is currently a Senior Lecturer in Education at the Department of Education and Professional Studies at the University of Limerick (UL) and is Course Leader of the Graduate Diploma/Master's in Education Leadership. As well as supervising Master's and Ph.D. students he directs the UL Curriculum Research, Development and Evaluation Unit. His experience in curriculum development and evaluation includes leadership of the SPIRAL 2 Project, Project Manager with the NCCA for the Leaving Certificate Applied and the external evaluation of programmes such as 'European Studies', 'Exploring Masculinities', 'Girls into Technology' and Transition from School to Work programmes.

**Gerry Jeffers** is a lecturer in the Education Department, National University of Ireland, Maynooth. From 1998 to 2000 he was national co-ordinator of the Transition Year Curriculum Support. He spent eleven years as deputy principal in Firhouse Community College, Dublin. He has also worked as a teacher and guidance counsellor in schools in Kilkenny, Balbriggan and Kenya, East Africa. He has written school textbooks in the areas of work experience, media studies and citizenship education.

**Dr. Thomas Kellaghan** is Director of the Educational Research Centre at St. Patrick's College, Dublin. His research interests include assessment, programme evaluation, and disadvantage. He chaired the Working Group on Primary Preservice Teacher Education which prepared the report *Preparing Teachers for the 21st century* (Stationery Office, Dublin, 2002).

**Dr. Tom Mullins** is Head of the Education Department in University College, Cork. He taught at second level before taking an appointment in teacher education at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Since 1985 he has lectured on English in Education at University College, Cork. Dr. Mullins has been involved in the development of the national curriculum in English for many years. His research interests are mainly in the area of English in education, children's literature, the impact of power and politics on syllabus construction, and teacher education.

**The editor, Dr. Andy Burke**, is Dean of Education at St. Patrick's College, Dublin. He lectures in Philosophy and History of Education and on the professional nature of teaching. Since 1990 he has been involved in consultancy work on teaching and teacher education for the World Bank, the European Commission and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs in several African countries, India, the Philippines and Vietnam.



## Second North-South Conference on Initial Teacher Education

### OPENING REMARKS

**Dr. Pauric Travers**  
**President, St. Patrick's College, Dublin**

A dhaoine uaisle go léir,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all here to Belvedere House, St Patrick's College, for the second North/South conference on initial teacher education.

I would like, in particular, to welcome colleagues from north of the border.

Belvedere House has seen many auspicious launches over the years. On 1 October 1812, it was the point of departure for the first attempted hot-air balloon crossing of the Irish Sea by John Sadler. His experience may serve as a reminder of the dangers of hot air; unfortunately, he crash-landed in the sea off Holyhead. My wish for this conference and the initiative of which it is part is a fair wind and a soft landing.

The inaugural conference of SCoTENS in Belfast, in May 2000, identified initial teacher education as one of a number of priority areas where collaborative work between teacher educators, North and South, might pay rich dividends. The workshop on initial teacher education at that conference provided an impetus for this collaboration and laid out a programme of work centred around two follow-up conferences on the changing landscape of teacher education. The first conference, on teacher education in Northern Ireland, took place in November 2000; this second conference, hosted by St Patrick's College and Coláiste Mhuire, Marino turns the spotlight onto teacher education in the Irish Republic. If I may be forgiven a sporting metaphor, this return leg has been somewhat delayed but if it provides a fraction of the information and insight of the first encounter, it will have achieved a good result.

A conference on the theme Teacher Education in the Irish Republic: Retrospect and Prospect could not be more timely. Nationally and internationally, the environment could hardly be more propitious with the fortuitous coincidence of a number of major reports, initiatives and trends. The OECD project on Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers and the EU initiative on Improving Education of Teachers and Trainers provide a wider context which is supportive. In the south, a decade of unprecedented modernisation and reform of curriculum and of the legislative framework has culminated in the significant reviews of teacher education at first and second level and the establishment of a teaching council. The reviews of teacher education, in particular, pose significant challenges for us all. Speaking on behalf of St Patrick's College, we enthusiastically welcome those challenges and look forward to engaging actively and constructively with colleagues in the colleges and in the DES on how best to move forward.

In the North too, the debate on the reform of teacher education has gathered pace. Clearly teacher education is once more a significant agenda item everywhere. The aim of SCoTENS and the purpose of these conferences is to advance that debate and to contribute to the development of policy and practice in a proactive manner. The importance of teacher educators working together, sharing ideas and problems, should not be underestimated. Many of us have been alarmed by the muted voice of teacher education as a sector within third level and within the education system as a whole. Too often, we are inclined to fall between two stools in a manner which is unfortunate and even dangerous – for our individual institutions and, more importantly, for schools, teachers and children.



The programme of this conference addresses the major issues facing teacher education. Professor John Coolahan's retrospect on the historical development of initial teacher education in the Irish Republic since independence provides an important context and assists in clarifying the major trends and issues. We are fortunate to have Dr Tom Kellaghan who chaired the review group on primary pre-service teacher education, Professor Sheila Drudy (UCD) and Dr Jim Gleeson (UL) to elaborate on these issues. Two fundamental issues are the most effective organisation of teaching practice and the most appropriate relationship of teacher education and schools. These are addressed from differing perspectives by Padraig Cannon (Marino) and Dr Tom Mullins (UCC). There is also a growing awareness of the position of initial teacher education on a continuum which includes induction, early and continuing professional development. Ms Emer Egan, Assistant Chief Inspector, DES, is ideally placed to provide an overview of developments in this area. Finally, Gerry Jeffers (NUIM) reports on the transition year programme, one of the more innovative developments at second level and one that is of particular interest to our Northern colleagues.

I would like to congratulate and thank those involved in these conferences, especially Professor Anne Moran of the University of Ulster and Dr Andrew Burke of St. Patrick's College and our colleagues in Coláiste Mhuire, Marino. A very welcome feature of this initiative is the inclusion of the opportunity to visit institutions and agencies to witness good practice at first hand – on this occasion delegates have the opportunity to visit regular primary classes, a special speech and language class, and a mild and general learning disability class at St Patrick's BNS; St Joseph's Adolescent and Family Services unit which provides services for 12-17 year old students with severe emotional/behavioural problems; a transition year class at Maryfield College, and the local Education Centre which provides continuing professional development for teachers.

Guím gach rath ar bhur gcuid oibre. Go raibh maith agaibh.



## THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

### John Coolahan

In approaching a study of the development of teacher education in the Irish Republic a number of questions present themselves. These questions include the following:

- What were the priorities following political independence?
- What was the course structure and approach for teacher education?
- How was 'Education' as a subject regarded?
- What was the underlying conception of teacher education?
- What were the characteristics of the training institutions?
- What were the major reform initiatives?
- How were difficulties surmounted?
- What are the main contemporary trends?
- Is there a coherence in the policy on teacher education?
- How is teacher education positioned for the future?

This article seeks to address such questions and, in the process, give a synoptic account of the progress of teacher education, with a particular emphasis on initial teacher education, from 1922 to 2003.

### Teacher Education in the Early Years of Independence

Prior to 1922 teacher education operated in a common pattern throughout the island of Ireland. Initial teacher education for primary teachers had deep roots, going back to the establishment of national schools in the 1830s, and had established a set pattern over a period of almost ninety years. By 1922 the teaching colleges provided a two-year course of training in single-sex, denominational institutions, with a heavy emphasis on the socialisation of student teachers to fulfil well-defined tasks in the schools. Prior to independence the colleges operated very much under the aegis of the Commissioners of National Education, with their graduates under the close scrutiny of the school inspectorate. Formal teacher education for post-primary teachers was of later origin, taking the form of the consecutive training model whereby, following the obtaining of a university degree, aspiring teachers undertook the new one-year, part-time Higher Diploma in Education Course (H.Dip. in Ed.) in the Education Departments of the universities. The H.Dip. in Ed. dates from 1912, and with the implementation of the regulations of the new Secondary Teachers Registration Council in 1918, the acquisition of this Higher Diploma became an essential requirement for recognition as a registered teacher. Registration became a prerequisite for eligibility for incremental salary, introduced in 1924.

One of the main driving forces for political independence was the ideology of cultural nationalism, one of the key tenets of which was that the possession of a distinct language was a key justification for seeking independent statehood. In the years prior to independence nationalists laid great stress in the necessity for a newly independent Ireland to promote the Irish language as a central and animating feature of its education policy. Education was regarded as a crucial agency in the revival and regeneration of the Irish language and culture which, it was alleged, had been neglected and repressed under British rule. After independence Irish was mandated as the language of instruction in all infants classes and regulations were laid down for the compulsory study of the language throughout the entire school system. This created difficulties for the teaching profession since only 9% of primary teachers had 'Bilingual Certificates' and were deemed



competent to teach through the medium of Irish. A further 23% held 'Ordinary Certificates' but these were not regarded as indicators of proficiency in the language. It was not surprising, therefore, that early attempts would be made to "gaelicise" the teacher training colleges as the formative and nurturing institutions of the new teaching force. Very quickly Irish was declared a compulsory subject for entry to the training colleges. Internally in the colleges steps were taken to promote Irish as the medium of instruction and the language for college social life and routine administration. For teachers in service summer courses in Irish were expanded, and residential periods in Irish-speaking regions were promoted. In 1926 the Government established a series of Preparatory Colleges. These were boarding secondary schools, fully conducted through the medium of Irish, at which children of the Gaeltacht, and some others with high standards in Irish, would receive free secondary education, with a view to their progressing as Irish-speaking cohorts to the training colleges. In these early years the concentration within the training colleges was on promoting fluency and competence in Irish, rather than changing aspects of the course in Education.

However by 1933 a new framework was given to the course of studies in the colleges. This was divided into three components – a professional course in educational studies, a general education in academic subjects, and an optional course. 'Education' was re-organised as "Principles of Teaching", to which 25% of marks were allocated in the final examination. Teaching practice was known as "Practical Teaching", and for the first time in the colleges success in both these elements was deemed obligatory if the student was to qualify. A significant problem arose in the context of the lack of textbooks in the Irish language. Some translation work was undertaken and, of course, lectures were delivered through the medium of the Irish language. Examinations were conducted through Irish. A tendency of producing lecture notes in Irish for students to study came to prevail, with less attention being paid to education texts in English. The old tradition of "Crit" lessons, whereby students in college carried out practice lessons in front of their peers and college staff gradually declined. Teaching practice tended to be organised in block release periods, amounting to six weeks per annum for each student. The practice took place in nearby national schools associated with the colleges. Senior inspectors from the Department of Education monitored standards of teaching practice by evaluating a cross-section of the student teachers.

#### **Features of the Training Colleges, 1922–1960**

The new state inherited five teacher training colleges: St. Patrick's, Drumcondra; Our Lady of Mercy College, Carysfort; and the Church of Ireland College, Rathmines - all in Dublin city; Mary Immaculate College, Limerick; and De La Salle College, Waterford. The latter college closed later, but the Christian Brothers' College in Marino, which had been established in the early 19th century in Waterford, became affiliated to the Department of Education after independence. All colleges were denominational and, except for the Church of Ireland College, were single sex. They operated as boarding institutions, with limited times allocated for extra-mural visits. The colleges had no links with other higher education institutions, and the students had no structured linkages with students other than student teachers. Students who performed at a high level in their final examinations, and who presented certain subjects, could be remitted the first year of the B.A. (General) by the universities. The daily life of students in the colleges was carefully structured on a timetable basis very similar to secondary boarding schools, with set times for religious services, meals, classes, dormitory etc.

The academic programme was dominated by a heavy lecture load. As late as 1959, the average lecture load was 30 hours per week, apart from other organised activities. There was very little time for personal reflection and little emphasis on extra reading by the students. The libraries were inadequately stocked and little used; in some colleges they were rarely unlocked. The colleges had very little academic autonomy. Entry



standards and student numbers were decided by the Department of Education, whose staff also approved the courses and corrected the examination papers. Lecturers were neither expected nor facilitated to engage in educational research, other than lecture preparation. The retention of scholarly or research interests was a matter for themselves.

Despite a sub-culture which grew up in the colleges that might be termed anti-intellectual, some committed and gifted staff members and intelligent and creative students went beyond the general academic and cultural levels required. Students tended to be from the top echelon of school leavers, as measured by the Leaving Certificate examination, and many of them were gifted with talents of an artistic, cultural or sporting type. A “call” to teacher training held high esteem in local society. The ethos was one of strong vocational commitment to a role which held high social status. While the ethos was not one that fully challenged such bright students intellectually, yet the work ethic was strong in support of the conception of teacher formation which was shaped in the nineteenth century, and which continued to prevail.

### **Secondary Teacher Training, 1922-1966**

The years prior to independence had seen significant development in relation to educational studies within the universities. The establishment of chairs of education in the universities (Trinity College 1905; UCD 1909; UCC 1910; UCG 1915; QUB 1914) was potentially of major importance. The Higher Diploma in Education training course began in 1912 and was supported by the regulations of the Registration Council from 1918. The founding of the Association of Secondary Teachers (ASTI) in 1909 was a further pressure for improvement. Moves were afoot at the time to establish education as a serious academic subject within the university as, for instance, in UCD., where education became available at Diploma and Higher Diploma levels in early 20th century. It was offered as an undergraduate subject for the B.A. and B.Sc. degrees, and also at M.A. and Ph.D. levels. An Education Society was established within the university and publication of educational studies was initiated. However these promising omens did not lead to an inspiring era for education in the universities during the four decades following independence.

The Higher Diploma in Education continued to be offered as the training course for secondary teachers who sought to be registered with the Registration Council. However, the course was conducted under very difficult circumstances. Up to the nineteen seventies lectures had to be given in the late afternoon or evening and the course was regarded as a part-time. The staffs of university Education Departments remained pitifully small throughout the period. Indeed, the very serious development occurred whereby different universities left the Chair of Education vacant for considerable periods of time eg. TCD from 1916-1922; UCD from 1950-1966; UCC from 1962-1969. The predominant concern of the small staffs became the teaching of the Higher Diploma in Education. The status of Education as a subject declined among other university staff. Furthermore, the fact that for several decades almost 50% of secondary teachers (mainly religious) were unregistered weakened the status of pre-service teacher education for secondary teachers. Only very small numbers undertook Masters Degrees in educational studies, and very little research work in education was published.

Thus, over the decades, while established subjects were being strengthened and other subjects e.g. psychology and sociology, were being developed within the universities, education was holding a very tenuous position within the sector. It had reached a very weak position by the early 1960s just at the time that there was to be a great renewal and expansion of post-primary schooling in Ireland. This dire condition was highlighted in the Report of the Commission on Higher Education (1967) when it drew attention to the fact that in 1965-66 the four large universities had 722 education students enrolled with a staffing



establishment of 14 full-time academic staff, only four of whom were above junior lecturer status. In the decade 1959 to 1969 the number of Higher Diploma students increased fourfold from 345 to 1,330. This put great strains on the educational studies infrastructure which had been seriously neglected within the universities since independence. In this period, teacher training for vocational teachers was conducted in short part-time courses under the aegis of the Department of Education, many of which were located in Colaiste Carman in Wexford. The emphasis was on applied pedagogics, and encouragement of fluency in the Irish language. Two tests were conducted for the latter – the Teastas Timire Gaeilge and the Ceard Teastas.

### **Developments in Colleges of Education in the Post-1960 Period**

The 1960's was a decade of significant re-appraisal of the state of the nation and developments pointed the way towards significant changes in teacher education and educational studies. A number of reports were issued which had important implications for education and teacher education such as the *Investment in Education Report* (1966), the *Commission on Higher Education Report* (1967) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) *Report on Teacher Education* (1970). It became clear that major reforms were required, in tune with many other social, economic and cultural changes in the society. A more vibrant national economy provided resources and motivation to move forward.

The training colleges, which had been built in the late nineteenth century, were re-modelled and benefited from new buildings and facilities. They now became more generally known as colleges of education, and 'teacher training' was dropped as a term in favour of 'teacher education'. Student numbers in the colleges increased in line with attempts to improve teacher-pupil ratios in the schools. The colleges became more "open" as institutions, with more personal responsibility devolving on students in the management of their scholastic and leisure time. Their older traditions as boarding institutions died away. The single sex colleges gradually gave way to mixed colleges, with female students forming the majority of the student body. The student body also became more diversified by a greater infusion of university graduates on a one-year training course, and the participation of what were known as "mature" students (not school leavers) within the student community.

Staff numbers were expanded in the colleges, and lecturers more specialised in subjects which would form part of the new primary school curriculum of 1971 were employed. From 1962 the colleges assumed greater scholastic responsibility for their courses and examinations, and were less under the control of the Department of Education. An important change occurred in 1963 when, following discussions between college of education personnel and the Department of Education, new courses were devised which reduced the number of subjects to be studied and established a restructured course in education. Education became more central as a subject with revamped courses in methods and the principles of education. This latter now included psychology and elective courses such as history of education, sociology of education and comparative education. The change was directed at giving a more theoretical underpinning to the students' studies. There was also a shift in course emphasis toward more child-centred perspectives. Teaching practice now included some block teaching placement in schools close to students' homes in June or September of the first and second years of their course. Libraries became better stocked and staffed, tutorials/seminars were introduced, and students were expected to utilise libraries in preparing assignments. Educational technology also became more utilised in the delivery of college courses. The establishment of the Educational Research Centre in 1966, located on the campus of St. Patrick's College, was symbolic of a new concern that the health and vitality of a modern education system required empirical research studies on the system.



The national teachers union, the INTO, had long sought a university linked award for primary teachers and a number of reports had suggested that the time was ripe for the establishment of such a degree. Eventually, the Government decided to request the universities to agree to the award of degrees to primary teachers, and a notable landmark in teacher education was the introduction of the Bachelor in Education Degree (B.Ed) in 1974. The three largest colleges became “recognised” colleges of the National University of Ireland, while the Church of Ireland College, Marino College and Froebel College became associated with Trinity College Dublin for their B.Ed degrees. (In the early 1990s St. Patrick’s College became a college of Dublin City University and Mary Immaculate College, Limerick became a college of the University of Limerick). For the great majority of students the B.Ed. degree is a three-year honours programme, while students in the colleges associated with Trinity College undertake a fourth year to achieve an honours degree. Under the B.Ed. structure, Education has become the central subject, and the extended time has facilitated a deeper study of the area. The colleges have assumed the normal academic freedom traditional within the universities. Methodology involves a range of approaches including lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, microteaching, practice teaching, and literary/research studies. Education is seen as both a theoretical and practical discipline, and the emphasis has shifted towards developing “reflective practitioners”. The colleges continue to benefit from very high calibre student intake, and college lifestyle has become attuned to preparing them better for teaching in a fast-changing society.

