IRELAND'S YEARBOOK OF EDUCATION 2019-2020

PUBLISHED BY

EDUCATION MATTERS

MANAGING EDITOR

Dr Brian Mooney

ISBN: 978-0-9956987-3-4

SPONSORED BY

Dublin City University - Irish Research Council National University of Ireland - Trinity College Dublin Maynooth University - University College Dublin - NUI Galway University of Limerick - QQI - SOLAS

Copy-edited by Stan Carey www.stancarey.com

Designed by Jeroen Bos www.artvaark-design.ie

Printed in Ireland by Walsh Colour Print Castleisland, Co. Kerry

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FOREWORD



Joe McHugh TDMinister for Education and Skills

As a former teacher and youth worker, it would be fair to admit that when An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD rang me in October 2018 to offer me the role of Minister for Education and Skills it was a dream come true.

I believe that it is through education that we prepare our young people for the world of the future and the lives they will live, which in many ways will be hard for our generation to even conceive.

In the time I have spent in the Department of Education and Skills, I have had the opportunity to work with department staff and a range of education partners who, although they may differ on the details, are dedicated to making sure the Irish education system is second to none.

The education brief is wide and varied, but there are a few policy areas that I want to focus on in this article.

Irish

The journey with the language continues. I want to see an education system which focuses on teaching our unique and prized 3,000-year-old language in a way that young people will use it. It is about making it relevant. It is about showing young people how to communicate and converse in Irish.

A small step on that road is the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) project that I introduced for early years, primary, and post-primary schools. It sets the ground for young people to be taught subjects through Irish, with one of those being PE. Other subjects being worked on are Art, Maths, Science, Business, Geography, SPHE, and CSPE. There are many options. And I am confident it will help young people connect with Irish in a new and better way.

Our students also have to understand the legacy of our language – ár nOidhreacht. Irish is 3,000 years old. It dates back to Roman times. It was strong enough to survive the plundering of the Vikings and the penal laws, colonisation and An Gorta Mór, albeit badly weakened.

Now we have almost 60,000 students in 247 gaelscoileanna and 49 gaelcholáistí around the country. There has been strong growth in the sector in recent years. I am keen to see more on this front. That is why I made a decision to designate five new primary schools being established from 2020 to 2022 as gaelscoileanna.

There is an imbalance that needs to be addressed, and I am confident that there will be significant demand for places in the new schools. It is about choice. It gives parents a certainty about education options.

Our responsibility to the next generation is to leave the standard of education of Irish in a better place. We are making changes. But we need to do more. We need to work harder on showing young people the relevance of the language but also to instil it more naturally from as young an age as possible. My aim is to see that ambition worked on in 2019.

History

I strongly believe that an understanding of history is vitally important, not just for future generations but also for our own. If we don't check in the rear-view mirror from time to time, how can we avoid the mistakes of the past?

An understanding of history – Irish, European, and global – will give you different and more informed knowledge of the importance of the border on our island, Brexit, or the rise of paranoid nationalism around the world. It is this type of understanding that is increasingly important for all our citizens to have.

The impact of the Decade of Commemorations in reviving the interest of Irish people of all ages, all over the world, in our struggle for Home Rule, the 1913 Lockout, the First World War, Easter 1916, the War of Independence, and the Civil War cannot be underestimated.

That revival has led to a thirst for deeper knowledge of our history from the earliest days to our recent past – not just the slightly rose-tinted view of the past that we sometimes get, but the unvarnished truth, all sides of our complex and often difficult history.

Shortly after my appointment in October 2018 I sought a review of the optional nature of History at Junior Cycle level. This ultimately led to my decision in the autumn of 2019 that History should be given special core status in the Junior Cycle.

The new History specification for Junior Cycle offers a much better way to teach and learn about our past, whether that is at a global, national, or even local level. It makes the subject more engaging for young people and moves it out of the classroom and beyond the 'chalk and talk'.

I believe that every student will benefit from being part of this, that it will create a generation of well-informed Irish citizens with the skills to critically assess facts and draw their own conclusions from an understanding of what has created these conditions. What could be a more important skill in the future that our young people will face?

I know that our education system is responsive and progressive and will allow this to be implemented. I will work closely with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and other education partners towards making this vision a reality.

DEIS

I am committed to tackling education disadvantage, and DEIS is the Government's main policy initiative to achieve this. The programme also provides, amongst other supports, reduced class size in Urban Band 1 DEIS schools, Home School Community Liaison Coordinators, DEIS grants, enhanced book grants, curriculum supports, priority access to Continuing Professional Development, and the School Excellence Fund for DEIS.

Evidence from the various evaluations of the DEIS programme demonstrate that it is having a positive effect on tackling educational disadvantage and is succeeding in addressing education inequality. My Department will spend in the region of €125 million in 2019 on the DEIS programme. We will continue to support DEIS and build upon the success of this programme to strive to reduce disadvantage in education.

Special Education

The provision of education for children with special needs is an ongoing priority for Government. The continual investment in special education since 2011, including the funding in Budget 2020, will see provision made for 1,886 special classes, 13,620 special education teachers, and 17,014 Special Needs Assistants in our schools. This is unprecedented and gives a clear indication of the Government's commitment to this area.

It is important that we continue to work together in the education sector to provide additional supports to children who need them as part of their education. These can range from transport to teachers and classes and beyond. We provide school transport, sometimes including escorts, for children with additional needs, at a cost of over €100 million in 2019. We are expecting that commitment to increase next year, and we are investing in this.

Some 167 new special classes opened this year, which means there are 1,618 special classes in place this year, compared to 548 in 2011. Next year we will increase that number. The extent of new classes being opened in recent years shows the willingness of schools to open special classes.

As Minister for Education and Skills I have the power under Section 37A of the Education Act 1998 to direct a school to provide additional provision where all reasonable efforts have failed. Since it came into law, with the enactment of the 2018 Education (Admission to Schools) Act, I have exercised the power under section 37A on two occasions this year: firstly in west Dublin before the summer, and again last month in south Dublin. Part of that saw the establishment of a new special school, which we are committed to.

As Minister I would prefer to see schools offering to provide more places for these children rather than places being secured on the back of an order

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or a direction. And I would like to commend the work of the Archdiocese of Dublin and others in making increased provision a reality in west Dublin.

In the vast majority of cases, schools are doing this without recourse to taking this legislative action, but there are areas of the country where children with special education needs require school places which are not available, and, however reluctantly, if necessary and when advised by the National Council for Special Education, I will exercise this legislative power.

The work on special education will continue.

Bereavement

In January 2019 I was deeply moved by Rhona Butler. Her mother died while Rhona was sitting her Leaving Certificate exams the previous summer, and she was left with no option but to sit an exam hours after seeing her mother pass away, another exam on the day of the wake, and others after the funeral mass.

Rhona was not alone. Hundreds of young people have endured the same unnecessary stress and anxiety. The lack of flexibility in the state exams compounded grief and trauma.

The possibility of deferring state exams for compassionate reasons after a bereavement had been examined before. But on hearing Ms Butler's harrowing story, I was determined to secure it. The change, announced in May and in time for the 2019 Leaving Cert, gave some time and space for students who suffered the death of a close relative to defer three days of the exams and to sit alternative papers in July.

I spoke to Rhona and thanked her for telling her story and for helping to secure the change. It was the right decision. By asking for the change I was able to put the well-being of students and their families first. It allowed me to ensure that in some small way we could help to ease the burden and stress of bereavement and loss and give students a brief window to focus on family at a time of their life that is already hugely pressurised. I want to thank Rhona again.

The Department, along with the State Examinations Commission, has committed to reviewing how the compassionate approach worked in 2019 and if other improvements need to be made.

North/South

Schools have long been building relations on an informal basis right across our island. But I think it is something that can grow. Thanks to the Politics In Action charity in the north and the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, and support from the Department of Foreign Affairs, we have set the foundations for lasting engagement between schools north and south.

The objective is to bring post-primary students together, from both sides of the border, and allow them to build relations by debating and reporting

on universal issues relevant to them – our climate, bullying, consent, and other issues.

The programme is in its infancy, but with the drive and experience of Politics In Action and Glencree, I am hopeful that it is the birth of something bigger.

Conclusion

It is a huge honour to have been afforded the opportunity to work as Minister for Education and Skills, to work with the hugely dedicated staff of the department, and to experience the professionalism and commitment of the education partners.

I would like to thank the many dozens of principals and their staff for welcoming me to their schools. It is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the job, and it is a phenomenally important learning experience which has allowed me to get a deep appreciation of the successes of our investment and policies and to understand how things can be improved.

Thank you, le meas,

Joe.



Minister for Education & Skills Joe McHugh taking calls at the NPCpp Leaving Cert Helpline in Croke Park, August 2019.

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EDITORIAL

As we enter the 20th year of the 21st century, it is time to reflect on how we have managed the Irish education system in this millennium to date.

Recently published data from Pisa (Programme for International Student Assessment) showing that Irish 15-year-olds are among the top performers in the world in reading literacy, and perform above average in Science and Maths, is a very positive indication that overall we are getting a lot right.

The pace of change in how technology is affecting every aspect of our daily lives is breathtaking, and the extent to which we are using it across our entire education system needs to be explored.

This year's Pisa results indicate that Irish students up to age 15 are less likely than students from other developed countries to use digital devices for classwork in school or while doing homework.

Given the constant struggle between the very human desire to live within our comfort zone and the need to respond to an everchanging world , this finding may indicate nervousness around the use of technology among educators due in part to a lack of technological skills or of sufficient access to technical support or assistance.

Another issue of concern in this year's Pisa results is that Ireland has significantly fewer high-achieving students in Maths and science subjects than other developed countries. Over the past five years, growing numbers of Irish students have been taking advantage of the availability of degree programmes taught through English in continental European universities. The biggest barrier they are experiencing is in their level of competency in Maths and the sciences – even among those who secured H1s in these subjects.

In adopting new curricula in Maths (Project Maths) and the sciences, we have pitched their level to encourage more students to participate at higher level, thus enabling many schools to offer these subjects for the first time, as they now have a viable class group and can allocate a teacher to teach this subject.



Dr Brian MooneyEditor, Ireland's
Yearbook of
Education

The negative Pisa findings may indicate two important constraints on improving our performance in STEM subjects. Firstly, very few graduates in Maths, Physics, and Chemistry seek positions as teachers due to far higher remuneration opportunities in the wider economy. Secondly, our brightest STEM students don't get to engage with curriculum content which is core in other developed countries. There are no easy answers to this dilemma, but a good place to start may be a State-funded online course in the more advanced elements of STEM which could be accessed by those considering third-level progression in STEM disciplines.

Early Childhood Education

Minister Zappone, in her article in this publication, outlines how she is consolidating the growth and development of the early childhood sector through the implementation of First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families.

The key issue is the quality of training provided to those who will teach our youngest learners during these formative years. Under the Workforce Development Plan, the government is facilitating the creation of a collective professional identity. To make this a reality they will have to integrate early childhood teachers into the State's mainstream salary structures, which will not come cheaply. But unless we do, we will never properly resource this vital sector. Peanuts and monkeys come to mind.

Primary Education

The primary sector over the past twenty years has carried out a Herculean task of integrating huge numbers of non-traditional new Irish into our society, while at the same time dealing with a population bulge of over 50,000 additional children who will progress through our second-level schools over the next six to eight years.

The challenge for our primary school system over the coming years will be to effectively manage contraction in numbers of students and therefore teachers as our population of children drops in line with that of our EU neighbours. This can often be a more difficult task than dealing with growing numbers.

Alongside this task, our primary schools dealt with the ever-changing nature of religious beliefs and practices in Irish society, leading to the emergence of new models of trusteeship and management. Bishop Diarmuid Martin's decision in December 2019 to consider moving sacramental preparation in the Dublin archdiocese from primary schools to parish-based catechetical preparation is truly revolutionary.

Sophia Maher's appearance on the Late Late Toy Show and her discussion with Ryan Tubridy about her experience of bullying at school raised an issue which had received a huge airing on Liveline with Joe Duffy in November. The potential for using social media as a channel for such activity, alongside the more traditional face-to-face activity, is a constant in the lives of all human beings where they engage with each other.

As educators we must accept that bullying is and always will be present among our pupils and adults in our schools. It's part of the human experience. The only way to address it is to accept that reality and to build in an anti-bullying strategy as part of school policy from 1 September each year.

We cannot depend on a reactive strategy and a determination to pretend that the problem is solved or, even worse, that it does not exist. Sophia's bravery should be marked by the adoption of a 'Sophia strategy' in every school in Ireland, outlining what the school does as part of its daily activities to address bullying. This is essential to meet the needs of those experiencing bullying as well as those carrying it out, who have their own difficulties that drive their behaviour.

Post-Primary Education

Seeking promotion in one's profession is a natural instinct of all ambitious persons. The fact that so few teachers are now seeking appointment as school principals indicates that the current model of school management is under severe strain. The sheer volume of regulation and accompanying DES circulars that school leadership must deal with puts huge constraint on their ability to do the job they are essentially tasked with: to provide leadership in teaching and learning. Clive Byrne, in his overview of second-level education, deals comprehensively with the challenges that this creates for the effective management of our schools.

2019 saw the rapid roll-out of the new Junior Cycle in all its aspects across all second-level schools. The in-service supports to enable teachers to secure the skills to deliver the new programme, which had been resisted by those affiliated with the ASTI, was rolled out, causing huge headaches for principals in securing replacement teachers to meet the health and safety requirements of the children, whatever about their education needs.

Ensuring the presence of a teacher in every classroom daily is becoming progressively more difficult, given the disruption caused by teachers being seconded for various roles in curriculum support services, carrying out State exam oral work, which requires teachers to be absent from their own students; the absence of teachers in September to correct Leaving Cert exam scripts appealed by students, which proved to be far more disruptive than anticipated; and a variety of other causes, including normal illness and personal leave under existing protocols in schools.