### **Re-Building the University Education Departments**

With regard to Education within the universities, heed was taken of the calls of the Commission on Higher Education (1967) that the university departments should be expanded as a matter of urgency, and that a more active research role be developed. Each university appointed new professors and all chairs of education were filled. Recruitment of more full-time staff with various specialisms took place. Premises and facilities were also improved, particularly in the areas of audio-visual equipment, resource rooms, microteaching studios, workshop spaces, and library resources. The Higher Diploma in Education was re-structured as a one-year full-time course, with a better balance between university and school-based experience. Over time, class numbers were reduced and better staff-student ratios were achieved. This allowed for less reliance on mass lectures and more scope for seminar, tutorial and workshop groups. More individual attention was given to students on teaching practice. More emphasis was placed on psychology and sociology of education, and greater numbers of students opted to specialise in educational technology, microteaching and other elective courses. Efforts were made to give a more practical emphasis to the courses. In later years the quality and motivation of entrants increased and by the 1990’s entry to the Higher Diploma in Education courses became very competitive.

All university Education Departments have re-vitalised their postgraduate work since 1970. M.Ed. courses were introduced, while MA and Ph.D. degrees in Education were expanded. There has been a great expansion of specialist post-graduate diplomas in education, such as guidance and counselling, remedial education, computers in education, educational management. The expansion of these certificated in-career development courses for teachers has had many benign effects. It has fed in productively to aspects of initial teacher education, has helped to established closer links between Education Department staffs and experienced teachers, and has promoted a greater research orientation for both university staff and involved teachers.

### **Towards an All-Graduate Teaching Profession**

A significant new departure in teacher education was the setting up of the National College for Physical Education in 1970 which, within a few years, developed into Thomond College of Education. Thomond



College was designed on different lines from the traditional colleges of education and from the university education departments. It was to concern itself with the education of specialist second-level teachers in areas such as physical education, woodwork, metalwork and rural science. The students followed four-year concurrent courses, with teaching practice taking place on the block placement model. The degrees were initially awarded by the National Council for Education Awards. Thomond College was subsequently absorbed into the University of Limerick (UL), following its establishment in 1989. Thereafter, Thomond's degrees were awarded by UL. Thomond College also began to offer some postgraduate teacher education diplomas, such as the Higher Diploma in Business Studies.

The National College of Art and Design (NCAD) was re-structured as an institution more independent of the Department of Education in the early seventies. In more recent years, the NCAD has become a recognised college of University College Dublin. Art and design teachers are trained on a dual model – the concurrent four-year programme, or the consecutive programme where a single year of professional studies follows the attainment of an undergraduate degree. Art teachers are also trained in the Crawford Institute, Cork. Its academic awards are conferred by the NCEA. The two colleges of home economics became associated with universities - Sion Hill, Dublin with Trinity College and St. Angela's, Sligo with the National University of Ireland, Galway. They too follow a concurrent course model. In the late 1960s, the Mater Dei Institute of Education was established by the Archbishop of Dublin for the education and training of teachers of religious education. It follows the concurrent model. Its degrees were for many years validated by the Pontifical University of Maynooth. In recent years the Institute became a college of Dublin City University, which now gives the awards for its initial teacher education course, B.Rel.Sc., and its in-career courses.

Thus within a short period in the 1970s the teaching profession became an all graduate one, with a mixture of concurrent and consecutive initial teacher education programmes on offer, and all new categories of teachers having degree status. The changing profile of the teaching profession was also reflected in the establishment of a common salary scale for teachers in 1972, with extra allowances for qualifications and the exercise of responsibility posts. It was also reflective of great change that a report issued in 1974 recommended the establishment of a Teaching Council, which would involve the exercise considerable self-governing powers by the teaching profession. This proposal was not, however, implemented at that time.

While reforms of initial teacher education had dominated policy concerns in the late sixties and early seventies, a greater awareness of the importance of in-service teacher education was also in evidence. This was signalled, in part, by the setting up of regional Teacher Centres to support in-service activities for all categories of teachers in the regions. Accordingly, one can conclude that the decade 1965 to 1975 was a momentous one for the teaching career and for initial teacher education in particular.

### **Developments in Research Aspects of Education**

Initial teacher education was also enriched and deepened by a contemporaneous flowering of educational research, and of scholarly associations with an educational research interest. The Educational Research Centre provided valuable findings particularly in the area of empirical research studies. Staff in the teacher education departments and institutions came to see engagement in educational research as an integral part of their professional responsibility. There has been a very significant increase in research-based Masters and Ph.D. degrees. The education holdings of academic libraries have been greatly expanded. External research agencies, such as the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the Linguistics Institute, have focussed more on educational research issues. The Reading Association of Ireland (RAI) was founded in 1975, and the Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) in 1976. State funding for educational



research remained lamentably small, but has improved since 1992 with the establishment of an Educational Research Committee within the Department of Education and Science. Many reports, pamphlets, books and articles with an educational research emphasis have become available. These have helped to build a knowledge base, with an Irish dimension to it, to underpin initial and in-service teacher education, as well as teacher education policy issues.

### **Policy “Wobbles” and “Steadying” the Policy Approach**

From the mid-sixties to the mid-eighties much creditable work had been done in teacher education. However, linked to national economic difficulties, a slowdown of momentum occurred from the mid-eighties, and a number of policy “wobbles” threatened to undo some of the progress which had been made. There was a lack of government action on a number of policy reports such as *The Report on the In-Service Education of Teachers* in 1984. That year also marked the beginning of a decline in the birth rate. Short-term thinking led to the very controversial closure of the country’s largest teacher education college, Carysfort College, in 1987. An even more drastic development occurred when, in January 1991, the Cabinet decided to close three of the five university education departments offering Higher Diploma in Education Courses. Due to strong opposition by university leaders, this decision was never implemented. Instead, the Higher Education Authority conducted a review, arising from which a quota system for intake to Higher Diploma in Education courses was agreed by a tripartite Committee of the Authority, the Department of Education and the universities. This quota system is still in operation.

These developments caused uncertainty in teacher education circles at the time, but a more “steadying”, affirmative attitude came to prevail shortly afterwards. In June 1991 the OECD published its review of Irish education, with particular reference to the teaching career. The report was very complimentary to the quality of the teaching force and of the personnel and infrastructure in place for teacher education. Instead of retrenchments, it recommended developments in support of the teacher career viewed from a “3 Is” perspective – good quality initial teacher education, followed by a structured form of induction and greatly expanded in-service teacher education. This approach was also endorsed in major policy papers which followed. Chapter six of the government *Green Paper on Education* (1992), chapter eleven of the *Report on the National Education Convention* (1994), and chapter eight of the government’s White Paper on Education (1995) endorsed the “3 Is” policy, affirmed the quality of the teaching force, proposed qualitative reforms for a better future and recommended the establishment of a Teaching Council. These strategic statements of policy coincided with a dramatically improved performance in the national economy, and with a greater political and public realisation of the centrality of a good education system for the promotion of the economic, social and cultural life of Irish society.

What might be termed as a “rolling” reform process was set in motion. Through the nineties various on-going reforms took place in initial teacher education programmes. There was a further expansion of the postgraduate, in-career certificated courses. In 1992 the In-career Development Unit (ICDU) of the Department of Education and Science was established. Significant expansion in in-service teacher education, now more commonly termed continuing professional development (CPD), took place with a range of providers in a variety of modes. The Teacher Centres were up-graded and provision extended under the new title of ‘Education Centres’. A structured system of induction was slow to take off, but in 2002 pilot schemes were initiated for primary and post-primary teachers, which hold much promise for development.



### Shaping Teacher Education and the Teaching Career for the “Knowledge Society”

Since the early nineties Irish education has been subject to an unprecedented amount of re-appraisal, analysis, policy formulation and legislation, within a lifelong learning paradigm. The policy process engaged in has been very consultative. This has cultivated a high degree of public awareness of, and engagement with, the issues. Politicians, economists and educationists have been emphasising the desirability of Ireland’s developing its niche within the evolving knowledge society which is opening up. Within this context it is realised that a high quality education system is a *sine qua non* if the ambitious aspirations are to be realised, and that such a system is contingent on the availability of a quality teaching force. A range of recent developments in teacher education are best considered against this background.

In 1998 reviews of primary and post-primary teacher education were initiated. The reports have been available since 2003, and it is understood that the Department of Education and Science is preparing to respond to these reviews in the autumn of 2004.

The Department has recently established a new section to deal with teacher education issues. A more controversial issue arose in the summer of 2003 when the Department recognised the qualifications of a new distance teacher education agency, Hibernia College, which had no track record in the field and about whose courses many reservations have been voiced.

In 1998 a report of a ministerial committee was presented on the establishment of a Teaching Council. Legislation was passed in 2001 for such a Council and procedures are underway in autumn 2004 for elections to the Council. The Teaching Council will have significant powers relating to the standards of entry to the profession, approval of initial teacher education courses, promotion of induction and continuing professional development, commissioning research, and advising the Minister on supply and demand issues in teacher education. The Teaching Council has the potential to be a major influence on the future shape of teacher education and of the teaching career.

Ireland has also been an enthusiastic participant in the major OECD study *Attracting Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers, 2002-04*. The synthesis report of this study, drawing on the experience of twenty-five countries, is scheduled for publication in late November 2004. Ireland has, of course, also been a member of the EU study on the education of teachers and trainers, under associated Objective One of the EU Lisbon objectives. The chairperson of this working group is an Irishman, Mr. Sean Feerick, who is giving an address on this study to the Annual Conference of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS) on 11th November 2004. For a number of years SCoTENS has been fostering greater communication about, and research on, teacher education issues on a cross-border basis. Thus there is a confluence of reports and reflections on teacher education and the teaching career from national and international sources which are likely to be influential in charting new pathways for the future. There is a preparedness and appetite to continue the rolling reform process within the teacher education community, which cherishes Ireland’s valuable asset of very high quality candidates for teacher education. Within the professional and technical issues involved, there is a realisation of the moral purpose of teacher education, and that quality in teacher education should be an Irish benchmark.



## CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

**Emer Egan**

### Preamble

During the past decade the continuing professional development of teachers in Ireland has received sustained attention. An expanded and strengthened in-career development programme was made possible through the assistance of the Human Resources Operational Programme (HROP) of the European Union under the National Development Plan. Over £35m was allocated for the six years 1994-1999.

In this way, funding to enable the achievement of policy objectives outlined in the White Paper *Charting Our Education Future* (Ireland, 1995), and in the HROP, was secured. The main policy objectives of the plan centred around supporting curriculum reform, enhancing principals' skills as leaders and managers of school-based change, developing teachers' skills in providing for pupils with special education needs, and facilitating the effective management of schools and the fuller involvement of parents in the education of their children. The rationale for the range of activities was the entitlement of all Irish children to education of the highest quality.

In tandem with the policy drive, a significant parallel project was initiated: £10m for the development of a network of Education Centres was secured from the European Union under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). This resulted in purpose built or refurbished premises for the majority of the full-time Education Centres, and during the period the network grew from 6 to 21 full-time Centres. These Centres were used to support the delivery of the enhanced in-career development programme.

### Introduction

This paper focuses on the practical elements of the current programme of in-career or continuing professional development for qualified teachers. It outlines how the system is organised and managed, including the role of the Education Centre network, and details the current priority activities. A number of emerging challenges are identified in the conclusion. The paper has been developed from a presentation to the North/South Conference on Initial Teacher Education on 13th November 2003.

### Structures for the organisation and management of continuing professional development

At the level of the Department of Education and Science (DES), responsibility for the continuing professional development of teachers was managed by the In-Career Development Unit (ICDU). Established in 1994 with a brief to develop, manage and evaluate the national programme of in-career development, the ICPU team included both administrative and professional staff, and engaged with the education partners through a variety of implementation, consultative or advisory groups. In May 2004 the ICPU, through a major restructuring process, was given significantly increased responsibilities and was renamed the *Teacher Education Section (TES)* to reflect these developments.

The Teacher Education Section is now responsible for three inter-related aspects of teacher education and development: (1) initial teacher education; (2) induction and (3) in-career development. This responsibility embraces policy formulation, co-ordination, general direction and management, quality control and financial control in relation to in-career development activities. One of the strategic aims is to empower appropriate groups, bodies and institutions to design, develop and deliver in-career development programmes effectively and efficiently.



This work focuses on four key areas:

- (1) National in-career development for new/amended curriculum areas
- (2) National support services for subjects, Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle programmes (e.g. transition year) and particular areas such as school development and special needs.
- (3) Pilot induction programme for newly qualified teachers
- (4) Education Centre Network.

The programme of in-career development activities under the responsibility of the TES involves national programmes, local initiatives and activities organised by interest groups such as management bodies, parents' councils, subject associations and trade unions. In determining the allocation of resources, priority is currently given to curriculum and programme reform initiatives, special educational needs and the activities of Education Centres. The management of discrete elements of the national programme of activities, particularly those with a curriculum or programme remit, is generally devolved to a dedicated support service which is hosted by an Education Centre. The range of activities supported by the TES is reviewed on an annual basis.

The infrastructure, through which continuing professional development programmes are managed at regional and local levels, is provided by the 21 full-time and 9 part-time Education Centres, now organised into six regions. While the core role of an Education Centre is to meet locally identified school and teacher needs, they are centrally involved in the organisation and delivery of most national programmes. In broad terms, therefore, Education Centres may be involved in supporting the continuing professional development of teachers in a variety of ways:

- As host centre for a national support service/national programme
- As local organiser of national programmes
- As organiser of locally driven programmes, which include courses, projects and support groups
- In developing expertise and initiatives in collaboration with local teachers
- As organiser of outreach modular 3rd level courses.

In addition to Education Centre activities, the TES is involved in the direct management or approval of other initiatives:

- Proposals submitted by national bodies such as teacher unions, management bodies, parent councils or subject associations
- Professional development activities arising from DES initiatives such as social inclusion measures e.g. Home School Community Liaison, Giving Children an Even Break, Reading Recovery
- Proposals initiated by Colleges of Education and Education Departments in Universities
- Proposals from school staffs/individual teachers/groups of teachers
- The summer course programme for primary teachers
- Administration of the refund of fees scheme.

**On an individual basis, teachers have access to the following:**

- Post-graduate programmes or initiatives developed by colleges of education or universities
- Secondment opportunities
- Study leave
- Involvement in national, European or international projects



- Participation in research projects
- Refund of fees scheme.
- Extra personal vacation days arising from attendance at summer courses.

### **What drives change and how is it managed?**

The key driver of change from an education perspective is the rate and level of environmental change. In this context, the education curriculum at all levels must be continuously adapted to reflect the emerging needs in areas such as Information and Communications Technology skills, language skills, special needs etc. National in-career development programmes generally arise when curriculum or programme change is introduced to meet these requirements. Once the Minister for Education and Science has considered the advice of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and decided on the changes to be introduced, normal practice is to establish a support service.

In the case of the primary system, for example, the introduction of a revised Primary School Curriculum in 1999 was the catalyst for the establishment of such a service. While planning for the introduction of the curriculum began in 1997, a support service, the *Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP)*, was established in 1998, a year before the curriculum was launched. Planning for the introduction of the curriculum was conducted in a collaborative manner and involved the education partners through an Implementation Group. This Group was supported by a Technical Working Group which considered in detail how the introduction of the curriculum should be supported and managed. Once the schedule of activities had been agreed, the support service team was recruited and progressed to the next stage which involved detailed planning and determination of delivery methods and schedules.

### **Composition of support services**

Responsibility for the development, management and delivery of support service programmes is devolved to the support service team which is managed by a National Co-ordinator. The team of trainers/facilitators or regional development officers is recruited, following a public advertisement campaign, and is generally made up of teachers seconded from their schools. Support services are managed by a Steering Committee which is chaired by a TES representative at senior level (usually an inspector) and includes the following: National Co-ordinator; Education Centre Director; and representatives of the Inspectorate, the NCCA and TES administration. The composition and size of the support services are determined by the nature and scope of the programme to be supported.

When a support programme is being planned by the support service, the first stage generally involves a design team which ensures that linkage is maintained between the curriculum design stage and the rollout of professional development activities. Detailed programme content and the range of activities are then drawn up by the team of trainers and the programme is delivered locally. A range of strategies is employed during delivery, influenced by factors such as the degree of change required, the size of the target audience, the extent to which the programme requires practical activity, and the scope of the task. All of the following strategies are employed:

#### *Group sessions with school staffs/teachers*

Used when large scale changes are being introduced and clarity of message is an important objective, e.g. Restructured Senior Cycle (Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate Vocational programmes), Primary Curriculum Support Programme, School Development Planning Initiatives



*Reflection on practice/interactive work with groups*

An integral part of all programmes, this strategy is employed for processing information and for work on classroom methodologies

*Videos of classroom practice/CD-ROMs*

Always popular with teachers, the presentation of new or different visions of practice has been found to be a powerful way of influencing teachers' classroom practice.

*Networking between school staffs/clustering*

Cluster meetings, where teachers of particular subjects or areas are facilitated in networking with colleagues, have proven to be a very effective strand of the post-primary curriculum reform programme.

*School visits by team members*

Many support service teams visit schools, generally at the invitation of the school. Their work might involve consultation with the principal, with a curriculum or programme leader or team, or facilitation of a staff/team meeting. In the case of the PCSP, Cuiditheoirí (supporters) visit classrooms and assist teachers by demonstrating how aspects of the curriculum might be organised and taught at classroom level. Second Level Support Service personnel will work in close consultation with schools, advise on needs analysis and assist in the design and implementation of programmes tailored to meet specific needs. This approach facilitates the development of a relationship with schools which extends over time so that staff development can become a continuing process rather than a series of once off events.