But by far the most important development to occur in 2019 was the emergence of the voice of young people over climate action. I do not think the adult world has any concept of how much our young people have been transformed in their thinking – regarding every aspect of their daily lives – by their sheer terror of the implications of current practices of adults on this planet. To dismiss them as 'kids looking for an excuse to skip class' is to totally miss the most seismic change in worldview to have ever occurred to any generation of young people.

Further Education

The challenge for our FE sector, as it has been since the establishment of Solas, is real integration, reform, and performance improvement. To this end, 2019 saw the launch of the action plan for apprenticeships and traineeships, an agreement of national further education and training (FET) system targets with the Minister for Education and Skills, and the establishment of strategic performance agreements between Solas and the ETBs. These actions have contributed to a more coherent sense of the future direction in which the FET system needs to evolve.

Andrew Brownlee, CEO of Solas, in his overview of the sector, emphasises that fundamentally FET revolves around skills development, learning pathways, and inclusion. He points out that FET can change people's lives, allowing them to develop themselves personally, engage with their communities, and go as far they want to go. It can help people re-engage with education and take the first steps in returning to work, give people a vibrant college experience without a four-year commitment, offer direct routes into many varied careers , and let people upskill at minimal cost if they're already in work and wish to ensure that their skills remain relevant and prepare them to succeed – whether they want to go on to higher education (HE) or straight into the workplace.

Higher Education

The key development here in 2019 has been the proposed reform of the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971, by Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor. The outlined legislative proposals envisage that a newly established Higher Education Commission (to replace the Higher Education Authority) will ensure the integration of the FET and HE sectors, an integrated approach to transfer and progression pathways from FET to HE, and an integrated approach to increasing the availability of apprenticeship training. The new Commission will also be given regulatory oversight of private and not-for-profit HE providers. It will have a pivotal role, alongside the DES, in developing national strategy for HE and HE research.

1 January 2019 saw the formal establishment of the first Technological University in Ireland with the launch of TU Dublin. The implications of the development of TUs for the higher education sector are revealed by John Walshe in his overview of higher education, in which he outlines the details of a letter written by William Beausang, DES assistant secretary in charge of tertiary education – a new section in the DES formed by amalgamating the sections that dealt separately with further and higher education.

Walshe's article reveals the details of this letter sent to Science Foundation Ireland, as a response to its draft strategy, and characterises the establishment of the TUs as the single most important development in the higher education landscape over the next number of years. Beausang, having originally worked in the Department of Finance, sought out the position of assistant secretary in charge of tertiary education, and he obviously has a vision for changes to further and higher education which he intends to oversee. Watch this space.

Because of Brexit, the place of Irish higher education in an international context is growing in importance each year. The number of international

students coming to study in Ireland continues to grow across all third-level colleges, particularly in the private sector.

Cuts to core grant third-level funding during the economic crisis have never been reversed, and restoring the previous levels of funding does not appear to be part of government policy. This has led to a growing reliance on attracting international students, and philanthropy has become part of the infrastructure of our third-level system. Where government is providing additional funding, the trend now is to allocate new targeting funding for the delivery of specific projects, such as the Human Capital Initiative, which was funded to the tune of €300m.

In higher education, Ireland has always been 'more Boston than Berlin' and sits comfortably in that Anglo-Saxon culture which includes the third-level sectors in Britain, America, Australia, and so on. But as an EU member state we are now in a single higher education market with our EU partners, which operate their systems based on free or almost free access to third level based on higher overall taxation than is the norm in Ireland or the UK.

The number of Irish students attending EU universities is doubling annually, admittedly from a low base. How then can our third-level institutions, as they weigh up the option of a CAO offer with an EU one, hope to retain our brightest and best students, if the costs associated with participation in a continental EU university are so much lower and do not require high CAO points?

The standard response from those I have discussed this with at senior levels in our universities and government is that EU governments will soon get tired of funding the education of Irish students and will find some way of cutting them out. This does not seem a very solid basis for our higher education strategy going forward.

Research

As Peter Brown alludes to in his chapter introduction, in the research and innovation ecosystem all eyes will be on the successor to Innovation 2020, the government's strategy for science, technology, research, and development. The mid-term (in reality late-term) review of Innovation 2020, published by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, is well worth a read to get a sense of the progress made and also where we are seriously falling short. Ireland will be well off its 2020 target of having total investment (public and private) in research and development equating to 2.5% of GNP, although this was always going to be difficult given the strong rise in GNP linked to economic recovery.

Business Expenditure on R&D (BERD) was €2.8 billion in 2017, up 31% since 2014. Since only a tiny fraction of this funding ends up in higher education, it falls to the public purse and other sources such as the EU framework programmes to fund research in higher education. But government expenditure on R&D grew by only 3.4% from 2014 to 2018. The upshot of all this is that university bosses are worried that Ireland will lose out in an increasingly internationalised research environment, as other countries, such as the UK, step up public investment in research and innovation. They want to see the funding pipeline renewed for basic research at individual

investigator level, so that we can retain top-class researchers and attract new ones. National investment also leverages success in European funding, including prestigious European Research Council awards.

Stakeholders are frustrated that research and innovation are not capturing the imagination of the political system and that there is a lot of lip service paid to this area. Gaining traction is undoubtedly tough when we continue to face major challenges in housing and health. But we cannot take expertise for granted. From a research stakeholder perspective, high-level expertise and knowledge are what will give Ireland the scope to address societal challenges, solve complex problems, and drive new technological and other innovations. The Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLI) is an oft-used example of the transformative impact of large-scale investment across disciplines.

In an age of urgent problems such as climate breakdown, decarbonisation, and online abuse, sooner or later we will need to bite the bullet and invest for the future in our research and innovation system.

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"The Irish Research Council was one of 16 international partners across 13 countries that formed GENDER-NET Plus, in cooperation with the European Union. Partners worked together to create a transnational funding call that was specifically designed to welcome proposals for research that integrates gender in addressing urgent societal challenges."

— Peter Brown, Director, Irish Research Council

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It states its commitment to ensuring that every child will have practical access to tuition, experience, and participation in music, drama, arts, and coding by 2022. Enlightened wisdom and avant garde thinking on an eclectic range of subjects relating to education in Ireland and internationally.

EDUCATION AT THE HEART OF THE UNIVERSITY

The Institute of Education at Dublin City University



DCU is unique in Ireland in having a full faculty of education. This article outlines the history and structure of the university's Institute of Education and shows how it will be centrally engaged in transforming the Irish education system and contribute significantly to knowledge creation and policy development across international education systems.



Prof Brian Mac Craith President, Dublin City University



Anne Looney
Executive Dean,
Institute of
Education, Dublin
City University

Early in 2012, the Higher Education Authority established an International Review Panel to advise on the structure of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision in Ireland. The members of the Panel were: Professor Pasi Sahlberg, then director general of CIMO (in the Ministry of Education) in Helsinki, Finland, who chaired the panel; Professor Pamela Munn, professor emeritus at the University of Edinburgh; and Professor John Furlong, former director of the Oxford University Department of Education. The purpose of the review was to consider the structure of ITE provision in Ireland and to identify possible new structures based on reconfiguring existing programmes to strengthen the quality of teacher education. The International Review Panel published its report in July 2012, and its conclusions were as follows:

The Review Panel recommends that teacher education should be facilitated in a university setting with systematic links to clinical practice in field schools which provide where possible for the full range of sectoral teacher education, spanning early childhood to adult education. This would facilitate greater synergies between the different levels of education. It would also provide a critical mass for improving capacity for high-quality research, the integration of students and staff across a number of disciplines, and the promotion of balanced international mobility of students and staff.

Dublin City University was particularly well placed to respond to this recommendation. As well as its own School of Education Studies, it had established links with St Patrick's College in Drumcondra and with the Mater Dei Institute. Four years after what has come to be known as the Sahlberg Report, the DCU Institute of Education (IoE) was established through the incorporation of St Patrick's College, Mater Dei Institute of Education, Church of Ireland College of Education, and the DCU School of Education Studies.

These constituent institutions have a long and distinguished history in teacher education. The Church of Ireland College of Education has been educating primary teachers since 1811, when it was known as the Kildare Place Training Institution. Following several transitions, it became the Church of Ireland College of Education in 1884. St Patrick's College has been educating primary teachers since 1875 and was Ireland's largest primary college of education. Mater

Dei Institute of Education was established in 1966 to educate teachers of religion for post-primary schools.

In 2019 the DCU Institute of Education has grown to a staff of more than 140 full-time academics and a cohort of more than 4,000 students working and studying across all sectors of the education system. DCU is unique in having a full faculty of education. It is the only higher-education institution to feature education in this way at the heart of its structure and mission. As an institution committed to transforming lives and societies, it recognises the role that education plays in this transformation at every level, and in particular the pivotal role of high-quality teachers and educators in sustaining that vital role of education.

Vision and values

The vision of the DCU Institute of Education is that by 2022 it will be recognised as a global leader in the field of education, as an innovative provider of teacher education, and as a centre of excellence in educational research. It will be centrally engaged in transforming the Irish education system and will be a significant contributor to knowledge creation and policy development across international education systems, through leadership of and participation in a range of research and policy networks.

It is committed to:

- education as a public good, a human right of individuals and communities, and a force for transformation
- equality and inclusive practice
- social justice and critical global citizenship
- respectful and ethical relationships and the well-being of all members of the learning community
- developing and sustaining partnerships
- curiosity, innovation, and engagement.

Sharing our values, our graduates are:

- passionate about education and its potential to transform lives and communities
- committed, believing in the potential of every learner
- competent, creative, and critical in the design of teaching, learning, and assessment in their chosen field, subject, and sector
- open, adaptive, flexible, and responsive
- critically reflective in their personal and professional development, and engaged in or with research
- independent thinkers, contributing to the development of the education system wherever they work
- engaged in lifelong learning
- open to the opportunities afforded by developments in technology.

Structure

The DCU Institute of Education created six schools that bring staff together from cognate areas in a coherent structure that is cross-sectoral and spans the continuum of education provision. The schools are as follows:

- · School of Arts Education and Movement
- School of Human Development
- School of Inclusive and Special Education
- School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education
- School of Policy and Practice
- School of STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies.

DCU is committed to university-based initial teacher education built around the three components of academic study, professional practice, and research. We recognise the expectations of government, families, and communities for teachers to do more and be more every day. As central prescription in curriculum planning gives way to increasing school autonomy, we are committed to enabling our students at undergraduate

and postgraduate levels to gain the adaptive expertise and sophisticated technical acumen necessary to lead the change process in schools and other educational settings.

The Institute also has two denominational centres: the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education and the Church of Ireland Centre. Their work includes supporting the preparation of teachers to work in schools under Catholic patronage and under the patronage of the Church of Ireland and Reformed Christian communities, as well as research and scholarship relevant to denominational and faith-based education.

DCU is unique in having a full faculty of education and in being the only higher-education institution to feature education in this way at the heart of its structure and mission.

Realising the ambition: programmes

Three years on, how has the Institute of Education fared so far? Applications for all programmes have increased, and this year the new post-primary teacher education programme for teachers of Gaeilge and Modern Languages attracted forty-five students. A programme like this brings together expertise from across the university – in applied languages, in Gaeilge, and in education – to work together on developing the next generation of language specialists for second-level. We have extended our highly regarded Master's in Guidance and Counselling, and now offer it in the north-west of the country in response to the acute challenges of recruiting guidance counsellors for schools in that region. With the particular support of the Education and Training Boards in the north-west, this new outreach is fully subscribed, and more are planned.

Plans are under way for a new master's in early childhood education, building on our highly regarded undergraduate programme in early childhood education, and in 2020 we will admit another cohort of students to our Doctorate in Education programme. With a number of students already signed up in anticipation, we expect places to be in demand, as they were in 2018 when the programme was last offered.

Realising the ambition: research

In addition to a large complement of research active staff, the IoE includes 20 postdoctoral researchers and 135 doctoral students researching in the disciplinary area of education and related areas. There are four large-scale research centres: the Evaluation, Quality and Inspection (EQI) Research Centre, the National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource (ABC) Centre, the Centre for Research on Learning and Teaching Irish (SEALBHÚ), and the Centre for Assessment Research in Education (CARPE).

There are a further eleven research groups researching in areas such as early childhood, work-based learning, educational disadvantage, STEM education, digital learning, religious education, citizenship and human rights education, and education for sustainable development. In 2019/2020, DCU's Higher Education Research Centre and the Institute of Education's Further Education and Training Centre will be aligned in a new research centre focused on the tertiary sector in its broadest sense.

Recently, the Australian Research Council announced a new global centre for the study of childhood in the digital age. The Centre for the Digital Child will be based at Queensland University of Technology, and the DCU IoE will be contributing to the work of that new AUD35-million centre.

In 2016–2019, Institute of Education authors have published 163 peer-viewed journal articles, 97 book chapters, 11 books, and 49 doctoral theses.

DCU recognises the pivotal role of high-quality teachers and educators.

Furthermore, the DCU Institute of Education has received €6.7 million in funding in fifty-eight funding awards from national and international competitive funding schemes, as well as corporate and philanthropic funding sources.

2018/2019 was the year of the three presidents. The Institute was the proud home of the president of the International Literacy Association, the president of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland, and the president of the European Research Association. Step up, Dr Bernadette Dwyer, Dr Enda Donlon, and Prof. Joe O'Hara! Although Bernadette is now the immediate past president, the three presidents will be restored in October when the executive dean of the Institute (the present co-author) takes up her role as president of the International Professional Development Association.

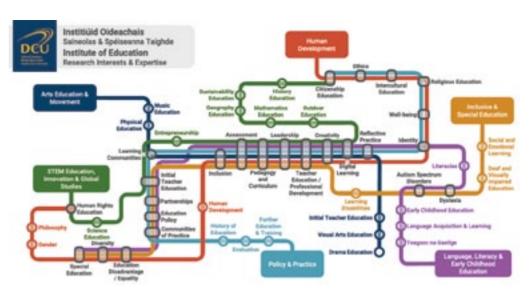






Dr Bernadette Dwyer, Dr Enda Donlon, and Prof. Joe O'Hara

The following graphic illustrates the diversity of the Institute's research expertise. As with metro maps, the research areas intersect at many points across schools. The Institute is currently working on Research Metro 2.0 to reflect the new tertiary centre and work in the denominational centres.