*Modular courses*

Specific to the SLSS, modular courses offer a model of support in which the emphasis is on the teaching of the programme or syllabus in the classroom rather than on the transmission of information. Modular courses offer optional accreditation to participants

*Internet/e-mail/helplines/newsletters*

Support services usually set up a website, where access to resources and updates are provided. Many also provide e-mail or phone service where queries can be received. Publication of Newsletters which are widely disseminated within the system also feature.

*After-school "clinics" in Education Centres*

Some support services arrange to have members of their teams present in an Education Centre at specified times when teachers can drop in to discuss implementation issues.

In general the various models employ different strategies, and flexibility in delivery is greatly encouraged so that activities are tailored to suit the particular needs of participants. During the past decade models have developed incrementally and have been adapted in the light of experience.

### **Current national programmes**

The following is a list of national programmes currently being supported:

- Primary Curriculum Support Programme ([www.pcsp.ie](http://www.pcsp.ie))
- Second Level Support Service ([www.slss.ie](http://www.slss.ie))
- School Development Planning Initiative: Second-Level Schools ([www.sdpi.ie](http://www.sdpi.ie))



- School Development Planning Service: Primary Schools ([www.sdps.ie](http://www.sdps.ie))
- Social, Personal and Health Education Support Service ([www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie))
- Leadership Development for Schools ([www.clare-education-centre.ie](http://www.clare-education-centre.ie))
- **New/revised syllabi:**
  - Leaving Certificate Biology ([www.nbsstralee.ie](http://www.nbsstralee.ie))
  - Leaving Certificate Home Economics ([www.homeeconomics.ie](http://www.homeeconomics.ie))
  - Junior and Leaving Certificate Religious Education ([www.galwayeducationcentre.ie](http://www.galwayeducationcentre.ie))
  - Junior Certificate Maths ([www.juniorcertmaths.ie](http://www.juniorcertmaths.ie))
- **Start-ups:** in Junior Certificate Science; Junior Cycle Physical Education; Leaving Certificate History, and Leaving Certificate Geography
- Pilot Induction programme for Newly Qualified Teachers (primary and post-primary)
- Special Education Support Service.

### Expenditure

The TES budget for the years 1997-2003 is outlined below:

Year	Expenditure
1997	€10.80m
1998	€12.20m
1999	€19.00m
2000	€25.79m
2001	€26.99m
2002	€28.93m
2003	€28.68m

### Evaluation

As a minimum, all participants complete a standard evaluation form while a composite evaluation form is submitted to the National Coordinator or TES for consideration and action. The Inspectorate also plays a role in the evaluation of activities supported by the TES. External evaluations are commissioned on a selected number of activities every year. In the case of the Primary School Curriculum, for example, the following evaluations are currently underway:

1. The DES and NCCA are co-funding an evaluation which aims to assess the impact of the PCSP in promoting teachers' overall understanding of the Primary School Curriculum and in supporting the implementation of the curriculum in schools and classrooms. The evaluation is being carried out by a team from the University of Dublin, Trinity College.
2. The NCCA is currently engaged in a Primary Curriculum Review. The four main activities in this review are:
  - a. Teacher Template Study (a Teacher Template was disseminated to all teachers during the 2003/4 Consolidation and Review Year for the Primary Curriculum. The process involved teachers and



school staffs in reflecting on and planning for the use of curriculum documents in English, Visual Arts and Mathematic. A sample Teacher Template is being reviewed in this study).

- b. case studies in six schools
  - c. evaluation of the PCSP (as described above)
  - d. review of research on curriculum in primary schools: a literature review activity, the purpose of which is to identify and reference the range of published studies regarding the Primary School Curriculum.
3. During 2003/04, the Inspectorate carried out a Curriculum Implementation Evaluation which involved evaluating the impact of the Primary School Curriculum on teaching and learning in three subjects (English, Visual Arts and Mathematics) in a sample of schools.

When the evaluation is completed, which is expected by early 2005, the TES will manage a process through which key experiences and lessons emerging from the various evaluations will be discussed and disseminated with a view to agreeing future plans for the effective support and implementation of the primary curriculum.

### **Challenges in the current system**

During the past decade considerable opportunities for continuing professional development have been provided for teachers. There is clear evidence that they value the availability and quality of activities provided by the various support services. The direct involvement of teachers in the design, delivery and management of support services has been a very positive feature of the activities, and there now exists a cadre of high quality trainers with generic skills in the system. In addition, the expansion of the Education Centre network now provides an infrastructure through which future developments can be organised and managed. In moving forward, a number of challenges have been identified which require attention. These include:

#### **Timing of in-career development activities**

Support activities for national programmes take place, in the main, during school time. At primary level most activities are targeted at the school staff and thus involve school closure. At post-primary level, where activities may be subject specific, invitations to attend events are targeted at individual teachers. While substitute cover is available for these events, disruption caused by teacher absence can be considerable. In recent months a calendar of events planned by the various support services has been drawn up and circulated to schools. However co-ordination of these events remains a challenge.

There have also been renewed calls from the managerial bodies to address what they refer to as “the erosion of the school year” by scheduling more in-service, insofar as is practicable, outside core school time.

#### **Teacher replacement: experienced teachers joining support services**

The principle of recruiting practicing teachers by open competition to support services results in experienced teachers, many with postgraduate qualifications, being replaced by less experienced



colleagues. The management authorities of schools have expressed concern about this situation, particularly where, due to teacher shortages, they find it difficult to recruit qualified replacements and/or where turnover in replacements is high.

#### **Lack of time for collaborative school planning and team development**

The Primary Curriculum Support Programme and School Development Planning Support Services at both primary and post-primary levels promote an approach to planning which is collaborative. While provision for designated planning time has been agreed as an element of these services' work, schools continually seek additional time for planning. However when teachers are involved in approved time for planning or in attending professional development activities during school time, a reduction in pupils'/students' time in school results.

#### **System essentially centrally driven**

Notwithstanding the remit of Education Centres to provide for locally identified school and teacher needs, the level of activity associated with curriculum and programme reform at both primary and post-primary levels has resulted in a diminution of teachers' attendance at locally generated professional development activities. A system where greater emphasis is placed on professional development activities in the context of needs identified by schools and teachers is not only desirable but essential for the future.

#### **Turnover of teachers in subjects such as CSPE/SPHE/LCA**

Turnover of teachers is high in certain programmes such as Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and in subjects such as Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). As a result, demand for access to relevant professional development activities is constant. This creates difficulties for the support services and for schools. There may be a need to enhance the available suppliers for these teachers and to encourage other teachers to experience such programmes.

#### **Accreditation of courses**

Given the amount of time devoted to continuing professional development by teachers, the level of accredited courses is extremely limited. Pathways to accreditation have been developed by some support services and by the Education Centre network. In the case of the support services, the School Development Planning Initiative works in partnership with NUI Galway in the organisation of the Higher Diploma in Professional Education Studies (School Planning). The Second Level Support Service runs modular courses, involving attendance both during and outside school time, which are recognized as routes to Masters' courses in both the University of Limerick and Dublin City University. Most significant in enabling teachers to access routes to further qualifications has been that provided by the University of Dublin, Trinity College, on an outreach basis through the Education Centre network. Many teachers, having successfully completed the required modules in the Diploma in Educational Studies and the Diploma in Management in Education, can go on to complete a Master of Studies programme and some have progressed further to Doctoral work. It is significant that many of the teachers who have been recruited to the support services have come through this route. Some Education Centres offer other accredited courses. Most notable is the range offered in the Monaghan Education Centre which is accredited by the University of Ulster and Queens University Belfast.

There appears to be a clear appetite amongst teachers for the accreditation of in-career development courses. This is strengthened by the significant number of teachers pursuing post-graduate qualifications in their own time at their own expense.

**Access**

With the current focus on nationally driven professional development programmes, the range of local events has diminished. Under current structures, a school which identifies particular aspects it wishes to address may not be able to recruit a suitable person to assist them locally. An associated issue is the level of staffing resources in Education Centres and the relatively untapped resource of ICTs.

**Fragmentation**

At primary level significant attempts have been made to ensure coherence in all the professional development activities which are available to schools and, where possible, new initiatives are routed through the PCSP: examples include the dissemination of the Learning Support Guidelines and the Child Protection Guidelines. The situation at second level is more problematic and independently functioning support services have not yet been able to successfully co-ordinate the range of their offerings to schools. However since 2002 the Second Level Support Service has attempted to create multidisciplinary teams which are in a position to assist schools in a variety of ways. This manner of working deserves further exploration, particularly where co-operation with Education Centres in determining how to respond to schools' needs might be facilitated.

Meeting system needs while also meeting the professional development needs of teachers

At national level the primary focus of continuing professional development activities has been associated with curriculum reform or DES initiatives. Looking to the future, the principles underpinning Whole School Evaluation (WSE) and school development planning, involving school review and self-evaluation, should empower schools to take greater ownership in identifying school and teacher continuing professional development needs. Ideally schools should have a policy and an associated professional development plan which is aligned to their school development plan and should be able to access flexible support services which will respond to their needs at a local level. An aspect of this work will involve meeting the development needs of principals and middle management whilst also recognising that management authorities and parent bodies have needs. A system which provides for regular needs analysis should enable more efficient and effective organisation of activities into the future.

**Conclusion**

Significant progress has been made in recent years in the range and quality of continuing professional development activities available to qualified teachers, although the focus has been almost exclusively on national programmes associated with curriculum reform. Expenditure on in-career development has seen an increase from 10.8m in 1997 to an estimated 26.68m in 2003. Recent developments in the School Development Planning Initiative, the Second Level Support Service and the Primary Curriculum Support Programme, which focus on supporting the individual school in addressing its development needs, have potential for further development. Issues such as access, accreditation, co-ordination and timing, in particular, will require consideration in this and the broader context. In the longer term the development of a policy on the teacher education continuum will facilitate the development of lifelong learning opportunities for teachers, as individuals and as members of a school staff.



## **PREPARING TEACHERS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON PRIMARY PRESERVICE EDUCATION**

**Thomas Kellaghan**

When Micheál Martin, then Minister for Education and Science, announced the establishment of a Working Group in January 1999 to review preservice teacher education programmes, it was not in response to a great clamour for reform, even though there had been no major review of teacher education since the foundation of the state. However by 1999 it was becoming increasingly clear that the rapid rate of change in Irish society presented serious challenges for the education system, which had obvious implications for the way that teachers are prepared. The Working Group was faced with the task of assessing the adequacy of existing teacher preparation programmes to meet existing needs and, a much more daunting task, their adequacy in meeting needs that might be anticipated in the new millennium. The Group realised at an early stage that its deliberations might result in a call not for minor adjustments, but for a root and branch reform based on a reconceptualisation of teacher education.

It is not the purpose of this paper to provide a detailed description of the thinking or of the recommendations of the Working Group. These can be found in the report *Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century: Report of the Working Group on Primary Preservice Teacher Education*, published in 2002<sup>1</sup>. In the present paper<sup>2</sup>, the work of the Group is summarised under five headings. First, its modus operandi is described. Secondly, the major challenges that were perceived to face teaching are outlined, as these were important considerations in framing the Group's approach. Thirdly, the knowledge/skills that the Group considered a beginning teacher required, and which a teacher education programme should be designed to provide, are described. Fourthly, the key principles underlying the recommendations of the Group are listed. Finally, some of the Group's major recommendations are presented.

### **Modus Operandi of the Group**

The Working Group was made up of 20 members with varying backgrounds in education. Its terms of reference pointed to the need to consider a variety of developments in primary education, including curriculum changes, as well as various aspects of teacher preparation (e.g. concurrent and consecutive approaches; relationship between initial education and subsequent provision for in-career development).

The Group met in plenary session 17 times between January 28 1999 and March 15 2001. Four subgroups consisting of members of the plenary group were formed in February 1999 to examine and prepare reports on specific topics. The topics addressed were: content of courses and course delivery; particular elements of courses (e.g., early childhood education, religious education, assessment); general school management; and languages. Written reports were submitted by each subgroup to the plenary group for discussion. The subgroups were supported by a member of the plenary Group (Caoimhe Máirtín) who was seconded from her work position for this purpose from October 1 to December 31 1999.

The work of the Group was also supported by Rhona Larney who reviewed relevant documentation and literature and prepared a chapter in the report on the current structure of primary preservice teacher education. In its discussions, the Group considered research and practice in teacher education in other industrialised countries (particularly in the United States of America), as well as debate and proposals about its future direction.

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<sup>1</sup> A review of the preparation of teachers for post-primary schools was carried out at the same time.

<sup>2</sup> The paper for the most part addresses programmes in the large colleges (and particularly the B.Ed programme). However much of it is also relevant to programmes in the smaller colleges and to post-graduate programmes.



## Challenges Facing Teaching

Ten major challenges facing teaching were considered by the Working Group. These range from curriculum concerns to new roles for teachers to greater involvement with parents and communities. Teacher education will play a critical role in equipping new teachers to meet these challenges.

*Revised curriculum in primary schools.* Accommodating the requirements of the revised primary school curriculum might be the most obvious challenge facing teaching, though it might not be the most difficult one to meet. Nevertheless it is formidable, and one that is going to change over time. Students preparing to be teachers need to be provided with skills in pedagogy underlying the curriculum, and to become familiar with its underlying principles and their implications for teaching. They also need to acquire competence in a range of new subjects (or some subjects may require more attention) such as science; information and communications technology; and social, personal, and health education.

*Concern with quality of learning.* Concern with quality of learning, inspired by economic, political, and cultural factors associated with globalization, is in evidence across the world. Analysts in many countries have expressed the view that children in school today will not be capable of participating in tomorrow's global economy unless some action is taken. As a result, educational reforms aimed at improving student outcomes are being launched in most OECD countries. It is recognised that at the primary school level pupils need to be provided with the foundations they will require to acquire the knowledge and sophisticated skills that we are told will be needed in a knowledge-based society. What those are is another matter. While there is room for debate on their precise nature, many commentators agree that they include literacy and numeracy, learning how to learn, and developing flexibility, creativity, and the ability to think critically and to apply learning in new situations.

*Integration of pupils with disabilities and special needs.* In light of government policy to provide for children with special needs in mainstream classes when that is the wish of parents, preservice education has to prepare teachers to deal effectively with a wide range of pupil ability and disability. Recent experience in the mainstreaming of pupils with special needs indicates that this is a formidable task and is probably beyond the competence of teachers who do not have specialised training.

*Focus on socioeconomic disadvantage.* While schools will not solve all problems associated with disadvantage, for many children education plays a key role in breaking the cycle of poverty. While there has been a variety of initiatives over the years to deal with disadvantage, these for the most part were confined to schools in disadvantaged areas. A recent initiative (Giving Children an Even Break), which extends to the whole system, means that a teacher in any school may have additional resources to deal with problems of disadvantage. Teacher preparation programmes should strive to ensure that teachers are familiar with government policy regarding social inclusion, with the range of initiatives that are in place, and with the principles underlying them. They should also know how to use resources (physical and human) that accompany initiatives.

*Specialisation in teaching.* The days when there was just one teacher to a class who more or less worked in isolation are gone. A count some time ago revealed 168 home-school liaison teachers, 1,530 learning support teachers, 2,300 special needs and resource teachers, 465 resource teachers supporting the education of Travellers' children, and 3,800 full-time and 1,000 part-time special needs assistants. Obviously teachers need to be prepared for this changed situation in which they interact with other teachers and assistants.



*School development planning and whole school evaluation.* While the beginning teacher is unlikely to have formal management or planning duties, he or she should have been introduced to the administrative workings of the modern primary school, and be prepared to play a role on the school team. This involves teachers being aware of their rights and duties as members of the school community and of relevant legislation, such as the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Child Care Act 1991.

*Greater awareness of children's needs in early primary school years.* It is a truism that the early years of a child's education are crucial for its later development. A child who fails to acquire basic skills by the age of 8 or 9 is very unlikely to make up the lost ground. The issue is of particular importance in this country since much of what would be regarded as preschool education in other countries (for 4- and 5-year olds) is provided in primary schools here. There is a danger in this situation that teachers will employ the same classroom organization and teaching methods with younger children as with older children. Since many beginning teachers will find themselves in junior or infant classes, they should be familiar with best practice at this level.

*Reduced class size.* Pupil-teacher ratio was reduced from about 29 to 1 to about 19 to 1 between 1980 and 2000. This reduction, of course, is not completely reflected in class size, but the size of classes has also been reduced. Despite this, reading standards between 1980 and 1998 did not change at all. One suspects that at least part of the explanation lies in the fact, for which there is empirical evidence from other countries, that when class size is reduced, teachers do not adjust their methods of teaching to reflect the smaller numbers. But unless they do, smaller class size may have limited beneficial effect.

*Interactions with other professionals.* The teacher has to be prepared to work with other professionals, to know when and how they can help, and how to interpret any guidance they may provide. The most obvious group that teachers will interact with is the National Educational Psychological Service Agency to which all pupils should have access by the end of 2004.

*Involvement with parents and communities.* Efforts to enhance home-school relations are a feature of many schools over the past decade, particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. Students should be familiar with the wide range of activities involved in these efforts, and how to optimize the contribution of parents to their children's education.

### **Knowledge/Skills Required by Teachers**

The report of the Working Group categorized the areas in which student teachers need to acquire competence, though it did not attempt to define the competences.

*Subject matter knowledge.* Irish, mathematics and science were identified as areas in which some beginning teachers were considered to be deficient. The problem of developing competence over a wide range of subjects was recognized.

*General pedagogical knowledge and skills.* These cover general management skills, ability to plan lessons, to present lessons in a well-organized, structured, and coherent way, and to evaluate pupils' learning progress and difficulties. The Group felt that courses in this area were not always sufficiently integrated with foundation-level courses (in psychology), curriculum courses, or teaching practice.



*Skills in teaching particular curriculum areas.* Some pedagogical knowledge is subject-specific. Teachers, in addition to being proficient in subject areas, need to be familiar with the content of the curriculum and to know how to represent and formulate it in a way that makes it comprehensible to pupils.

*Knowledge of learners and learning.* Knowledge of the characteristics of their pupils and how they learn, which is usually acquired in foundation (psychology) courses, is key to the work of the teacher. Again, the Group perceived deficiencies in the relationship between these courses and other courses and, in particular, teaching practice.