Realising the ambition: impact

The incorporating institutions had a long history of engagement in Irish education, and in teacher education in particular. Some had international partnerships, and recognition. But it is already evident that the Institute is having an impact at scale and of significance. Examples include working with the European Commission on projects in Lithuania and Croatia on system improvement and change; supporting Educate Together in Ireland in evaluating and developing school ethos in their primary and second-level schools; providing expert support to the OECD in system reviews; informing policy on assessment across the school system; active engagement in the development of the early years workforce in Ireland; and supporting the G20 deliberations on early years and sustainable development.

The Institute played a key role in recognising teachers and the teaching profession through the DCU Teachers Inspire Initiative, culminating in the gala evening of celebration in the Helix in October 2019 – the first of a series of such celebrations which will coincide next year with the hosting of Féilte, the Teaching Council's festival of teaching.

These are early days, but they are good ones. The buzz on the St Patrick's Campus of DCU is palpable, as thousands of student teachers and early childhood education students, current teachers and practitioners pursuing professional development and postgraduate studies, an endless stream of curious international delegations, and a fascinating line-up of guest lecturers and speakers cross the threshold every day. The library is always jammed and buzzing (in the places where buzzing is allowed!), and there are great expectations for the new Jesuit Library on the All Hallows campus that will offer more space as well as world-class collections in philosophy and theology.

Recent staff appointments reflect the range and scale of what we are trying to achieve. New colleagues include an early career educator from Taiwan with expertise in augmented reality in education, a second-level principal who led her school through junior cycle reform and then did a PhD about it, and a teacher with thirty years' experience in every kind of primary school you can imagine. Each in their turn was attracted by the vision and potential of the DCU Institute of Education. Three years old. Building on a great legacy. Inspired by a great vision.

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

A Practitioner's Perspective

This article explores the idea of an integrated tertiary education system in Ireland from a practitioner's point of view, giving prominence to the student perspective. It looks at the potential for the Regional Skills Fora to provide a framework for a more integrated approach to tertiary education provision, and offers proposals for mapping a way forward.

Introduction

In 2018 the Department of Education and Skills, in its Statement of Strategy, identified a strategic objective of achieving 'a more integrated tertiary education system' (DES, 2018, p. 14). This was reiterated in the Action Plan for Education for 2019 (DES, 2019, p. 41): 'Develop a framework for an integrated strategic approach to tertiary education' (Action 64.1).

The National Risk Assessment (Government of Ireland, 2019) identified the capacity of the higher and further education system as a strategic risk, stating:

An adequately resourced, flexible, responsive and aligned Higher Education (HE) and Further Education & Training system has a crucial role to play in sustaining enterprise growth in Ireland. (p. 38)

This article will explore the issue of an integrated tertiary education system in Ireland from a practitioner's point of view, while giving prominence to the student perspective. It will begin by outlining what is meant by tertiary education, then describe some current areas of system convergence between further education and training (FET) and higher education (HE).

Greater cooperation between FET and HE in the framework of an integrated tertiary education sector is to be welcomed. From a student's perspective, however, a transparent and equitable system for progression from FET to HE is paramount. This is briefly discussed below. To illustrate initiatives that could support further strategic convergence of FET and HE, the experience of the University of Central Florida and its partnership with local Community Colleges will be outlined.

In the Irish context the article will explore, as a possible way forward, the potential for the Regional Skills Fora, in which all FET and HE providers in each region are represented, to provide a framework for a more integrated approach to tertiary education provision. It will conclude with proposals for mapping a way forward.

IRELAND'S YEARBOOK OF EDUCATION 2019-2020



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Definition

Before discussing an integrated tertiary education sector in Ireland, we must decide what is actually meant by tertiary education in this context. Given that FET includes provision across the first six levels of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and HE includes provision from levels 6 through 10, some precision is needed.

While none of the policy statements cited above explicitly defines tertiary education, the context of the discussion therein suggests that tertiary education consists of post-secondary provision. Therefore, provision from levels 5 through 10 on the NFQ will be taken here to be included in the meaning of tertiary education.

This meaning is consistent with the definition used by the World Bank. However, the OECD, EU, and Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland use the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) referencing for the different levels, which has two categories relevant to this discussion (UNESCO, 2019). ISCED level 4, 'Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education', is described as '[providing] learning experiences building on secondary education, preparing for labour market entry as well as tertiary education'. In the CSO's Educational Attainment Report of 2018, FET provision at levels 5 and 6 is included in this level (CSO, 2018).

Skills at all levels in any economy can be categorised under three broad headings: general, industry-specific, and firm-specific.

ISCED levels 5 through 8 are classified as 'Tertiary Education', which is defined as '[building] on secondary education, providing learning activities in specialised fields of education. It aims at learning at a high level of complexity and specialisation. Tertiary education includes what is commonly understood as academic education but also includes advanced vocational or professional education.'

In the world of international comparisons and statistical reporting, both nationally and internationally, the statistical definitions used by these various bodies, while pertinent to this discussion, have been described so as to highlight the need to clarify what is meant by tertiary education in the context of the DES policy objective of an integrated tertiary education sector.

Convergence of FET and HE

A particular feature of the current Irish policy landscape has been the convergence of FET and HE, at both the policy and institutional levels. This convergence has its foundations in developments in relation to qualifications and the NFQ in the late 1990s and 2000s. The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 established, for the first time in Ireland, a national certification and qualifications system. It also facilitated the establishment of the NFQ, launched in 2003.

With all qualifications at all levels described using the same language of learning outcomes, the NFQ brought vertical convergence between FET and HE qualifications. More recently, this convergence has become apparent in the establishment of a single division in the DES for Higher and Further Education and Training policy, and in the strategic engagements between

SOLAS, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and the Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

Speaking at the Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) Conference in 2018, QQI chief executive Dr Padraig Walsh, referring to ETBs' obligation for quality assurance, said that 'the development, compliance, and reporting responsibilities of the ETBs are now commensurate with those for higher education' (Walsh, 2018). Indeed, in its recent Statement of Strategy, QQI said the ETBs would be subject to an institutional review model similar to the CINNTE model that applies to the universities and institutes of technology (IoTs) (QQI, 2018).

This alignment of quality assurance approaches between FET and HE is in line with the ambition to see ETBs assuming delegated authority to confer awards. Similarly, the Strategic Performance Agreements concluded recently between SOLAS and each ETB were based on the model used for similar agreements between the HEA and the third-level institutions.

Indeed, the recent programmes of reforms in both FET and HE have highlighted a number of areas where the desired degree of synchronisation between the various elements of overall provision has yet to be achieved. For example, the duplication of provision between FET and HE at NFQ level

6, and in many cases level 5, is perceived as a source of tension between the two sectors. This division has its roots in the creation of the two certifying bodies, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), under the 1999 Act. It has led to the continued existence of two sets of awards at level 6, one for FET and one for HE. This issue recently attracted the much-needed attention of QQI.