*Knowledge of educational contexts and how to respond to them.* Students have to be prepared to adapt to the variety of contexts (whether geographical or classroom-based e.g. multi-grade classes) in which they will find themselves.

*Communication skills.* Obviously, teachers should have well-developed oral and written communication skills. Otherwise it is unlikely that they will be able to teach them.

*Moral sensibility, values, and attitudes appropriate to a caring profession.* To some extent, these are “caught” not “taught”. Thus the whole ambience in which students learn, their extra-curricular activities, and the example they are provided by staff may all have important roles in developing these characteristics.

*Ability to analyze and reflect on practice.* If trainee and practicing teachers are to develop professionally, they need time to analyze and reflect on their studies and their teaching. It might be argued that the heavy teaching and assessment load in colleges, and the lack of co-ordination between the elements of programmes, do not provide the conditions that are conducive to analysis and reflection.

### **Key Principles Underlying Group’s Recommendations**

I now turn to the key principles which underlie the Group’s recommendations.

*The need to take account of existing arrangements.* Since the Group was not acting in a green field situation, it had to take account of existing organisational arrangements, structures and practice.

*Teacher education needed to be reconceptualised and programmes restructured to meet the demands on teachers in the coming years.* This principle signals that it was not just a question of adding bits and pieces to existing programmes. For one thing, programmes are already over-loaded, and would be even if the length of teacher education programmes were extended.

*The reconceptualisation of teacher education should be informed by current understandings.* A good deal of thought is evident in the educational literature, particularly in the United States, regarding the preparation of teachers who will be competent in addressing the challenges facing them. It has been suggested, in particular, that students need assistance in interpreting and integrating their experiences in the various elements of their preservice programme, as well as those acquired prior to entering the programme, and in constructing new understandings to guide them in making the practical day-to-day decisions of teaching. When one considers the complexity of teaching, the need to be flexible, adaptable, and able to deal with change that will occur during their lifetimes, it becomes clear that an approach that simply “trains” students to act in prescribed ways is bound to be inadequate.



*The primary objective of programmes is to prepare students to teach. As a consequence, the content of courses should be redesigned to ensure that they are relevant to teachers' professional needs, and that all students acquire the knowledge and skills required to begin teaching.* This may sound so obvious that it hardly needs to be stated. However it is not at all clear that all courses have in mind the professional needs of teachers, however those might be defined. The principle should not be taken to imply that all course work in academic subjects should be directly relevant to teaching in a primary school. The integrity of subjects has to be taken into account. At the same time, where possible, relevance should be considered (for example, by devoting some of a course in English literature to children's literature).

*The focal point of programmes should be the practice of teaching. Thus programmes should adopt a co-ordinated holistic approach in which students are assisted in applying all their programme experiences to that practice.* This might be regarded as the key recommendation if one had to select one. While the principle is related to the last two, it goes further. Not only should course content be relevant to teaching, students should be assisted in identifying that relevance and in applying it in practice. This is particularly important in the case of foundation studies. The principle implies that students frequently have difficulty in recognising the relevance of their course work to practice, and in interpreting it in the context of their actual teaching. It cannot be assumed that what is involved is simply the 'application' of general propositional and organised knowledge of the type provided in coursework. Indeed we know that students often express the view that foundation courses are of little value to them when they come to teach. The essential task of teacher education, then, would seem to be to assist students to develop the kind of professional reasoning they will need in dealing with the complexities, urgencies, and contingencies they will meet in teaching by helping them integrate a variety of sets of knowledge: the information they acquire in both curriculum and foundation courses; the preconceptions they bring to teaching; and the accumulated wisdom of practitioners, sometimes called 'classroom knowledge' or the 'wisdom of practice.'

*Programmes should take account of the need to prepare students for a future that is uncertain and unpredictable.* All we can be certain about is that the future is uncertain. This means that some of the skills and knowledge that students acquire today may be largely irrelevant in the future. To address this situation, students should be provided with a solid base for keeping abreast of new developments (e.g., developing habits of enquiry and reading) and with opportunities for problem-solving and reflection in the hope that they will be adaptable, questioning, critical, inventive, creative and reflective.

*There is a need to accommodate the requirements of the revised primary school curriculum.* I have already adverted to this. However saying it is one thing; implementing it is another. Informed decisions need to be made about the depth in which content matter should be covered. Is competence in an area essential for a beginning teacher? Is a college-based programme the most appropriate location in which to study an area or topic?

*There is a need for greater variety in modes of presentation in courses.* One of the major problems reported by students is the amount of time they spend in formal lectures. If students are involved in lectures or other formal activities most of the day, it is difficult to expect them to spend much time in reading or study.

*A greater proportion of student time should be devoted to Education subjects.* Although in theory there may seem to be a balance between Education and other subjects, in practice academic subjects seem to make greater demands on students' time.

*Schools and teachers should have a more formal role in teacher preparation.* The relationship between colleges and schools for teaching practice is informal and in many cases was considered by the Group to be



unsatisfactory. Provision varies between colleges in the organization of practice, in its timing, in the amount of time devoted to it, and in how poor performance is dealt with. Students' teaching is not integrated into the work of schools. Some college staff are not involved because they are teaching on other programmes, and large numbers of external supervisors who have nothing to do with the programmes or the students are employed to supervise and evaluate students.

*Preservice is only the first of several stages in teachers' professional development.* If we accept this, then we also accept that preservice does not produce a fully fledged teacher. The task of colleges is to decide what is essential in preservice, and what can be left until later, and indeed may be more appropriate when the teacher has had some experience of real life teaching.

### **Main Recommendations**

There are 61 recommendations in all. Here I will list some major ones.

*Extension of length of programmes.* The Working Group recommended that a fourth year be added to the B.Ed. programme and that the post-graduate programme should be extended from 18 months to two years. A decision on this will obviously have to take into account student numbers in colleges (and when these can be reduced as supply meets demand) and when the education system will not require a full year's output from colleges.

*Institutionalization of the consecutive model.* Up to now the post-graduate entry to teaching has been used mainly to adjust supply over a shorter period of time than that required for the B.Ed. The Group, on the basis of a number of beneficial features identified with the concurrent model, recommended that it become a permanent feature of teacher preparation.

*Entry requirements.* The Group recommended a higher grade in mathematics on the Leaving Certificate Examination for applicants to teacher education programmes, but did not recommend a change in the grade required in other subjects.

*Establishment of middle-management structures in colleges.* It was felt that colleges had grown so much that middle-management structures were required; also that new structures may be required to implement proposed changes.

*The Group recommended that the Colleges prepare and submit to the Department restructured programmes based on the recommendations in the report.* The submission should list the subjects to be offered, and specify course content, course structure, modes of delivery, allocation of time, and standards of performance.

A number of specific points are relevant in this context. First, it was recommended that a number of subjects with direct relevance to education be offered to students as academic subjects (e.g., Psychology, Sociology, Early Childhood Education). Students would choose one of these and one from the traditional list in their first year. Second, the additional time that would be made available if a fourth year were added would be devoted entirely to the study of Education. Third, courses should be examined for overlap, and efforts made to integrate material from a variety of curriculum areas. Fourth, courses (including academic courses) should incorporate material relevant to the primary school curriculum. Fifth, formal student contact time should be reduced, and courses should provide a greater mix of whole class teaching, seminars, tutorials, mentoring, practical work, library time and private study. Sixth, standards of student performance should be reviewed,



in particular the very large proportion of students who are awarded honours degrees. Seventh, structures should be put in place to ensure that coursework relates to the practice of teaching and to assist students in integrating in their teaching knowledge and skills acquired in coursework. Finally, teaching practice was considered to be in need of a radical appraisal and restructuring, which could well accord to schools and teachers a more formal role.

While the Working Group recommended that programmes of teacher preparation be restructured, and proposed a variety of considerations which should underlie that restructuring, it did not attempt to specify details of course content, the precise balance to be struck between programme components, the allocation of time to components, or the resources that would be required<sup>3</sup>. It took this position because of the variety of programmes that exist at present and the complexities that can be expected to arise in their redesign, which it considered to be a task that the colleges were best placed to execute. The Group proposed that each college carry out an indepth appraisal of its programmes and resources, following which it would prepare proposals in the context of the Working Group's recommendations and submit them to the Department of Education and Science. Proposals should relate to the structure and content of programmes, personnel development, physical resources, and their associated costs.

The Working Group had anticipated that this process would have been completed within a year of the presentation of its report to the then Minister for Education and Science (Dr Michael Woods) on April 9 2002. However, at this point it is not yet clear if the recommendations of the Working Group have been accepted by the Department or the colleges. The delay may in part be due to the extreme pressure to increase teacher supply in recent years, though that, while it might affect implementation, should not necessarily have affected planning. At least a commitment in principle to accept the basic tenets of the Working Group's report might have been expected. However the only development in teacher education since the Working Group completed its report has been the recognition of an on-line programme as a preparation for primary school teaching. It would be of interest to know to what extent the deliberations of the Working Group informed that decision, and if they did, how their compatibility with distance education was established.

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<sup>3</sup> Because the Group adopted this view, it was not in a position to cost its recommendations as had been requested in its Terms of Reference.



## TEACHING PRACTICE IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

### Padraig Cannon

The practice of teaching is regarded as occupying a central position in each of the five colleges that specialise in primary teacher education in the Republic of Ireland: St.Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin; Mary Immaculate College, Limerick; Church of Ireland College, Rathmines, Dublin; Froebel College, Blackrock, Co. Dublin; and Coláiste Mhuire, Marino, Dublin. This paper will examine teaching practice arrangements and provision in those institutions, focussing in particular on school partnership, supervision, assessment and specific college requirements.

### School Partnership

Unlike many of our European counterparts, the teaching practice partnership arrangements between schools and teacher education colleges in the Republic of Ireland are voluntary. Traditionally, teachers have welcomed student teachers into their classrooms. They have been very co-operative with the colleges and supportive of students despite the absence of a structured or paid system of teacher mentoring. Teachers play a very valuable role in providing observation and teaching opportunities for students. They guide their curriculum content selection prior to the commencement of teaching practice and advise, if requested, on their actual classroom performance. A measure of the professional goodwill of practising teachers is demonstrated by the fact that over 4,200 student teachers are hosted in one third of our primary schools each year, even though there is no contractual obligation on either schools or teachers to accept them.

Colleges are acutely aware that new driving forces and increasing demands on the role of the class teacher may make this high level of cooperative goodwill difficult to sustain. Contemporary Irish schools are dynamic environments where pupils' weekly curriculum experience is enriched by a range of different teachers in learning settings other than their classrooms. Irish teachers are expected to implement a much broader revised Primary School Curriculum, integrate children with specific learning difficulties and respond to the educational needs of pupils from multi-cultural backgrounds. Such pressures, coupled with the complex social issues now impacting on schools, are beginning to discourage some teachers, especially in areas where there is high and regular demand for teaching practice placements, from hosting student teachers in their classrooms for a three week period or longer. Hence anxiety continues to grow in most of the Colleges of Education about their ability to match student placement demand with classroom supply. The logistics of placing large numbers of students for teaching practice are formidable and constitute a heavy burden for all the colleges though, by all accounts, they are operating their respective systems efficiently (Kellaghan, 2002. *Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century*).

The responsibility for teaching practice assessment has, up to now, rested solely with the Colleges of Education. There is no joint responsibility expected or required of either the school principal or the classroom teacher in the assessment process. While they may be invited to comment on a student's commitment and professional conduct, they play no formal role in the grading of students' preparation or classroom performance. However the recent Kellaghan Report (2002) recommends that teacher education colleges should develop structures for a more formal involvement of schools and teachers in the grading of teaching practice. The Report recognises that the colleges do not have the resources or capacity to spend the necessary time advising, evaluating and supporting students in the classroom. Teachers are in the best position to provide more formative assistance to student teachers provided they are adequately trained for their mentoring role. However it has not yet been established if teachers or principals in the Republic of



Ireland support a formal role in assisting and assessing student teachers and, until this is ascertained, their roles will remain co-operative and informal.

The need to develop structures for meaningful partnerships with schools becomes even more critical if colleges are to increase and vary the amount of field experiences they are currently providing. In principle, the Teaching Practice units in all the colleges are keen to explore and develop the range of practical experiences in schools, but a reformulation of institutional and national policy to provide additional human and financial resources is urgently needed to achieve this. In particular, more time is needed to facilitate much longer periods of school-based work (Kellaghan Report, 2002). However all sectors in education, but universities in particular, have been negatively affected by current economic policy which has reduced funding for education in the Republic. In an unsympathetic economic climate the capacity to deliver meaningful partnership is left uncertain.

#### **Teaching Practice Assessment and Supervision**

Entry points to primary teaching remain very high and competition is strong. Teacher education programmes draw entrants from the top 25% of Leaving Certificate students proceeding to third level education. This has been a key factor in sustaining the very high qualification levels of student teachers entering the profession. In recent years, the number of B.Ed. graduates qualifying with an honours grade in teaching practice has been increasing significantly and has ranged from 60% to 85%.

All colleges are engaged in evolving clear criteria for the assessment of student preparation and classroom performance on teaching practice. Students in all colleges receive summative and formative feedback in both oral and written form post classroom performances. The written forms identify students' strengths, areas for improvement and strategies for the implementation of recommendations made. College supervisors perform a dual role on teaching practice – namely, to advise and assess. Their role as advisors/mentors is a source of considerable frustration for both supervisors and students due to the very large increase in both undergraduate and postgraduate student teachers in all the colleges. Supervisors in all the colleges assess students on both teaching preparation and classroom performance. They are required to complete assessment/evaluation forms for both and also determine the final mark/grade for teaching practice.

A fundamental principle of assessment in the colleges is that a pass in teaching practice is required in order to progress to the next year of the programme. Students who do not prove satisfactory on a repeat practice are given further opportunities to reach a passing grade before the due process is exhausted. Repeats on teaching practice are generally restricted to a two-year period. The failure rate in teaching practice is very low. Weak students are identified at an early stage in their programmes. Considerable advances have been made in recent years in all colleges to provide a range of support structures that enable weaker students to reach satisfactory standards of teaching competence. These include: teaching support and individual directed tutelage programmes, teaching skills programme, and in-school mentoring initiatives. In the wake of such interventions, students who are still found to be unsuitable for teaching and/or who continue to fail teaching practice are counselled and advised to reconsider their suitability for the profession.

While colleges vary in their practices of assessing students in their final year of study, all give a heavy weighting to classroom performance. In all a significant proportion of the overall marks for Education in the B.Ed. degree are allotted to teaching practice. A pass in teaching practice is a precondition of graduation in all the Colleges of Education while an honours grade is a prerequisite for the award of an honours degree in some.



### College Requirements

The nature and duration of teaching practice and the pupil contact time specified for it vary between the colleges of education. Most of them, however, provide block placements of at least three or four weeks duration, generally in the autumn and spring terms, and provide one-week observation and preparation for all students prior to commencing final teaching practice. Contact time with pupils varies depending on the stage of the course (i.e. 1st, 2nd or 3rd Year) and the specified requirements of individual colleges. These latter vary from three lessons per day in the first year to full-day teaching (covering the entire curriculum) in second and third years. B.Ed. students spend between 18 and 22 weeks on school experience over the three-year programme while postgraduates spend approximately 10-15 weeks over their eighteen-month diploma programme. School experience placements in the first and second years of B.Ed. programmes are in mainstream classes. Serial or block periods are provided to second- and third-year B.Ed. students and to postgraduate diploma students to observe children with special needs. Teaching placements are planned so that by the time a student reaches the final year he/she will have had experience with a variety of grade levels and in diverse settings (e.g. urban, rural, multi-grade and special needs schools and in Gael Scoileanna where pupils are taught through the medium of Irish).

All colleges in the Republic of Ireland set out detailed requirements in their '*Guidelines for Teaching Practice*'. These guidelines encompass requirements for observation, short-term planning, lesson preparation, classroom performance, student evaluation and reflection, attendance, complaints, supervision and assessment, and contacts with schools. The short-term planning of weekly/fortnightly schemes is expected to incorporate broad objectives and to comprehensively encompass the strands of each curricular area. Lesson notes are written for each lesson. These require specific lesson objectives and detailed planning of teaching methodologies/strategies. In the case of students who are teaching all day, lesson notes are incorporated into their overall daily plans. All students are required to evaluate and reflect on their teaching and on pupils' learning. Both preparation and classroom delivery are the subject of written critical comment by the student post teaching. Students also have an opportunity to critically evaluate their work with supervisors. This oral exchange is immediate and post supervision and is intended to develop the students' reflective and critical skills.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this information might help to bridge the information gap on school-based experiences, not only between teacher education colleges in the Republic of Ireland, but with our counterpart institutions in Northern Ireland. A forum that may have the potential to narrow the institutional divide even further is the recently formed Directors of Teaching Practice Study Group that has emerged as a result of the North-South Student Teacher Exchange programme. It is timely that issues concerning supervision and assessment, duration and variety of school experiences, school partnerships and mentoring, under-staffing and resources, policy formulation and transparency be best explored in a forum that provides the mutual benefit and richness of exchange between teaching practice personnel from both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

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## SECOND LEVEL TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: CONSECUTIVE PROGRAMMES

**Sheelagh Drudy**

### Introduction

This paper outlines the structure of teacher education programmes for post-primary teachers, based on the consecutive model, in the Republic of Ireland. It indicates a number of key issues and challenges facing teacher education and it highlights some international developments likely to affect it.

### Structure of teaching programmes

Teaching in the Republic of Ireland is an all-graduate profession at primary and post-primary levels. Teacher Education is provided by education departments in the seven universities, or by colleges of education affiliated to one or other of the universities. With a number of exceptions, teacher education for post-primary teachers - i.e. for students aged 12-18 - is provided on the consecutive model (see article by Gleeson in this volume on the concurrent model). Teaching is a regulated profession and the number of places on teacher education courses is limited by the Higher Education Authority, in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science. Currently there are 1,000 places on post-primary teacher education courses. Students specialize in their chosen areas of study (Arts/Humanities, Business, Science, etc.) to Bachelors degree level for a period of three or four years, depending on the university or programme of study. This is followed by a one-year, post-graduate, teacher education programme – the Higher Diploma in Education (H.Dip. in Ed.) – which is the professional qualification for recognized second-level teachers. In terms of the National Framework of Qualifications developed by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI, 2004), both the concurrent and consecutive awards would appear to be at Level 8, albeit the Higher Diploma in Education is a postgraduate award which builds on what is usually a Level 8 degree award. The exact positioning of the Higher Diploma in Education as a post-graduate professional award within this framework requires further clarification.