Ireland has increasingly been moving away from its nearest neighbour towards the EU.

Alignment of educational opportunities from the student perspective

The clearest progression opportunity for learners having completed their Leaving Certificate relates to the transparent processes employed by the Central Applications Office (CAO) to allocate programme places to learners based on points achieved for Leaving Cert subjects. While this process is clear to users and, if anything, brutally fair, it does presuppose equality of opportunity to engage with the Leaving Cert exam process and to obtain good academic grades. It does not so easily accommodate learners who progress through FET to HE. It also does not accommodate mature or return-to-education learners. It also has limits in the context of 'learn and work' or apprentice-type programmes, where aptitude may be a more important marker of success than previous academic grades.

FET programmes provide essential opportunities for students who choose not to proceed immediately to work or higher education after their Leaving Cert. The current courses provide a valuable blend of knowledge, skills, and competence to develop the individual and prepare them for the world of work. But this specific blend is not always aligned with those offered in HE programmes. This can lead to challenges when seeking advanced entry to HE from FET programmes, particularly those longer than one year.

Evolution of HE links schemes to more student-centric process

In the context of progression from further to higher education, a process that worked well in the past was the Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS). This was introduced before the introduction of the NFQ and the associated clarity surrounding academic level and credit volume. The HELS allowed students from an FET course to progress to first year of a higher education course, where the academic content was reasonably well aligned. This worked well within a quota of places allocated by a higher education provider, but where demand for places exceeded supply, the FET graduates could find themselves treated differently from Leaving Cert graduates. This could occur even when both technically had a nationally recognised award at NFQ level 5.

The links scheme was extended to a system where nominal points were allocated to FET programmes such that they could be listed with Leaving Cert graduates in a single list for place allocation for individual courses. This was not ideal – not all routes to specific programmes were opened up, and debate continues on the exact point equivalences between the FET and Leaving Cert systems – but it did allow FET graduates to access a broader range of courses. Learners were not restricted in HE to the academic area of their previous FET course. Another way of viewing this is that a decision to progress into a specific FET course did not dramatically

restrict opportunities to progress subsequently into different HE programmes.

As the FET system evolved, the number of level 6 programmes offered that spanned two years increased. Graduates of these programmes met further challenges when trying to progress to higher education. They faced the dilemma of losing a year and progressing to first year of the HE course, or attempting to progress directly to second year. The misalignment of the blend of knowledge, skills, and competence between FET

year two and HE year one made progression by advanced entry to HE year two challenging in many cases. Yet progressing from a two-year FET level 6 programme to first year of a HE programme extended the duration of learning by a year, adding cost and uncertainty to the learner and expense to the State providing the education.

Without a direct progression to second year, this option is less appealing, as it extends the time to final qualification and entry to the workforce by a year. If progression routes are not well articulated, and programme content not well aligned, FET graduates who progress by advanced entry to second year face significant challenges in participating fully in the HE course. Progression rates in subsequent years of the HE programme can be less than desired as a consequence.

From a student's perspective, progression from FET to HE remains confusing, complicated, and in some cases not very transparent. The existence of two progression pathways for level 5 graduates from FET to HE, namely a quota system in many universities and a points system for the IoTs, with not all courses on the CAO lists having an obvious pathway, leaves a system which is significantly underperforming in terms of widening participation.

There has been consistent failure over the years to state clearly the ultimate purpose of work experience as part of an educational programme.

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A more strategic

approach to

FET-HE cooperation

of collaboration,

assurance, and

at regional level could

have benefits in terms

convergence, quality

strategic performance.

The situation for FET level 6 graduates is also unsatisfactory from a student perspective. Having completed two years in FET and graduated at NFQ level 6, current practice has resulted in students entering the HE course in year two and in some cases year one. This has proved to be a source of confusion and indeed irritation for many FET graduates.

QQI has recently begun a research project on the comparability of the two sets of awards at level 6. If an outcome of this research is to propose rationalising the two sets of awards at level 6 into one set, then implementing this will lead to a number of policy issues for both FET and HE institutions. From a student's perspective, however, such a rationalisation could facilitate more transparent and equitable progression pathways from FET to HE and support the widening participation agenda.

Possible approaches to convergence between FET and HE

In many countries, progression from FET to HE has attracted much debate (Moodie, 2008; Deissinger et al., 2013; Bailey et al., 2015; Ryan, 2017). A common theme to emerge is structural and curricular alignment to facilitate transparent progression pathways. This is currently attracting much debate at national level, including a subcommittee of the national transitions committee chaired by SOLAS.

By way of illustration, the next section will describe an initiative from Florida involving a partnership between the University of Central Florida and six partner community colleges. This will be followed by a discussion on how the nine Regional Skills Fora in Ireland may provide a framework to facilitate an integrated tertiary education sector in Ireland.

Work has a significant influence on people's identity, both as individuals and as members of social groups.

Case Study of University of Central Florida

'Direct Connect' to University of Central Florida (UCF) guarantees admission to the university with an associate degree from one of its partner community colleges. Such an associate degree would be similar to a level 6 FET award on the Irish NQF. The benefits of Direct Connect from the student's perspective are that with an associate's degree earned from a partner college, admission to the university is guaranteed. This results in a shorter time to degree completion; a smooth pathway for engagement, admissions, orientation, and registration; and access to university facilities, student services, activities, and events during the time of the associate degree programme. It is an institutional initiative driven by the participating colleges and the university in partnership to improve opportunities for the learner.

With such an initiative, educational opportunities are aligned from the student's perspective, so that no time is wasted and clarity is offered on progression pathways. Complicating issues like government policy on funding and student fees for FE and HE, staff salaries, and student grants are beyond the scope of this article but would need to be resolved to implement such a system.

Such an approach would require alignment of curriculum learning outcomes at NFQ level 6 as a prerequisite. Could an arrangement like this be developed for the Greater Dublin region, linking FE colleges and a Technological University, for example? The current practice is of bilateral arrangements between one FE college and one HE institution. Indeed, it can often be an arrangement between the two course coordinators. In an integrated tertiary education sector, might it be time for a more strategic approach?

The Irish Regional Skills Fora

Among the numerous areas of existing collaboration between FET and HE is one that may provide the platform for structuring such an effort. With the nine Regional Skills Fora, all post-secondary education and training providers meet with employer representatives and enterprise development

> bodies to ensure alignment of course content with the needs of the labour market. If the relevant providers are already members of these committees, this may be an ideal foundation for building a framework for a more integrated tertiary education sector, including FET and HE providers.

Indeed, given the existing convergence already under way in the areas of qualifications, quality assurance, and strategic performance, the stage is set for increased cooperation at a regional level. In the Dublin Regional Skills Forum there are seven HE institutions and two ETBs. In the two ETBs there are some 25 FE colleges and five training centres. Using the

bilateral approach would result in over 200 individual arrangements. Surely a regional approach would be more appropriate. A more strategic approach to FET-HE cooperation at regional level could also have benefits in terms of collaboration, not just convergence, in quality assurance and strategic performance.