Recognition of teaching awards for the purpose of entrance to secondary schools is currently the provenance of the Secondary Teachers' Registration Council. A Teaching Council is in the process of being established arising from the implementation of the *Teaching Council Act, 2000*. When it is fully established, the Teaching Council will take over the function of registration, and will also:

- review and accredit the programmes of teacher education and training provided by institutions of higher education and training in the State;
- review the standards of education and training appropriate to a person entering a programme of teacher education and training; and
- review the standards of knowledge, skill and competence required for the practice of teaching.

Teacher education is entering a period of considerable change. This is likely to occur not just as a result of the implementation of the Teaching Council and from the as yet (at the time of writing) unpublished review of post-primary teacher education, but also from changes arising at international level. Europe-wide debates on teacher education are likely to arise from studies in progress under the auspices of the OECD, for example. The quality of the teaching workforce was a central concern in the establishment of a major international review on the attraction, development and retention of teachers (OECD, 2003). The implementation of the Bologna process also has implications for teacher education, just as it does for all disciplines (see right).



### Entry to teacher education programmes

Entry to post-primary teacher education programmes in the Republic of Ireland is highly competitive. Data from the Higher Diploma in Education Application Centre (HDEAC), which processes applications for the 800 places on the Higher Diploma in Education in the four NUI universities, show that in 2003 there were 3,034 applicants. This figure represented a significant increase of 30% over the previous year and may well be related to the economic downturn.

There is a greater diversity of previous educational background among H.Dip.Ed. candidates than would have been the case perhaps ten to fifteen years ago when most students went straight from their degree to the Higher Diploma in their own college. This is illustrated by the degree profile of the 2003 applicants to the HDEAC for the NUI universities.

**Table 1: Degree Background of HDEAC Applicants, 2003**

<i>Degree Background</i>	<i>%</i>
7 Irish Universities	74.7
Institutes of Technology	16.5
Other Irish Institutions	3.4
British Universities	2.1
Northern Irish Universities	1.7
Other EU Universities	0.7
Non-EU Universities	0.4
Other	0.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>3,034</i>

*Source: Figures from the Postgraduate (H.Dip. in Ed) Application Centre*

Just three-quarters of the applicants in 2003 were from the seven universities. The most obvious change was the increasing proportion of applicants with qualifications from the IT sector, at 17 per cent in 2003. Some 52 applicants were from Northern Ireland, with a further 63 from British HEIs.

A recent survey of entrants to second-level teaching on the Higher Diploma in Education in one of the universities provides some data on entrants to post-primary teaching. Females were disproportionately represented, but less markedly so than among primary entrants - some 74 per cent were female and 26 per cent male. Just over 85 per cent of these students had been awarded their degrees at honours level, also indicative of a high academic calibre of entrants to second-level teaching (Killeavy, 1999). Just a quarter of the H.Dip.Ed. students had decided to become teachers before entering university. However research on school leavers (Drudy et al. 2004) suggests there is a relatively poor perception among second-level students of post-primary teaching, which makes it a difficult choice to make while still at school. Interest in their subjects was the chief motivator for post-graduate entrants to post-primary teaching, while an interest in working with young people and a desire to help create a better world were also significant motivators. While the working conditions associated with teaching were also regarded as attractive, a teaching salary was not rated highly as a career incentive (Killeavy, 1999).



### Subject groupings

In recent years concern has been expressed about the supply of teachers in different subject areas. Science, especially physics and chemistry, has been a particular focus of public comment. This has led to suggestions that quotas should be established for specific areas. However the establishment of subject quotas would be a rather complex affair and patterns vary quite considerably each year. Patterns also appear to be quite sensitive to labour market changes. Traditionally English and history have been the dominant subject groupings in H.Dip.Ed. intakes. There are still substantial numbers of candidates offering these subjects. In 2003 English and history accounted respectively for 199 and 194 of the acceptances of offers from the Higher Diploma in Education Application Centre. However, an indicator of economic change was that the largest subject grouping by far among the acceptances, at 295 (22%), was Business Studies, with 131 (10%) in Economics and 104 (8%) in accountancy.<sup>4</sup>

While there has been legitimate concern about the need for appropriately qualified teachers of science, the application levels are not quite as low as some commentators might believe. In 2003 some 32 offers of places on H.Dip. in Ed. Courses were accepted by graduates with physics in their degrees, 53 by chemistry graduates, 92 by biology graduates and a further 37 by graduates whose qualifications were described as 'science' (usually as part of an IT degree). There was a further 57 acceptances from persons qualified in computer science or IT technology. Some 200 persons with mathematics in their degrees accepted offers.<sup>5</sup>

University College Dublin caters for one-fifth of the total cohort undertaking post-primary initial teacher education courses each year (and just over a quarter of all NUI Higher Diploma students) so the patterns tend to illustrate general trends. In 2003/2004 37 H.Dip. in Ed. students had a qualification in science. This included 3 students with a degree in agricultural science (1 female, 2 male). Overall, 11 of the science student teachers were male and 26 were female. Two of the students had an M.Sc. Subjects included botany, biochemistry, industrial microbiology, cell biology, physics, chemistry, molecular biology, IT, sports science, geography, zoology and genetics.

As regards degree denomination, the biggest degree grouping consisted of 138 students with BAs. There were 25 with BBS (mainly from the ITs), 5 with the BComm, 2 BMus and 2 with engineering degrees.

### Resource issues and length of studies

As suggested earlier, teacher education in Ireland is facing into a period of change. This is hardly surprising since it is widely acknowledged that, in Ireland and internationally, the decade of the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century have been a period of unprecedented change throughout the education system. This is the result of many factors prior to, and during, this period. Among these have been the international re-structuring of economies and the increasing centrality of knowledge-based industry; changing patterns of employment and unemployment; changing patterns of migration; changes within the major social institutions such as the family; the waning power and influence of religious institutions; the impact of reports, recommendations and directives from an increasingly powerful and integrated European Union; the influence of organisations such as the OECD on government policy; the policy analysis and debates around government green and white papers such as the Green Paper *Education for a Changing World* (1992); the White Paper *Charting Our Education Future* (1995); *Ready to Learn*, the White Paper on Early Education (1999); the Green and White Papers on Adult Education (1998 and 2000); the *Education Act*, 1998 and the

<sup>4</sup> Figures from the Postgraduate (H.Dip.Ed.) Application Centre. There would be some subject overlap here as many of the acceptances were from people who combined related subjects. In addition, figures for gross acceptances are greater than for net registration in the university Higher Diploma in Education programmes.

<sup>5</sup> Figures from the Postgraduate (HDipEd) Application Centre.



*Education and Welfare Act, 2000*. These changes, and the increasing propensity of society to look to schools and the teaching profession to address social problems, confirm the complexity of the teacher's role identified by the OECD in its report on Irish education, and subsequently by a variety of other reports.

These changes, and the increasing complexity of the teaching role, have significant implications for teacher education. All teacher education institutions are, and have to be, engaged in an ongoing process of review and change of their initial education programmes, in an effort to address the changing demands of the system. For those universities, whose programmes are structured according to the consecutive model, with a duration of one academic year, this means that more and more must be fitted into what is, essentially, less than nine months of actual teaching and learning time for the student teacher. Thus the courses have become more and more intense. Furthermore, there has been no serious evaluation of the adequacy cost base of the Higher Diploma in Education as a professional course involving teaching/clinical placement and supervision, and computer laboratory work, in comparison to other professional courses. In the universities in the Republic of Ireland the standard allocation for the Higher Diploma in Education has been equivalent to the base funding for the cheapest programmes – i.e. those in arts/humanities. Comparison with other jurisdictions indicates that, in countries such as England, Australia, Canada, the U.S. and Sweden, weightings for teacher education programmes vary from 1.3 to 2.1 times those of arts/humanities programmes.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless a recent review of costs for initial teacher education in England, where funding is more generous than in the Republic of Ireland, confirmed that initial teacher education programmes were under funded by around 20 per cent (JM Consulting Ltd., 2004).

A further resource issue relates to the length of the Higher Diploma in Education. The postgraduate programme for primary teachers in the colleges of education is a year and a half's duration. The recent review of primary teacher education recommended an extension to two years (Working Group on Primary Preservice Teacher Education, 2002). A similar extension of the Higher Diploma in Education, even to a year and a half of full-time studies, would allow for the incorporation of a number of very desirable elements and reforms into existing programmes. For example, it would facilitate greatly the placement of students in at least two different schools for their teaching practice. It would allow for more fulsome coverage of areas which are becoming of increasing importance, such as the legal responsibilities of teachers, child protection, pupil diversity, catering for pupils with special educational needs, school planning and team work, and so on. It would allow students to participate in European exchange programmes, which would be of great benefit to second-level student teachers. It would also facilitate a more research-based approach to teaching. The latter has been seen as of great importance for the future development of teacher education in a number of important policy documents at an international level, such as the *Green Paper on Teacher Education in Europe* (Buchberger et al., 2000). Studies of initial teacher education programmes at a European level have suggested that research has not, as yet, become an integral component of most models of teacher education (Gonzalez and Wagenaar, 2003). Although Higher Diploma courses in Ireland have incorporated action research, case studies and reflective teaching approaches into their coursework to a greater or lesser degree, an extension of the duration of the Higher Diploma would allow for a greater role for research components in initial teacher education and would position Irish trained post-primary teachers at the forefront of their profession in Europe.

It is likely that such a development would also require a reconfiguration of existing programmes and would involve modularisation of the Higher Diploma. It would also involve an examination of the relationship between the Higher Diploma in Education as part of the '3 Is' approach to teacher education (i.e. Initial,

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<sup>6</sup> Personal communication from Professor P. Clancy, Dean, Human Sciences, UCD.



Induction and In-career) and progression to Masters level. Indeed, it may be that Masters level qualifications should be the norm for established teachers. A number of different pathways are identifiable, all of which could build on initial teacher education. Flexible modes of accreditation for in-career development for teachers would facilitate this. Developments such as these would have resource implications which would need to be examined.

A further resource issue for postgraduate initial teacher education relates to student support. Currently, in contrast to those undertaking concurrent teacher education programmes, the majority of students participating in postgraduate initial teacher education are liable for substantial fees and are ineligible for any form of student maintenance or support. This puts considerable financial pressure on these student teachers, most particularly on the increasing number of mature students who have other professional experience and who have elected to enter the teaching profession. Many of the mature students have family commitments which make their situations especially acute.

### **Teaching practice**

Teaching practice is a central element in all Higher Diploma in Education courses. Student performance on the teaching practice elements of the course also drives the level of the final award. Experience on teaching practice is almost certainly the most formative element of the student's initial development as a professional. The Secondary Teachers' Registration Council prescribes the minimum number of hours of classroom teaching (as opposed to school experience) for recognition purposes at 100 hours. The way that this is arranged varies somewhat in the university departments of education. Four models can be identified:

1. 5 mornings in school, 5 afternoons in university throughout the academic year.
2. 2 full days and one half day in school, 2 full days and one half day in university throughout the academic year.
3. 2 full days in school, 3 full days in university throughout the academic year and a three-week block school period.
4. Block periods interspersed throughout the academic year.

Annual surveys of student teachers on the H.Dip.in Ed. programme in University College Dublin indicate a high level of satisfaction among them with their relationship with their teaching practice school, with their teaching practice supervisors, and with the level of support they receive from both.

However there are ambiguities in the relationship between universities and schools. These ambiguities sometimes give rise to situations requiring diplomatic negotiation. School principals, as a result of serious difficulties in resources, may sometimes give H. Dip. In Ed. students greater responsibility than would be warranted in view of their status as trainee teachers. Indeed as far back as 1991 the OECD Report emphasized the importance for schools of avoiding timetabling student teachers as if they were established staff (OECD, 1991).

On the other hand, school principals may sometimes feel that universities do not always provide the kind of interventions that students require. The importance of partnerships and shared understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of universities and schools in initial teacher formation cannot be over-emphasised. This can and should happen at a local level. However there is also a need for guidelines on good practice at a national level to provide norms concerning the roles, rights and responsibilities of the different partners, including the roles of the co-operating teachers and good practice in relation to



timetabling and support structures for student teachers. These are necessary to ensure consistency of practice as between different schools and universities. In addition, there is at present no system of police clearance for persons undertaking teaching practice in second-level schools. There are important child protection issues at stake here and Ireland is now out of line with neighbouring countries in this regard. The provision of guidelines on these matters may now constitute a rather urgent task for the new Teaching Council.

### **Induction**

In the light of the relatively short and intensive duration of the Higher Diploma in Education it is, perhaps, surprising that a structured system of induction has not yet been introduced in the Republic of Ireland. The induction phase in the life cycle of the teacher is a key phase in the continuum of professional development and, where developed programmes exist, acts as a bridge from initial teacher education to continuous professional development. Unlike Northern Ireland, Great Britain and many other countries, the Republic of Ireland does not have a system-wide induction programme for newly qualified teachers.<sup>7</sup> A further reason to support the establishment of a system-wide induction programme is to address the challenges presented to teaching by the employment difficulties of teachers in the early stages of the profession. Analysis provided by the Higher Education Authority illustrates that the proportion of Higher Diploma in Education graduates who were engaged in part-time/temporary/substitute teaching in their first year of employment increased from 55 per cent in 1990 to 74 per cent in 2000 (Advisory Group on Labour Market Trends, 2002). Data from other jurisdictions indicate high levels of attrition in the early years of teaching (Killeavy et al., 2004). Comparable data are not available in Ireland. However international research indicates that good quality induction programmes combat high levels of attrition in teaching (ibid.).

As the result of increased awareness of the issues outlined above, a partnership project on induction was established in 2002. This project involved schools, two universities (University College Dublin, Education Department and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, DCU), the Department of Education and Science, the three teacher unions, and the education centres. Two strands of the project were developed – a post-primary and a primary strand.

The design of the post-primary strand involved: evaluation of existing models of induction in Ireland and internationally; selection of a number of case study schools (different school types; urban/rural); identification of induction issues and needs among newly qualified Irish post-primary teachers across a range of subjects; development and implementation of a number of induction models in case study schools; training of mentors in case study schools (also of principals/deputy principals); evaluation of models in case study schools; making recommendations on models of induction, including the role in induction of different agencies, and on national policy on induction. The results of this pilot project have proved very positive and have led to the recommendation that a well-structured and resourced induction programme for newly qualified teachers in Irish schools be established. At a National Colloquium on Teacher Induction in January 2004 senior officials in the DES emphasised that induction programmes could strengthen teacher professionalism (Killeavy et al., 2004).

### **International patterns and award recognition: challenges of Bologna**

Teacher educators in Ireland must now consider the implications of the Bologna Declaration of 1999 and the Berlin Communiqué of 2003 (see Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education, 1999 and

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<sup>7</sup> The Teacher Induction Pilot Project has, however, identified a number of locally developed induction programmes at school level which vary considerably in extent and quality.



Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education, 2003). The key point which has emerged from the Bologna Declaration is that the European Ministers of Education have agreed to the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system.

Ministers have agreed the adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle will require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The Berlin Communiqué envisages that the degree awarded after the first cycle will also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree, as is already the case in many European countries.

The Bologna declaration, and its follow-up developments, views the establishment of a system of credits - such as in the ECTS system - as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. The Berlin Communiqué, for example, suggests that credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognised by the receiving universities concerned.

In relation to the comparability of teacher education programmes, analysis of second-level teacher education programmes at educational institutions in Europe shows that most share the following components:

- Studies in academic disciplines (usually two) perceived to be indispensable for the teaching of the corresponding school subjects.
- Studies in subject methodologies or 'didactics'. Subject studies and subject methodologies form up to 90% of the teacher education studies (in consecutive courses combining degree and postgraduate qualification) in some countries.
- Education studies (e.g. pedagogy, general didactics, educational psychology, sociology of education).
- Teaching practice (although this is not offered by all institutions of teacher education within their programmes of study) (Gonzalez and Wagenaar, 2003).

The approach envisaged in Bologna-related documents and debates, such as the report of the TUNING project and the Berlin Communiqué, sees the teacher as a facilitator of learning. This approach to teaching and learning focuses on the learning outcomes of programmes, including teacher education programmes, and implies active learning methodologies and reflective practice.

In the Berlin Communiqué the Ministers committed themselves to start the implementation of Bologna by 2005. They also encouraged member states to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They undertook to elaborate a framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. They recommended that ECTS become not only a transfer but also an accumulation system. They set the objective that every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement (which will provide a breakdown and details of all the components of the degree programme) automatically and free of charge. This will obviously involve significant adaptations for the structure of many of our teacher education programmes and may have financial implications as well.

The Irish universities have not all yet incorporated ECTS at postgraduate level, and certainly not yet fully as an accumulation system. If we think of the initial consecutive qualification for post-primary teaching in ECTS



terms then we would have either  $180 + 60 = 240$  (for three year degree programmes + H.Dip. in Ed.) or  $240 + 60 = 300$  (for four year degree programmes + H.Dip. in Ed.). While at international level it should be pointed out that the issue of how to deal with the incorporation of professional courses into the Bologna framework is not yet fully resolved, it should be noted that the accumulated credits for a four year degree programme followed by a H.Dip. in Ed. come to the same number (300) as that for a masters' award under the Bologna system. The issue of the exact positioning of professional awards under Bologna is still being worked out in various forums, including the TUNING project, but must be factored into policy considerations relating to teacher education at the initial, induction and in-career stages, and in relation to masters level awards for established teachers.

### Conclusion

Initial teacher education in Ireland is facing into a period of considerable change, resulting from substantial reforms in the system during the 1990s and from planned reforms in the process of implementation. In preparing teachers for these changes, consecutive initial teacher education currently faces a number of constraints, not least the relatively low level of resource provision. The short duration of the Higher Diploma in Education, the increasingly complex roles for which teachers must be prepared, and the part-time/temporary nature of employment for most graduates, have given rise to increased demands for a structured induction phase in the teaching career. Other challenges arising from the establishment of the Teaching Council and from commitments made by European Education Ministers to move towards a framework of comparable awards throughout Europe also have implications for teacher education, in both the resource and curricular areas. These present major policy challenges for teacher education in the Republic of Ireland.