Conclusion

This article explored some of the main issues in the development of an integrated tertiary education sector in Ireland. While the rationale for the DES proposing the development is unclear at this time, there are some obvious benefits to greater cooperation and collaboration between FET and HE providers. Issues remain regarding what the DES defines as tertiary education, but clear areas of convergence were identified in qualifications, quality assurance, and strategic performance. In FET to HE progression, more transparency and equity for FET students would be welcome. There are also some challenges. Should QQI's research into the comparability of the two sets of awards at level 6 on the NFQ propose a rationalisation to one set of awards, the implications for FET and HE providers in its implementation will not be trivial.

From the FET practitioner's perspective, it must be remembered that the former VEC FE provision in Ireland operated with the post-primary sector. In other word, what are commonly referred to as colleges of further education are, in governance terms, post-primary schools which differ from mainstream secondary schools primarily in three respects: age profile of students, courses provided, and certification offered. Consequently, a prerequisite for developing an integrated tertiary sector would be to develop a new governance model for the 'FET College of the Future'.

At the ETB level, given the increasing governance demands in strategic performance and quality assurance, Walsh (2018) highlighted the difference in staffing levels, particularly administrative, between universities, IoTs, and ETBs:

The HEA performance framework report in 2014 indicates that 53% of staff in the university sector are classed as administrative, this falls to 31% in the Institute of Technology sector. It is considerably lower again in the ETB sector, yet the development, compliance and reporting responsibilities of the ETBs is now commensurate with that for higher education.

In the end, the success of macro policy will depend on local capacity to implement it. In the context of the macro policy of an integrated tertiary education sector, the current debate about third-level funding, and the persistent capacity deficit in FET, are matters that will require urgent attention.

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THE ART OF TELLING COMPELLING STORIES

It's all about language, structure, and the hook



Academics and researchers are well versed in writing for academic journals and publications, but what about an article for the general public? The editor of RTÉ's Brainstorm project discusses what is required to get a non-academic audience to click on your story.



Jim Carrol Editor, RTÉ Brainstorm

This story begins a decade or so ago, back when Ireland was in the grip of the financial crisis and the banking disaster. An RTÉ employee began to wonder about the academics he was hearing on air and seeing on screen during that great national breakdown.

He was a big fan of academic rigour and insights and voices, but he noted that he wasn't getting a lot of it. Well, that's not quite true – he was hearing and seeing a lot of economists. But where were the historians, the sociologists, the philosophers, the scientists at a seminal moment in the life of the nation? Surely they had something to contribute to this discussion – and probably to other topics too. Was there a place for them?

That RTÉ employee was Rory Coveney, the organisation's director of strategy. A few years later, Rory's thoughts on academics and the media turned into a brainwave: What if there could be a dedicated place on the RTÉ website where academics and researchers could contribute their thoughts, insights, and perspectives on the matters of the day?

It would be a place where academics and researchers could get their expertise and research across to the general public. A place where they could rub shoulders with RTÉ's own gallery of journalists and broadcasters. A place where new and diverse voices from Irish academia could emerge and develop and migrate to the broadcaster's many TV and radio shows.

That brainwave became Brainstorm, a first-in-the-world partnership between academia and a national public-service media organisation. It's an initiative made possible by the involvement and enthusiasm of founding partners University College Cork, NUI Galway, University of Limerick, Dublin City University, Technological University Dublin, Maynooth University, Ulster University, and strategic partner the Irish Research Council.

It's a project which developed quickly from a website where academics and researchers can write about Ireland and the world into a flurry of radio shows, podcasts, videos, and events.

THEMES

Academic buy-in

It is clear to me, as the project's editor, that one constituency in particular has been essential for our success. It may sound obvious, but it's the academics and researchers themselves who have really made Brainstorm possible. It's because they bought into it with such great gusto from the outset that we have been able to keep on trucking.

They quickly saw a potential in Brainstorm that many of us involved on the coalface never quite saw initially to the same degree. They've been hugely generous with their time and expertise. They've recruited other academics, encouraged their colleagues to get in touch, and evangelised widely for Brainstorm. We really wouldn't be telling this story without them.

The reason for this cheerleading from academics and researchers? They understood how Brainstorm could help them communicate their ideas to the general public.

Audiences

There are many potential audiences that the academic and research community want to reach. Writing for academic journals or contributing at conferences are proven ways to reach peers, policy-makers, and funders and to tick those all-important impact boxes. But the general public are not at those conferences or reading those journals.

Academics quickly saw potential in Brainstorm... they've been hugely generous with their time and expertise.

The journals are behind onerous and ludicrously expensive paywalls (there's an article to be written about how academics and researchers have been hoodwinked by academic publishers, but we'll leave that one for another day). The conferences are niche and usually aimed at a peer-to-peer audience.

Sure, there are occasional mainstream media pick-ups of what's published in those journals or said at those gatherings. But by and large, those accounts rely on a time-poor, resource-bereft and inexpert reporter or journalist who may not quite get the right gist or angle of the research at hand. And the PR lens which brings in the media in the first place may often highlight a part of the story which is not the actual hook at all.

No wonder so many researchers and academics are unhappy with how their work is represented in the mainstream media. It's a common theme when experts see how their thinking has been shorthanded by an intermediary for a lay-person audience. After all, you know your work better than anyone else, so you should be the one telling the story.

One of the beauties of the Brainstorm approach is that the vast majority of the pieces we run on the website are written by the academics themselves. The articles are not filtered or summed up by a third party. The person named at the top of the page is the person who did the hard yards in the first place, put the work in, and wrote the piece you're about to read. It's their words summing up their thoughts, their analysis, their opinion.

Another beauty of the Brainstorm approach is that the audience for this work is the general public. Housed on the RTÉ website, which gets around

10 million visitors a month, Brainstorm is a way of reaching the people whose tax euros fund the research in the first place.

The stories are published alongside the day's news, sport, business, lifestyle, culture, entertainment, and Gaeilge stories. When people scan and click onto the RTÉ website, the Brainstorm stories are part of the mix on the page. Academics' pieces appear alongside the work of such well-known and respected broadcasters and commentators as Tony Connelly, Emma O'Kelly, Will Goodbody, and Claire Byrne.

The view from the dashboard

So what makes someone – be it your neighbour, your aunt, or the barista who made your skinny latte in the local café this morning – click on your story? What makes them choose your story to browse rather than something else on the RTÉ.ie page?

This is a question which occupies the mind of all editors day in and day out. A lot of our job is about analysis, because not all stories are equal. We're always looking at how a story performs and what makes one story

do a better job of attracting and retaining an audience than another

Brainstorm is a proven way to communicate with the general public about your idea, your work, your expertise...

We have an online dashboard in front of us which is constantly being updated with stats and data. We can see that this story is appealing to women, that that story is resonating with 25–34-year-olds, and that both stories are holding people's attention for an average of over three minutes or so.