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## TEACHING PRACTICE IN THE HIGHER DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**Tom Mullins**

### **State Regulations and overall approach**

In the various universities that offer Higher Diploma in Education programmes, practices can vary in some details<sup>8</sup> but in general the overall approach remains broadly similar.

The amount of time allotted to teaching practice is determined by the regulations issued by an official state body, the *Teachers' Registration Council*. According to these regulations every student preparing to teach at secondary level is required to have at least one hundred class teaching hours during their pre-service training. This forms the basis of teaching practice within the Higher Diploma in Education programmes in all the universities. For the remainder of this paper I intend to focus on the approach to teaching practice in my own department in University College Cork. I will indicate its salient characteristics as an exemplar of teacher training in the Republic. I will highlight the present situation with its positive and negative elements and furthermore mention proposed developments that could move the situation forward in most welcome ways.

### **The relationship between the schools and the university**

In any context of teacher education the quality and nature of this relationship is of fundamental importance. A student teacher needs to experience a coherent professional approach where all the independent elements are seen to have their due place and make distinctive and complementary contributions. At present the relationship between the Education Department in UCC and the schools that provide the sites for teaching practice consists of informal collaboration which has worked reasonably successfully over the years.

At present the onus is on students to establish the school site for their teaching practice independent of any advice or direction from the university department of education or for that matter from the state's school inspectorate service. The students are free to select any type of school that they wish - community, vocational or voluntary - and they remain in the particular school for the total duration of their practice. The students are required to sign an informal contract with their chosen school that stipulates in general terms the nature of their position and responsibilities. The students begin to teach with the opening of the schools in September and continue right through to the end of the school year in late May. Many students become involved in a broad range of school activities - sports, debating etc. - which gives them a fuller insight into the actuality of the career experience of a secondary teacher.

Some traditional practices that occur in schools do give pause for thought. Students can be treated as if they are fully qualified, professional teachers and are sometimes entrusted with responsibilities that are not appropriate to their status, e.g. teaching Leaving Certificate classes. Furthermore, schools frequently employ and remunerate student teachers for a range of purposes such as supervision and substitution. It is true to say that the students' own attitude to being thus employed is quite ambiguous: while they may feel professionally inadequate for the roles assigned, they are more than enthusiastic for the remuneration received and eventually also for experience gained. Admittedly, schools where such practices arise can be under resourced and find in the student teachers a ready-made solution to an immediate problem. Despite this, it would be better for all concerned if that ready-made solution were not so easily available.

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<sup>8</sup> Some colleges do block release teaching practice in various forms in different schools rather than daily practice in one school throughout the year; the latter is the more common practice.



The university has no input, in real terms, in determining the context in which the students find themselves teaching, although general guidelines have been sent to the schools. As indicated above, while some disquieting situations can arise, in the majority of cases the students report that their experiences in their school sites are very positive and professional. In the evaluation surveys of teaching practice and school experience conducted by the UCC's Department of Education for every student cohort, over 90% of students consistently attest to it being a most positive, professional experience. This evaluation is made despite the absence in many schools of any formal induction procedures or consistent mentoring structures. However, because some anomalous and inequitable situations do arise, it is hoped over the next few years to develop an agreed protocol of practice between the department and the various representative bodies of the schools to set the collaboration on a stronger base of professional practice. In that way the solid foundation that is clearly present can be built on and agreed guidelines put in place which formalise the school experience and ensure parity of treatment and experience for all students

### **Supervision of Teaching Practice**

During the academic year every student on TP is allocated a supervisor, who is a full-time or part-time member of the education department. A student will, for the most part, be supervised by the same person, although there is now a stipulation that a second supervisor must see the student at least once during the year to ensure parity of practice and equity in standards of evaluation. Finally, almost a third of the student body will be seen by another supervisor in the form of an intern or extern examiner. The main supervisor will conduct weekly tutorials with the students and also engage in a number of microteaching sessions throughout the year. Both the tutorials and microteaching sessions provide rich opportunities for the exchange of school experiences and the raising of issues and problems. The insights gained through these peer-learning situations are invaluable and the isolation, loneliness and sense of inadequacy that are frequently perceived as threats by student teachers can be ameliorated. Thus it is evident that the support from the department is immediate and continuous, which is most appropriate in the context of the challenge that teaching practice can present for students.

Every student receives at least five supervisions throughout the period of TP. Each of these supervisions can have a somewhat different character and emphasis. The two initial visits have a pastoral orientation to give the students confidence and also to help them understand the challenges offered by the particular teaching context in which they find themselves. The third supervision, conducted by a different supervisor, while retaining the pastoral emphasis, also has an evaluative dimension. The last two supervisions will focus strongly on developing students' professional skills and on arriving at some assessment of their progress so that a final evaluation can be made.

The role of the student's main TP supervisor is complex and demanding. It entails the maintenance of a delicate balance between a series of diverse functions in a sometimes volatile and tense context. These functions include amongst others, giving pastoral advice, acting as a teaching coach and finally deciding on an assessment grade for teaching practice. The latter function is fraught with tensions because the examination result a student achieves in the Higher Diploma in Education has a career long significance for the level of salary received subsequently.

### **Assessment of Teaching Practice**

As is universally recognised, this aspect of the teacher training requires the most careful management. Because of the uniqueness of every school site and the presence of countless variables in classroom



interaction, any assessment approach has to keep in balance a complexity of factors covering skills development, professional stances and overall attitudes. Likewise the culture of a particular school site, while successful in itself, may not be amenable to the particular approach of a student teacher, and the assessment and evaluation must be resolute and strong in distinguishing the essential from the less essential in its criteria of evaluation.

To cope with this situation, the Education Department at UCC has devised a series of categories for the analysis of teaching practice. These can be used as sources of discussion and guidance with students during supervisory visits and also, ultimately, as general criteria for assessment which will determine, in most respects, the Teaching Practice grade that the student achieves. These categories are:

- Preparation and the Teaching Practice File
- Knowledge of Subject
- Classroom Management
- Lesson Management and Methodology
- Capacity to Reflect on Practice
- Overall Stance and Attitude.

All these categories are fully elaborated in the Student Handbook for the course so students are aware at all times of the kinds of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are central to the purpose and direction of their professional education as teachers. Furthermore, these categories are also explicated and elaborated as Grade Criteria so they can understand clearly the reasons they were awarded a particular grade. Recently a policy of student self-evaluation in the context of teaching practice has been tentatively attempted by some members of the staff with varying degrees of success, as would be expected. However it is hoped that such an approach might become more widespread, although its development and application would need much forethought and careful staff development. However admirable such an aspiration might be, there would obviously be some complex motivations operating in the context of expecting students to engage in disinterested self-evaluation.

A further aspect of the assessment of teaching practice is important to emphasise. To curb any danger of adopting an evaluation stance too heavily dependent on a behaviouristic approach, it is made clear that all supervisors/assessors should ultimately exercise their professional judgement in each situation. The Student Handbook is quite explicit on the need for the totality of the situation to be taken into account. It states:

Throughout the year the standard of a student's performance on teaching practice can vary greatly. Frequently a student's practice can make complex and uncertain progress, exhibiting a range of features pertaining to various grade levels at different times and on different occasions. There can be many reasons for this, not always within the student's control. The context of the student's teaching site may also be a factor that has to be considered. The final grade will be decided on the basis of the overall progress made in each individual student's case, and the consistency and the quality of the sustained performance achieved in the range of skills and competencies itemized in the descriptors. Thus the grade awarded will be an informed and professional judgment on the part of the Staff of the Department weighing up the wide range of factors operative and considering the whole complexity of the situation.

At the moment the schools have no formal role in the evaluation of students during their teaching practice. However regular consultations with the authorities in the schools is expected in order for the main



supervisor to get a more rounded picture of the student teachers. An important aspect of the assessment criteria employed by the department is related to the overall professional stance and attitude of the student. In this context the feedback from the school is most valuable in arriving at a final grade for any student teacher. So while at present the school's viewpoint is not formalised, the school's considered overview of the student is taken into consideration in the evaluation process. In the consultations which regularly occur between the university department of education and the schools, it has been found that there is no great enthusiasm on the schools' part to become more fully involved in the evaluation/grading of students. The status quo with regard to evaluation is likely to remain for the foreseeable future.

### **The Reflective Portfolio of Teaching Practice**

The final aspect of the teaching practice scenario that needs to be considered here is the role and place of the *Reflective Teaching Portfolio*. Students are encouraged from the beginning of the year to develop an awareness of themselves as performers in the classroom. This awareness is nurtured in various ways. The teaching practice supervisors orientate a part of their commentary on a supervised lesson towards a student's own sense of role and presence in the classroom. Furthermore, through the weekly tutorials and microteaching sessions, this ability to reflect on the interaction between the personal and the professional is cultivated. From these contexts, and the required weekly appraisal of lessons taught within their teaching practice file, a rich store of experiences is accumulated. From this store students are required to construct a series of portfolio entries that go to form a kind of episodic narrative of their development as teachers in the course of the year. Each portfolio must have five entries contained within the following generic structure:

**Introduction:** Where I started from...

(This entails the student outlining the assumptions and beliefs held about teaching prior to starting the course).

**The Process:** Three individually selected entries. Each entry must begin from a definite concrete focus: an artefact exemplifying that focus must be included within the portfolio entry. (This artefact can vary from a lesson-plan to a school report, to a photograph or anything suitable from the school context). Its purpose is to ground the entry and the consequent reflection in the reality of the school experience.

**Conclusion:** Where I have arrived...

(This entails the student describing the changes that have occurred in her or his understanding of the teaching role and providing a reflection and commentary on them.)

In general, students find the writing of the portfolio a challenging task. It is most unlikely that, previous to this, they have been invited to reflect on themselves as learners or have been required to write a reasonably coherent and critical account of that experience. Nevertheless most students eventually manage to present something that is quite impressive. This department is quietly sanguine about the potential outcomes from the portfolio within the course. It sees the making of a portfolio as a central informing task of the student teacher whereby many of the dichotomies and tensions inherent in pre-service teacher education courses can be acknowledged and hopefully ameliorated in that way. The indigenous dichotomies being referred to here are, of course, the university/school divide and the theory/practice gap. It is through the portfolio that, to some extent at least, a more explicit integration of the professional and the personal can be achieved.



## Conclusion

In University College Cork the teaching practice domain of the pre-service education of secondary teachers is gradually developing more overall coherence in its approach. The various divisions and dichotomies that have been a part of the process up to this time are being acknowledged and strategies for overcoming them are now achieving significant results. However there still remains some work to be done.

A most desirable way forward would be to develop a programme in which some form of a mentorship role for various members of the staff of schools could be inaugurated. The development of such a mentoring policy is fraught with challenges and problems that cannot be explicated here. Such an approach was advocated in the report of the *Advisory Group on Post-Primary Teacher Education* in October 2002. At the moment two pilot programmes on school mentoring are underway in Dublin and Cork. The outcomes and findings of these will be of great interest to all concerned with ensuring that initial teacher education continues to develop a new professional coherence in preparing teachers to face the challenges in schools today.



## **CONCURRENT TEACHER EDUCATION (POST-PRIMARY) IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: SOME ISSUES AND TRENDS**

**Jim Gleeson**

### **Introduction**

My intention in this paper is to describe the approach to initial teacher education in the six concurrent post-primary programmes in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) along the same lines as our Northern Ireland colleagues did at the corresponding meeting at the University of Ulster in 2000. Papers in this volume by Drudy and Mullins deal with the *consecutive* (i.e. Higher Diploma in Education) programmes in the Republic. This paper describes the relevant *concurrent* programmes and considers the recruitment of student teachers in the broader context of education policy and planning. Common features of the structure and content of each of the concurrent programmes, as well as interesting contrasts, are identified. Teacher education as a reflection of the wider environment of the Irish education landscape is discussed and some emerging issues are identified.

The paper draws on my personal experience as a teacher educator over more than twenty years. The first ten of these years were spent in Thomond College of Education (TCE), Limerick. When the Houses of the Oireachtas dissolved TCE as a rationalisation measure in 1991 its functions were transferred to the University of Limerick. While membership of the university has brought advantages, particularly in the incentives to engage in research, teacher education has been diluted as a result of this integration. The downsides of integration are included in the paper so that teacher educators in other colleges will be more aware of some of the challenges they may have to deal with if faced by amalgamation.

### **The providers**

Details of the established providers of initial teacher education programmes for the post-primary sector are outlined right (Table 1).


**Table 1: Providers of Concurrent Teacher Education Programmes.**

Institutions with concurrent programmes	Graduates are qualified to teach	Intake (2003)
Dublin City University (DCU)	Physics or Chemistry to Established Leaving Certificate <sup>9</sup> (ELC); Mathematics, Science to Junior Certificate; ICT	29
National College of Art and Design (NCAD), a recognised college of the NUI	Art, Art History to ELC Art, Craft and Design to Junior Certificate	20
Mater Dei Institute, a constituent college of DCU	Religious Education (RE) to all levels + English or History or Music to ELC	77
St. Angela's College, Sligo a recognised college of the NUI	Home Economics to all levels + Religion or Biology to ELC	28
St. Catherine's College, Sion Hill, a recognised college of Trinity College, Dublin*	Home Economics to ELC + Elective (RE or Economics or Gaeilge) to ELC	25
University of Limerick has four concurrent teacher education programmes	B. Sc. (PE) – PE to all levels + Elective [Mathematics (25) or Chemistry (7) or Geography (26) or English (10) or Gaeilge (9) to Leaving Certificate (ELC)]	77
	B. Sc. (Ed.) – Science to Junior Cert with two main internal options: Biology and Agricultural Science with either Chemistry or Physics, to ELC (45); Physics and Chemistry to ELC (5).	50
	B. Tech. (Materials Technology Construction) – Materials Technology (Wood), Technology, Technical Graphics to Junior Cert; Technical Graphics and Construction Studies to ELC.	63
	B. Tech. (Materials Technology Engineering) – Metalwork, Technology, Technical Graphics to Junior Cert; Technical Graphics and Engineering to ELC.	46
	<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>

\* The Minister for Education announced in 2003 that St. Catherine's College is to close in 2007.

<sup>9</sup> There is a general assumption that all post-primary teachers are qualified to teach the Leaving Certificate Applied, an alternative to the ELC, in their own subject and in cognate areas. The different requirements here have primarily to do with process and methodology.



### Student intake and projected future needs

While four of the colleges make their own decisions about intake numbers, it is interesting that the DES controls the intake to the two Home Economics colleges. Decisions about intake are taken in an environment characterised by a lack of research in relation to the projected staffing needs of the system at all levels. Cromien (2000, p. 17), in his unpublished *Review of the Department's Operations, Systems and Staffing Needs*, remarked that

the Department [of Education] should develop its forward-looking role' and went on to say that 'if adequate time is given to planning for future developments, it should be possible for the Department to anticipate what is coming down the tracks and plan accordingly, rather than merely react, as tends to happen at present.'

Coolahan (2003, p. 23) concluded that

in the past, managing the supply and demand situation for teachers has been impeded by the lack of a comprehensive data bank on the teaching force. This lack is now being addressed. There is also an inadequacy of research on teacher retention patterns. Policy-making also needs sharper information on patterns of return to mainstream teaching by teachers on career breaks. More precise and formal data on alleged shortages in some subject areas at post-primary are also highly desirable.

The OECD (1991, p. 85) found that there was "a teacher surplus mainly because the demand for teachers is being circumstantially choked by a combination of a high PTR [pupil-teacher ratio] and the deferment of measures to foster school improvement". These issues have been addressed in the interim, but the allocation of education resources must take cognisance of a changing demographic situation. While McGuinness (2001, p.89) predicted that "enrolment projections for the post-primary sector indicate an annual reduction of 6,000 students up to the 2014", the figures from the 2002 Census present a different picture (Central Statistics Office, 2002, Table 10). These projections indicate that, while there will be a decrease in the number of second-level pupils in the 2005-2007 period, the numbers will increase again in 2008. While the 1991-96 intercensal period showed a continuing decrease in the annual natural increase in population due to the declining birth rate, the 1996-2002 period showed that the average annual natural increase reverted to the level attained in the late eighties. Secondly, the pattern of estimated net migration has changed dramatically over the recent past – "the most recent intercensal period has witnessed net inward migration at a level higher than that experienced in the 1970s" (Central Statistics Office, 2002, p. 12).

This increase in student numbers will result in the erosion of the demographic dividend that has been available in recent years. McGuinness (2001, p.95) noted that while significant improvements had been made in staff allocation "many of the posts created have been allocated to positions outside the regular classroom and, therefore, have had minimal impact in reducing class size". The demographic dividend has been managed effectively to equalise staffing levels across the different sectors and to service a variety of policy initiatives such as School Development Planning (SDPI) and Second Level Support Services (SLSS). The increase in post-primary pupil numbers post 2008 will have particular implications for the future staffing of the current level of special initiatives, as the demographic dividend will have turned into a demographic deficit by that time.

Intake policy in individual teacher education institutions may be influenced by factors totally other than the needs of the education system. For example, intake numbers at the University of Limerick have almost doubled over the past three years as the University strives to maintain its overall student intake when demand for places in computer-related courses has dropped off dramatically.



Generally speaking, the overall intake to the six concurrent programmes under review broadly reflects the popularity of the relevant subjects in the state examinations as reflected in Table 2.

**Table 2: Uptake of selected subjects in Junior & Leaving Certificate examinations (2002)**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>% of candidates taking this subject at Junior Certificate</b>	<b>% of candidates taking this subject at ELC</b>
Art	43%	19%
Home Economics	39%	33%
Science	88%	N/A*
Biology	N/A	43%
Physics	N/A	17%
Chemistry	N/A	12%
Materials Technology (Wood)	29%	N/A*
Metalwork	16%	N/A*
Construction Studies	N/A	18%
Engineering	N/A	10%

\* NA = not applicable. These subjects are offered in a more specialised form at senior cycle.

There would appear to be a problem with over-supply of teachers of biology. This is one of the few areas where graduates from the consecutive teacher education programmes (Higher Diploma in Education) are competing with those being prepared using the concurrent model, while participation rates in Science subjects are a matter for serious concern as reported by the Report of the Task Force on the Physical Sciences (undated) and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education (<http://www.irlgov.ie/committees>).

### **Some common features of these concurrent teacher education programmes**

All teacher education institutions have either university status or academic accreditation from one of the universities. All concurrent programmes are of four years duration. The main teaching subjects in most of the programmes are in laboratory/workshop/practical subjects, with the exception of the RE programme at Mater Dei Institute. (Teacher education for primary teachers has always been located in denominational Colleges of Education). Mater Dei was established by the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin to prepare post-primary catechists at a time when the numbers of religious were beginning to decline. While the state always looked to the universities or specialised colleges of education to prepare subject teachers, finely balanced Church-State relations dictated that religious education was a matter for the Churches up until the recent introduction of an agreed RE syllabus at Junior and Leaving Certificate. One notes the recent introduction of teacher education programmes in at least two seminaries in response to the decline in vocations to the priesthood – a concurrent programme at St. Patrick's College, Carlow (RE and/or English) and a consecutive programme at St. Patrick's College, Thurles in collaboration with Tipperary Institute of Technology (RE and Business Studies).

### **Course structure and content**

The structure of concurrent teacher education courses is varied. Some are entirely modular, some are based around 'short courses' while others retain the more traditional format. While the proportion of programme



contact time devoted to 'Education' (including methodology courses) related to subject discipline(s) varies from 1:2 to 1:9, the norm is around 1:3. It is interesting that micro-teaching or studio-teaching are provided in all six colleges, often in more than one year of the programme, despite the fact that this seems to have fallen out of favour internationally. Provision is made for teaching practice (TP) or an equivalent placement in all years in all colleges except UL. This was also the norm at Limerick prior to the dissolution of Thomond College of Education in 1991. The logic of rationalisation meant that student teachers were taking modules alongside students pursuing other courses with resultant timetabling constraints. The result is that UL student teachers are now placed in post-primary schools only twice during their four-year programme – a six-week placement in Year 2 and a ten-week placement in Year 4.

Not surprisingly in view of the requirements of the Teacher Registration Council, the Foundation Disciplines form the 'spine' of the programme in most colleges. All programmes make provision for subject methodologies, often taught by practicing teachers. Reflective Practice is a prominent feature of three of the courses while two programmes make use of a thematic approach (e.g. social and emotional development; church/state in education). Provision for Special Education Needs varies considerably across programmes. Web-based learning is a feature in one of the institutions, but provision for the development of students' ICT skills varies from institution to institution.

### **Teaching Practice**

The frequency and extent of teaching practice varies considerably across colleges. All colleges are well within the Teacher Registration Council's requirement of one hundred hours. Notwithstanding the observation of the OECD (1991, p. 97) that "the optional character of school placements in secondary schools bears looking into", all colleges have to 'find' school placements for their students. Five of the six colleges place their students in practice schools for continuous blocks of time while the remaining institution uses a combination of block/day release arrangements. These blocks vary from 3-14 weeks (excluding primary school placements) in length while the total amount of time that student teachers spend on placement over four years ranges from 12-17 weeks or 110-180 hours teaching experience approximately. This means that an average of approximately 12% of the total programme time is spent in schools, considerably less than in other jurisdictions. Three of the institutions include a primary school placement during first year, and students in two of the colleges experience placements in non-formal education settings in their fourth year, e.g. industrial placement for science teachers in one college; placement in community education or Special Needs education in another.

Student teachers progress from teaching junior classes in the early years to senior classes in the later years. Each student is normally visited by two different tutors during each placement. These tutors come from a variety of backgrounds and include a combination of permanent faculty and part-time support staff. The latter are often retired teachers. While the number of tutor visits may vary by year of course, students receive between 8 and 12 visits over the duration of the programme. Although many cooperating teachers provide tutorial assistance to students allocated to their classes, mentoring has yet to be formalised in most colleges. The master/co-operating teacher is *required* to be present during the lesson in the case of one of the colleges. On the other hand the policy in some cooperating schools is that the class teacher must be in the classroom while the student teacher is teaching. On-line mentoring is employed in some institutions.

### **Assessment**

All college-based courses employ a combination of summative and continuous assessment. The cooperating teachers do not have an official role in the assessment of teaching practice. In order to get an honours award



in two of the colleges, students must first achieve honours in TP. Performance on TP is used as a 'moderating influence' in one further institution. In the two remaining institutions it is not a prerequisite for a student to achieve honours grade in TP in order to graduate with an honours degree.

### **Teacher education as a reflection of the broader environment**

Teacher education reflects the influence of the surrounding education landscape in a variety of ways. Within the confines of this paper, this influence will be discussed from the following perspectives:

- Fragmentation – between the academic and the vocational and between primary and post-primary institutions;
- The perceived marginality of teacher education as reflected in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) provision, participation in education partnership and student teacher placements in schools
- The theory/practice dichotomy as reflected in the emphasis on the Foundation Disciplines and the status of TP in the academy.

### **Fragmentation**

The chasm that exists between primary and post-primary education in the RoI is well illustrated in the study of McMahon (1998), who found that post-primary principals and teachers totally ignored the data which feeder primary schools gave them in relation to incoming students, preferring to take a 'fresh start' approach. Historically there has been fragmentation and tension between the NCCA and the Department of Education, meaning that curriculum design and development (in the sense of syllabus) have been divorced from curriculum implementation and assessment. There is a history of discontinuity within the Department of Education between the administrative side and the Inspectorate, and within the Inspectorate itself between primary and post-primary and between the academic and vocational.

The current arrangements for initial teacher education reflect the academic/vocational dichotomy (O'Connor, 1998). It is significant that the post-primary concurrent teacher education programmes are mainly in the vocational areas – materials technology (wood), engineering, science, home economics, art, and in the (as yet) non-examination areas of religious education and physical education. The degree requirement for teaching was introduced relatively recently in many of these areas and teachers in the vocational sector are not required to take a professional qualification, only a recognised qualification in their subject discipline. On the other hand, the consecutive Higher Diploma programmes are located in the traditional universities and cater mostly for the 'academic' subjects. Historically, students on the latter programmes were placed in the higher status secondary school sector, and the Higher Diploma programme itself would also have enjoyed higher status than the more vocationally oriented qualification gained through concurrent programmes.

From the perspective of the institutions, in the RoI there is only one joint education faculty (comprising two education departments) involved in the preparation of both primary and post-primary teachers. This is located at the University of Limerick. Notwithstanding the high levels of mutual goodwill between faculty members in the primary and post-primary departments, levels of professional collaboration between them are low. While the fact that these departments are on different campuses five miles apart is a constraint, this lack of collaboration reflects the strength of the primary/post-primary divide and the fragmented nature of our education system (Gleeson, 2000). The voice of teacher education in the national arena is weaker as a result.



### **The perceived marginality of teacher education**

This is reflected in the marginal role of teacher educators in the continuing professional development of teachers, their low levels of involvement in the education partnership process and the voluntary nature of student teacher placements in schools. The willingness of teacher educators to become involved in CPD activity is reflected in the fact that four of the six colleges offer Graduate/Higher Diplomas in areas related to their disciplines, with three currently offering Masters and PhDs, reflecting an increased interest in postgraduate studies in education. But outside of the academies CPD has become the prerogative of the members of the various curriculum support services – seconded teachers, often released on a year-to-year basis to work in teacher education. This in-career development work is at the cutting edge of change, arguably more challenging and interesting than initial teacher education.

The perceived marginality of teacher education programmes was well illustrated recently in the very revealing advertisement for the positions of National and Assistant National Coordinator of the Leadership Development for Schools Programme (*Sunday Independent*, June 1, 2003). The extensive list of desirable attributes mentioned did not include relevant academic qualifications such as the M.Ed. in Educational Management/School Leadership.

The National Education Convention (NEC), held in Dublin Castle during over a ten-day period in October 1994, represents our most celebrated example of the partnership approach to education policy-making. The official record shows that some 42 bodies, from a diversity of backgrounds, participated in the NEC. “These comprised those organisations directly and centrally involved in the education process and included representatives of patrons/owners of schools; managerial organisations; school management organisations; teacher unions; National Parents’ Councils; Heads of Universities and Directors of Higher Education Institutions, curriculum and assessment organisations and the Union of Students of Ireland. Other organisations less closely associated with the system such as the social partners, farming and trade union and employer organisations and cultural groups also attended” (McGuinness, 1995). Each organisation made a formal presentation during its allotted time (ranging from 15-30 minutes) in which it outlined its responses to the proposals for change and took questions from the Secretariat on matters arising.

During the second week of the Convention specific issues were debated at some length during concurrent group discussion sessions. These included: the governance and internal management of schools; curriculum issues; local education structures; the role of the Department of Education and of the Inspectorate; and school rationalisation. The proceedings of the NEC were highly influential in the establishment of national policy, and this is reflected in the extent of the liberal use of quotes from the Convention in the 1995 White Paper. While some members of the Secretariat at the National Education Convention in 1993 worked in teacher education, the post-primary teacher educators did not have representation at the Convention even though groups such as the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association did, a clear indication of the marginality of post-primary teacher education.

As noted earlier, OECD (1991) commented on the voluntary nature of school placements in post-primary teacher education. The nature of the current arrangement highlights the ongoing perceived marginality of initial teacher education and those who work in this sector. There is growing recognition of the need to formalise arrangements between schools and colleges of education. This can only improve what is often a very tenuous relationship and provide an impetus for practitioners to draw on the expertise of the teacher educators for professional development. The formalisation of mentoring arrangements would provide a springboard for such collaboration.



### **Theory and practice: the emphasis on the Foundation Disciplines and the place of teaching practice in the academy**

As teacher education moved from dedicated colleges of education (with their strong 'craft' orientation) to the academy, there was a resultant concern with academic respectability. This caused the balance to shift away from the 'craft' of teaching towards the foundation disciplines of education. Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) refer to this development as the 'devil's bargain', suggesting that a very high price was paid for academic respectability. In the RoI context, the Regulations of the Teacher Registration Council, drawn up in 1926 under the Intermediate Education Act of 1914, provide the framework for the professional qualification to this day. These regulations were drawn up to serve the Higher Diploma programmes in the universities. They identify 'Studies in the Foundations of Education' (i.e. Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology and History of Education) as essential components of initial teacher education. There is also a requirement in relation to Professional Studies which "*must include general methodology and specific methodology and should normally include studies in the areas of school organisation, audio-visual technology, evaluation and assessment and curriculum studies*" (Department of Education, 1987, p. 8; author's italics).

These regulations were revised during the late eighties and a *Guide to the Regulations for the Registration of Secondary Teachers* was published in November 1988. Notwithstanding the changed circumstances – the move towards an all-graduate teaching profession, the changing student population due to increased rates of retention, the new emphasis on curriculum change – the relative weightings of the foundation disciplines and curriculum studies did not change at all from the 1928 position. As Stenhouse (1975) emphasised in his seminal *Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*, teacher professionalism thrives on direct involvement in curriculum development and school-based action research activity i.e. the teacher as researcher, collaborator and reflective practitioner. Meanwhile 'curriculum studies' has become the bedrock of teacher education in other countries. McDonald's (1991, p. 6) experience of curriculum innovation in England was that "the theoretical tradition of education based on derivative disciplines began to give way to the new theorists of educational practice whose theory was based on the close observation of new curricula in action, grounded theory of school life". The lowly status of 'curriculum studies' in the existing regulations of the Teacher Registration Council reflects a mentality that was more concerned with respectability in the academy, and with positivist approaches to education theory/knowledge, than with school-based research and practice.

The treatment of the practicum element of initial teacher education programmes also reflects the theory/practice dilemma. Higher Diploma in Education students must achieve an honours grade in TP in order to qualify for the award of an Honours Diploma. This is a significant statement on the part of the traditional universities offering the consecutive model, one that honours the importance of the applied nature of this professional qualification. But this is not the case in three of the six institutions offering the concurrent qualification, two of which recently achieved university status. The University of Limerick situation is particularly interesting here. While an honours TP grade is a *sine qua non* for an Honours B. Ed. award at Mary Immaculate College (a college of UL), graduates of the post-primary education department in the same university and faculty do not have to meet this requirement. This anomaly arose because the Quality Credit Average coming off the computer decides the level of award regardless of teaching performance, and because of fears that students with high academic achievement might be precluded from progression to Master's by research in their subject discipline if a passing performance in TP prevented them from attaining an honours primary degree.



### **Some personal reflections**

Coming towards the conclusion I wish to focus on three particular issues: the concurrent versus consecutive debate in the light of my experience; the imminent establishment of the Teaching Council, and some recent developments in relation to the integration of theory and practice in the context of CPD.

### **Concurrent versus consecutive in the context of institutional integration: a personal perspective**

Both models of teacher education are provided under the auspices of the University of Limerick. This means that members of the Department of Education and Professional Professional Studies at UL have a relatively unique opportunity to experience both models of initial teacher education at first hand. In my experience it is also more satisfying to work with mature graduates who have taken considered decisions to become teachers than with some of the students on the concurrent programme who, at the age of 16 or 17 opt for teacher education (maybe as a second or third choice) on their CAO forms for third-level places.

But this reaction must be considered in context. Since the integration of Thomond College of Education (TCE) with the University of Limerick, concurrency might fairly be described in terms of simultaneity without worthwhile collaboration or integration. The distribution of teacher educators from TCE across several departments and faculties of the university has left teacher education as a site for interdepartmental 'turf wars', e.g. the decision, discussed earlier, to do away with the requirement of an honours grade in TP as a prerequisite for an overall honours qualification. The University of Limerick is unique among the six institutions dealt with in this paper insofar as it is the only case in the RoI where a dedicated college of education (Mary Immaculate College) has been fully integrated into a university institution. Most of the other colleges of education might be described as enjoying the best of both worlds insofar as they have institutional autonomy while engaging in academic collaboration with their 'adoptive universities'. Teacher education at Dublin City University post-dates the establishment of that university.

### **Teaching Council**

Probably the most interesting live issue for initial teacher education revolves around the imminent introduction of the Teaching Council. According to Section 8(d) of the Teaching Council Act, five of the six institutions dealt with in this paper (Mater Dei, interestingly, being the exception) are included in the list of ten post-primary teacher education institutions that shall jointly nominate two members to the 37 member Teaching Council. It might be argued that this small allocation reflects the perceived marginality of teacher education alluded to earlier. Many interesting questions arise. What impact will the Teaching Council have on initial teacher education when it gets up and running? Will the Council supplant the as yet unpublished review of post-primary teacher education? Will the arrival of the Council result in a badly needed debate about teacher education at all three levels - initial, induction and in-career - as well as the relationship between these three stages of teacher development? What role will the teacher education institutions have in teacher induction? What is the future of CPD now that the In-Career Development Unit has been disbanded, economies are being sought, and there is a strong sense that the latest changes are 'in place' and working well? Will initial teacher education regain some lost ground vis-à-vis the 'new teacher educators' of the support services?

### **The interface between practice and the academy**

One of the other important relevant developments of recent times relates to the academic accreditation of in-career development activity provided by what has been referred to earlier as the 'new teacher educators'.



The School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) has established a working relationship with NUI Galway, while the Second Level Support Service (SLSS) and the Primary Curriculum Support Programme have collaborated in the development of a 'link-in' module with the post-primary teacher education department at the University of Limerick. Participants who register at UL for taught post-graduate programmes in areas such as Education Leadership may subsequently use the academic credit provided by the university for this module. This provides a framework within which generic CPD courses being provided by the SLSS (e.g. creating a positive classroom environment; mixed ability teaching) or other agencies might be integrated into accredited post-graduate education courses at UL. This link-in module facilitates a much-needed fusion of practical expertise with academic explorations in the study of professional practice, and concretises widely held beliefs about the importance of bringing theory and practice closer together and about the fundamental role of reflective practice in teacher education. This should help reduce fragmentation between theory and practice and between different providers of teacher education, while ensuring that CPD activities are informed by relevant theory, research and reflection.

### Conclusion

While there is remarkable consistency between the concurrent teacher education programmes in the six institutions considered in this paper, some interesting differences also emerge e.g. varying approaches to TP, uses of reflective practice, ICT and non-school placements. Arrangements for initial teacher education hold up a mirror that reflects the beliefs and values of the wider education system and beyond. Some of the resultant images include the pervasiveness of fragmentation, the persistence of the academic/vocational and theory/practice divides, the perceived marginality of initial teacher education and the neglect of macro planning. Progress and change in these areas will have significant implications for teacher education at all levels.

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## IMPLEMENTING THE TRANSITION YEAR PROGRAMME IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

### Gerry Jeffers

Young people at age 15-16 in schools in the Republic of Ireland have the option of taking a Transition Year (TY). This is a one-year 'stand-alone' programme, designed by individual schools within the framework of national guidelines. It occurs after the compulsory three-year Junior Cycle (age 12-15) and Junior Certificate Examination, and before students embark on a Leaving Certificate programme for the final two years of their schooling. Transition Year programmes build on the idea that mid-adolescence is very much a time of change and there is a strong focus on facilitating transition from the dependence of childhood towards the relative independence of adulthood.

The mission of Transition Year is:

To promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of pupils and to prepare them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society. (Department of Education, 1993, p.4)

Furthermore, there are three interrelated and interdependent aims:

1. Education for maturity with emphasis on social awareness and increased social competence.
2. Promotion of general, technical and academic skills with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and self-directed learning.
3. Education through experience of adult and working life as a basis for personal development and maturity. (Department of Education, 1993, p.4)

Individual schools, when devising Transition Year programmes, attempt to respond to a complex rationale, for example:

- To develop a learning structure that promotes maturity; to develop a wide range of cognitive and emotional processes
- To be learning-led, rather than exam driven
- To provide breadth and balance in the curriculum
- To co-operate with all educational partners, especially parents, in providing a broad and enriching educational experience
- To challenge students in all areas of development
- To develop life skills
- To encourage variety in teaching and learning
- To learn through networking with other schools and with social agencies. To facilitate interdisciplinary work
- To develop basic competencies in key areas, including remediation
- To enable students to become independent self-directed, learners.

### Origins

The Transition Year was the brainchild of Richard Burke TD who, when Minister for Education, launched the idea in 1974. As he saw it at that time, young people's lives had become highly pressurised, particularly in the race for high grades and examination success. He argued that

Because of these pressures the school is losing contact with life outside and the student has little or no opportunity 'to stand and stare', to discover the kind of person he (sic) is, the kind of society he will be living in and, in due course, contributing to its shortcomings and its good points. (Burke, 1974)



The Minister proposed a programme 'to stop the treadmill and devote time to personal development and community service'. Early guidelines emphasised an interdisciplinary programme directed towards developing intellectual, social and emotional maturity. Suggestions for programme content included moral education, education for living, philosophy and applied logic, music and the arts, Irish studies, 'civilisation' courses for students of continental European languages, media education and communication skills (Department of Education, 1976).

Uptake of the new programme was slow, with three schools offering it in 1974 and a further five a year later. During its first decade, a disparate group of schools – by geography and school type - offered TY, usually to a single class group, though Newpark Comprehensive School in Dublin had over 100 students following the programme as early as 1975. None of the schools offering TY in the seventies and early eighties was fee-paying.

### **Further development**

Government decisions in the mid-1980s to introduce a three year Junior Certificate programme to replace the former Group and Intermediate Certificates led indirectly to a significant rise in the number of schools offering TY. Many schools that had previously taken a four-year route to the Intermediate Certificate Examination, followed by a two-year Leaving Certificate programme, decided to maintain their six-year cycle by inserting a Transition Year. Schools that charged fees often made this year compulsory. The number of students taking TY jumped from 484 in 1985 to 2918 in 1986 and by 1990 was over 6,000.<sup>10</sup>

Development of Transition Year was also facilitated by the Curriculum and Examinations Board (CEB) which in 1986 issued a set of TY guidelines for schools that contained many practical suggestions for structuring and implementing the programme (CEB, 1986).

In 1991 the Government proposed that all students should have the option of a six-year cycle in school. In 1994 the senior cycle was re-structured and TY was 'mainstreamed'. This involved issuing a fresh set of *Guidelines* (Department of Education, 1993). Every school was invited to apply. Participation in a programme of in-service was a condition of participation. As a result of this, there was a dramatic expansion in TY participation rates with numbers increasing from over 8,000 in 1993-94 to in excess of 21,000 the following year. Participation rates over the following decade indicate that more than two thirds of all schools offered a TY programme with about 40% of the age cohort of students taking part. Schools report a variety of reasons for undertaking the programme. Some highlight the personal and social development opportunities for students. Others point to the benefit of students being a year older when completing school. Some schools state that, when faced with declining enrolments, TY allows them to retain teaching staff.

### **Curriculum guidelines**

The *Guidelines* invite each school to shape its own Transition Year curriculum, appropriate to its own particular context:

Curriculum content is a matter for selection and adaptation by the individual school having regard to these guidelines, the requirements of pupils and the views of parents. In establishing the curriculum, the school should also take into consideration the possibilities offered by employers and other work-providing agencies and the wider interests of the local community. (Department of Education, 1993, p.5)

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<sup>10</sup> Based on data supplied by the Statistical Section, Department of Education and Science.



Faithful to the original vision, a central feature of Transition Year continues to be the creation of a space to learn, mature and develop in the absence of examination pressure. Because 'points' generated in the examination at the end of the two-year Leaving Certificate (LC) programme are so critically important for admission to third-level education, maintaining Transition Year's identity as a stand-alone course, separate and distinct from the LC programme, presents schools with major challenges. The guidelines emphasise that a Transition Year should not be seen as an opportunity for spending three years rather than two studying LC material. The guidelines also state that:

The programme content for Transition Year, while not absolutely excluding Leaving Certificate material, should be chosen largely with a view to augmenting the Leaving Certificate experience, laying a solid foundation for Leaving Certificate studies, giving an orientation to the world of work and, in particular, catering for the pupil's personal and social awareness/development. Where Leaving Certificate material is chosen for study it should be done so on the clear understanding that it is to be explored in an original and stimulating way that is significantly different from the way in which it would have been treated in the two years to Leaving Certificate.

(Department of Education, 1993, p.5)

This somewhat tense relationship between the Transition Year Programme (TYP) and the LC programme is a common strand in the evaluations of the programme and one that co-coordinators and school staffs struggle with to ensure 'balance'.

Because personal development and social awareness are so central to the Transition Year Programme, some, mistakenly, may initially interpret this emphasis as a swing away from an intellectual focus. The *Guidelines* see intellectual challenge as an essential component of all aspects of the TYP. The goal should be to develop in students' confidence, specific study skills and an increased capacity for self-directed learning.

Transition Year is also an attempt to wean teachers away from the traditional compartmentalized teaching of individual subjects. Interdisciplinary work is encouraged in order to promote a more unified perspective on learning.

### **Active teaching and learning**

The programme *Guidelines* envisage a major shift on the part of teachers to more active forms of teaching and learning. They state that

A key feature of Transition Year should be the use of a wide range of teaching/learning methodologies and situations. (Department of Education, 1993, p. 8)

Some specific approaches are proposed, including:

- negotiated learning
- personal responsibility in learning
- activity-based learning
- integration of appropriate areas of learning
- team teaching approaches
- group work: discussion, debate, interview, role play
- project work and research
- visiting speakers and seminars
- study visits and field trips
- work experience, work simulation, community service.



### **Assessment**

While removing the pressure that results from external examinations, assessment is still an integral part of the teaching and learning process in Transition Year. Schools are invited to devise their own forms of assessment that are both diagnostic (so as to provide accurate information with regard to young people's strengths and weakness) and formative (so as to facilitate improved performance through programme planning and implementation). Some schools have responded to this opportunity by developing systems of portfolio assessment, often shifting from a traditional reliance on terminal, written examinations towards a greater emphasis on presentations of work, practically and orally. Project work, by individuals and by groups, student journals and log books, as well as reports from work experience and community service placements, also feature in some schools' assessment procedures. Despite the opportunities that TY offers teachers for creative approaches in assessing students' work (Humphreys, 1998), various evaluations of TYP suggest that assessment is an area where practices vary widely from school to school and in many cases could be 'greatly improved'.

### **Evaluation**

Schools are obliged to document their TY programmes, not least so as to facilitate ongoing review within the school and by the Inspectorate. The suggestion is that the programme should be reviewed internally on an annual basis and revised appropriately following each review. Perhaps understandably, many schools express concern at the lack of time needed to thoroughly evaluate their TY programmes and to implement effective reforms of them.

### **Organisation of the TYP in schools**

In practice the day-to-day running of the Transition Year programme depends very much on a core team of teachers within a school and, in particular, on the person designated as 'co-coordinator'. Indeed, various studies (e.g. Department of Education, 1996; TYCSS, 2000) point to the centrality of co-coordinators in the successful implementation of TY programmes. The *Guidelines* continually emphasise the importance of whole staff and whole school involvement at the various stages of design, implementation, assessment and evaluation. Keeping various stakeholders, inside and outside the school, informed about the values and practices of Transition Year is an ongoing challenge.

### **Individual programmes**

Given the emphasis in the Transition Year *Guidelines* on personal and social development, on interdisciplinary work and on active teaching and learning methodologies, an examination of a weekly timetable needs to be augmented by looking at the 'once-off' calendar items that occur at various stages during a TYP. For example, daylong field trips, whether to mountains, woodlands, riverbanks, seashores or busy shopping centres, can provide valuable data for numerous classes. Visits to courthouses, to county council offices, to prisons, to numerous other workplaces, to theatres and art galleries can offer memorable reference points for learning. This is also true of visitors invited into classrooms. These range across all sections of society: including members of ethnic minorities, sporting heroes, politicians, representatives from various careers and so on. In many schools the most dramatic and distinctly visible feature of the TY calendar is a work experience or community service placement. These are typically of one or two weeks duration and are only possible with the active co-operation of employers and community interests. Many schools report these learning experiences as significant, particularly in terms of fresh perspectives on adult environments, social skills, career clarification, personal motivation and general maturity. Quite a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), recognizing TY's potential for increased social



awareness, have developed curricular materials and projects for the programme. These include agencies working in areas such as human rights, disability awareness and environmental protection. Some innovative interdisciplinary projects such as the establishment of mini-companies and costume design using re-cycleable materials, as well as more traditional school events such as school plays, musicals and sporting events, can also benefit from the time available during Transition Year. *Transition Times*, a weekly feature in the *Irish Times*, has highlighted many of the more innovative dimensions of TY.

TYP timetables usually include subjects, particularly English, Mathematics and Irish, that represent a continuation of subjects previously learned at Junior Cycle. Indeed it is in these classrooms where the challenges to implement active teaching and learning strategies appear greatest. Some schools modularise their year into two or three segments and this allows for some imaginative variations within these 'linear' subjects. A modular approach also allows students to sample a variety of subjects, thus enabling them to make more informed choices for their LC programme. Short courses in a variety of subjects not normally covered in the Junior or Leaving Certificate - usually related to a teacher's particular interests - allow for a great broadening of students' encounters with learning. For example, schools have offered modules in TY on Architecture, Aviation, Egyptian Studies, Development Education, Horticulture, Leisure Studies, Local history, Media Studies and Tourism. Some schools also avail of opportunities in Transition Year to develop and gain accreditation in skills as varied as computing, first aid, refereeing and swimming.

### **Support for the programme**

One of the clear differences between the development of TY from 1993-4 onwards and the earlier years was the putting in place of a structured programme of support for schools. As stated already, a condition of participating in the mainstreaming of TYP in the nineties was that schools *had* to become involved in staff development/in-service education related thereto. Initially this was facilitated by a team of 68 practitioners on part-time release from their schools. This team supported schools locally and regionally in designing programmes and implementing the guidelines. This model of support was deemed so successful (Lewis and MacMahon, 1996) that a dedicated team of 14 teachers was seconded from their schools between 1995 and 1998 to assist schools nationally in developing their TY programmes. This was replaced by a six-person support team, appointed in 1998. In 2000 this latter team was integrated into a composite Second Level Support Service that aids schools across a variety of initiatives. The future of this service, however, seems uncertain.

### **Evaluation and Inspection**

During the initial year of TY mainstreaming (1994-95), Department of Education inspectors looked at programmes in 146 schools. They found that 90% were following the *Guidelines* in a 'satisfactory' manner. They added that:

The consensus among principals, teachers and pupils is that the Transition Year Programme is a very worthwhile initiative, allowing the school to engage in genuine in-school curriculum development, offering teachers an opportunity to break free of overly compartmentalized subject teaching, and giving students the space and time to grow in maturity and to develop in self-confidence. (Department of Education, 1996, p.20)

This report, while echoing many of the points in the Guidelines and praising schools for enthusiasm and innovation, also suggested:

- More attention to interdisciplinary, cross-curricular approaches
- Delay of LC subject choices until the end of TY (some schools had been operating what looked very like a 'three-year LC' programme)



- Further development of links with the local community
- More compensatory teaching
- More informal networking between schools for 'improving and revitalising' programmes
- Better assessment procedures
- Improved evaluation within schools.

The report also noted that external evaluation would continue. A Department of Education Inspector (Murphy, 1999) reported on 18 TY inspections during the academic year 1998-99. He noted that pupils enjoy the TYP, valuing the opportunity to be so active in a creative way to develop many technical and interpersonal skills and to sample different subjects. He also noted their appreciation of the bonding effects of the TYP on inter-pupil relationships and on pupil-teacher relationships.

Murphy also described TYP as "a most effective form of teacher in-service training", noting that "like the TYP itself, it is a case of learning by doing". He stated that:

It is not surprising that some of the most dynamic teachers in the schools are heavily involved in the TYP. They see it as an opportunity to be creative and innovative.

#### **Parents' attitudes**

Parental attitudes to the programme have been tinged with ambiguity from the outset. According to Murphy: Parents' attitudes to the Programme seem to undergo a significant transformation in the course of the year during which their children are doing TYP. Many of them are quite sceptical about the TYP before the year begins. By the end of the year they tend to be much more positive about its benefits. The change in traditional homework patterns and the perception of parents that the school's role should be exclusively academic are two of the factors contributing to some parents' prejudiced view of the TYP. The experience of seeing their children mature through their TYP experiences does much to alter their original perceptions. Needless to say, if pupils do not commit themselves to the TYP, and a number don't, their parents are quite justified in questioning its value for their children. (Murphy, 1999)

#### **The reality in schools**

Across the country there are teachers, students and parents who are still far from convinced about TY's merits. Even in schools where the programme appears established, principals and teachers report that convincing each fresh cohort of students and their parents of the value of TY is an annual challenge. Furthermore, whether teachers are enthusiastic, lukewarm or even doubtful about TY's benefits, they find the tasks of designing, implementing, assessing and evaluating a TYP every year very challenging. This is partly because of the extensive demands made by other, more established, programmes and partly due to many teachers' limited experience of curriculum development.

#### **Writing the Programme**

In the late 1990s both TY support personnel and schools inspectors noted that many school staffs were experiencing major difficulties in providing written descriptions of their programmes. In several cases imaginative programmes, or at least components of programmes, were being implemented but the only one who knew in any detail what was going on was the teacher involved. The weakness of such *ad hoc* approaches, especially for consolidation and development of the TYP, was clear. Collaborative work between the support service and the Inspectorate resulted in the production of *Writing the Transition Year Programme* (TYCSS, 1999), a guide on how TY programmes might be documented. The basic rationale was that



documenting a programme that is school designed and school specific is both professionally responsible and practically useful.

This guide suggests that a TY programme should be written in three parts. The initial section might set out a general introduction to the school's TY programme, relating it to the national guidelines and to the school's overall mission. Ideally the aims should be clearly stated and should be the result of a process of consultation with all the partners in the school community.

The second part of a school's written programme might include modules for individual subjects. A format for documenting this would normally include:

- Title of subject or module
- Approximate duration of module
- Aims
- Objectives
- Teaching and learning strategies
- Content
- Assessment
- Resources
- Links with other subject
- Provision for evaluation.

Extensive examples of aims, objectives and teaching and learning strategies are provided.

The guide proposes that the third part of the programme plan might include organisational details, including names of co-ordinator and core team members, students and the weekly timetable, main calendar features, assessment and certification details, finances, and procedures for evaluation. Explanations and examples of technical terms are also offered.

### **Research**

A longitudinal study of those students who sat the Junior Certificate Examination (JCE) in 1994 drew much public attention to the TYP (Millar and Kelly, 1999). Comparing those who sat the Leaving Certificate Examination in 1996 with those who took the examination a year later, this research indicated that the latter group – the vast majority of whom had followed the TYP – tended to achieve more CAO (Central Applications Office) points in the LC than the former. The raw difference was 46 CAO points and, when adjusted for gender, school type and previous performance in the JCE, amounted to 26 points. The report also noted the positive impact TY programme participation appears to have on the progress of boys in both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged schools. This study also suggests that, following a TY, students are more likely to be educationally adventurous with regard to the subjects they select for LC – for example, more likely to take up a subject *ab initio*. The commentary by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) accompanying the report notes:

While it cannot be concluded that participation in TY is the cause of this gain in CAO points, the data do point to a strong relationship between enhanced academic performance and TY.  
(Millar and Kelly, 1999, p. xxvi).

Perhaps ironically, some schools subsequently found this data more effective at convincing students and their parents about the value of the TYP than extolling the virtues of a holistic educational experience. Subsequent work by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) (Smyth et al, in press) also examined



the relationship between Transition Year participation and LC performance and found results “broadly consistent with the difference found in the NCCA study”. This report also draws attention to schools where the programme is optional and suggests that “there is evidence that students with behavioural difficulties may be discouraged from participating in the programme”. It notes the funding implications of specific activities and observes that “additional financial resources are particularly relevant in more disadvantaged schools where it may not be appropriate to expect students (or their parents) to fund specific activities”.

Smyth et al (in press) identify ‘lack of time’ as the main resource constraint on the effective management of the TYP. These researchers also state that “current timetabling structures within schools militate against the development of interdisciplinary courses, for example, in restricting opportunities for team teaching”. They also commented on variations across schools and across students who opt for TY. Their study makes the observation that it is difficult to capture the effects of TY on the development of ‘soft skills’ such as young people’s personal and social skills.

The pattern of uptake of the TYP by school type and geographical location since 1994 also shows numerous local variations (Jeffers, 2002). In general, the programme has been slightly more popular among girls than boys, on the east coast than on the west coast, in larger schools than in smaller ones, and in non-disadvantaged schools than in schools designated disadvantaged. There is some evidence of TY’s potential to make a substantial impact on educational disadvantage but this requires specific targeting, relevant programme development and adequate support.

Ongoing research by the present author suggests that schools adapt the TYP to fit with their own visions of their core missions. For example, schools with strong academic traditions are likely to emphasise the academic benefits of TY while schools designated disadvantaged may see TY as a practical way of increasing the number of their students proceeding to third level. Schools with a strong commitment to holistic education will highlight personal and social development while schools with low public profiles may find TY an effective vehicle for projecting the school’s image as innovative and progressive to the local community.

Students consistently report that they greatly value the improved teacher-student relationships that emerge through TY programmes, as well as the opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. This research also finds that a tension between an instrumentalist view of schooling – favouring a five-year cycle - and a more developmental perspective – which sees TY as a core component of a six-year cycle – leads to ambiguous attitudes to TY among all stakeholders.

## **Conclusion**

Transition Year represents an attempt to introduce innovative thinking about young people’s learning at the critical stage of mid-adolescence. The programme devolves extensive responsibility to individual schools, principals, co-coordinators and teachers to devise, implement, assess and evaluate their own programmes. Evidence so far suggests that to implement a TYP effectively requires sustained vision, effort, commitment and support, particularly by teachers and educational leaders. The quality of the experience appears to vary widely among students and teachers. Three decades after its inception, Transition Year is well embedded in some schools while in others it is still very much a focus of contention and debate. The aspiration in the *Guidelines* that “the aims and philosophy of Transition Year should permeate the entire school” (Department of Education, 1993, p.4) still presents a major challenge to most schools. Yet Transition Year’s emphasis on integrated, holistic and imaginative learning experiences is a very worthy goal for any school.



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