Data like this is often useful, always horrifically addictive, and occasionally downright dangerous. Some editors will lean on the findings from their analytics to make judgement calls about future stories. If a story about red dresses worked in May, for example, a similar story dressed up slightly differently might work in September. Others will simply add this data to their gut instinct and previous learnings about the stories our audience want to read, and run in that direction.

So what's in all of this for the academic? To be honest, not much in the data-analysis piece of the pie. Let's remember that, first and foremost, you are not a journalist or editor skilled in the dark arts of media analytics and data. You're probably better off!

But you're interested in a site like Brainstorm because it's a proven way to communicate with the general public about your idea, your work, your expertise, your bank of incredibly detailed knowledge about a specific subject area. Yes, you want an audience, but it's the simple matter of communicating the story rather than having a story which breaks the internet which is why you're doing this (though it would be nice to break the internet as well).

When I make presentations and host workshops about writing for Brainstorm, I talk a lot about three things: language, structure, and hooks. They're the key attributes of how to tell a compelling story about your work

in a way which draws in an audience. The story will come with a headline, photos, and audiovisual content, but there's none of that gravy without the meat and spuds of the story in the first place.

Before we jump into these things, remember that academics and researchers have one hugely useful advantage when it comes to telling a compelling story. You can write. Some phrases may need to be turned, and some of those 300-word sentences need to be tucked into seven or eight shorter ones instead. But the pieces submitted to RTÉ Brainstorm usually require only light editing, and that's something which is hugely appreciated by all editors.

Language

Brainstorm stories are written in this awesome language called plain English (though we have also published pieces in Irish, Spanish, and Chinese). Brainstorm is not an academic journal, so the language has to be clear, concise, non-technical, and straightforward. No academese, please. That's not for this audience.

Yes, I hear you. You're saying that the PhD process has knocked this ability out of you. You can now only write in a way and style which makes sense to your peers who've also gone through the same tortuous process. You can cite your way through 14,000 words without breaking sweat, but writing 800 words in plain English for a general audience brings you out in a cold sweat.

Brainstorm is written in this awesome language called plain English.

But this audience is not going to stick around and absorb what you have to say if they can't understand it. If the piece is littered with jargon like 'interventions', they're going to click onto something else. If you want to reach this audience, you have to use the language you'd use when you're talking to your neighbour, aunt, or barista. Ask for an intervention in the café tomorrow along with your morning coffee and see where it gets you.

Structure

Because you have 14,000 words to mull over in a journal article, you have ample elbowroom to make your points, get your citation ducks in a row, and write plenty of those long sentences that academics are so fond of. With a 900-word piece for a general audience who don't give two hoots which of your colleagues you're referencing, it's a very different kettle of fish. You need to know what you're doing from the get-go.

This is where structure comes in. You have to get your main points lined up and dealt with in the first couple of paragraphs. Why will the reader click on this story? What will make them stick with your piece for the duration? How do you get your research into the mix in such a way that it makes sense?

Thinking about structure allows you to prioritise and streamline your points. It means you have to deduce what the general reader will take away and how you include the relevant details about your work.

IRELAND'S YEARBOOK OF EDUCATION 2019-2020

The hook

The most important aspect of any Brainstorm piece – especially those that have hit the mark with our audience – is the hook. The hook is what draws a reader in and keeps them reading. When they got up this morning, they may have not realised they were going to spend five minutes reading a piece on medieval Irish words, or to enjoy two sociologists reviewing *The Young Offenders*, or to pore over how Irish welfare spending compares with the rest of Europe. But that's what happened, because the hook drew them in.

The hook often comes down to timing. For example, we've seen huge interest in Brainstorm stories about Brexit and climate change in 2019 as people search for new thinking about these issues. There may be perceived wisdom that people don't want detail or depth, but we have the data to turn that one on its head. If there's a story with a different angle on these issues, it will often do well.

Other hooks are to do with what people are genuinely interested in. We know that there are some topics (like sleep) and themes (popular culture) which will draw in readers. At all times, you've an eye out for the hook and how best to deploy it. You know that this is the thing which will make people read on.

You may know everything there is to know about a particular area, but can you convey it in a way that holds the attention, curiosity, and interest of the reader?

Of course, as I said earlier, you're not a journalist, so it's often the case that you won't know what the hook is. That's where the editor comes in. When I'm pitched a story, either by email or face to face at a Brainstorm campus workshop, I'm looking for a hook. It may be in the fifth paragraph of the email, or it may take you ten minutes to get around to it, but I'll be looking for it. The hook is what makes your story really sing and stand out.

Conclusion

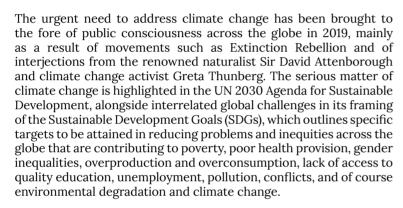
The art of telling a compelling story comes down to communication. You may know everything there is to know about a particular area, but can you convey it in a way that holds the attention, curiosity, and interest of the general reader? What is it about your work which will make them sit up and take notice? Can you construct the narrative in a way that will make them happy they clicked your way?

At Brainstorm, we believe there's a great relationship to be fostered between our writers – academics and researchers – and our readers, the general public. Both sides are coming to the table with different aims and expectations, but we're just happy to be the ones providing the bridge between the two.

REDRESSING THE SUSTAINABILITY PARADOX OF **EDUCATION**

Infusing education for sustainability in higher education programmes

This article introduces the sustainability paradox of education, highlighting the urgency for reform in the processes and practices of education to address global challenges. It outlines how education for sustainability can be infused in education, with a focus on higher education.



The education sector is a key agent in implementing these SDGs, and many of its stakeholders are already on pathways towards integrating sustainability in their programmes and practices. This article sets the context for infusing education for sustainability in education more generally, and outlines sustainability models and pedagogic approaches to be considered in the reform of higher education programmes and practices.

Relationship between education and wealth

Interesting correlations exist between education and wealth, and between wealth and many of the factors that contribute to the global challenges articulated in the SDGs. Let's begin by stating what most of us might already expect of the relationship between education and wealth. People with advanced levels of education generally earn more, and a higher-education qualification can increase income even further in what has been termed the 'college wage premium' (Wolla and Sullivan, 2017, p. 3), leading to significant increases in the personal wealth of graduates from higher education.

Relationship between wealth and carbon footprint

And what then of the relationship between wealth and those global challenges that propelled the setting of the SDGs? The biggest polluters on our planet are also generally the wealthiest: multiple studies identify income as the dominant determinant of a person's



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ecological footprint. Wealthier people tend to buy more, consume more, and travel more, and thus have a significantly larger carbon footprint. A study by Oxfam (2015) found that the world's richest 10% are responsible for over 50% of global pollutants, and that the poorest half of the global population – who are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change - are responsible for only around 10% of global emissions.

Education: a double-edged sword

McKeown (2002, p. 10) concisely expresses the relationship between education, wealth, and resource consumption: 'generally, more highly educated people, who have higher incomes, consume more resources than poorly educated people, who tend to have lower incomes'. The more educated we become, the less sustainable we are in general. McKeown notes that as a result, the most educated countries in the developed world have the 'highest per-capita rates of consumption' and the 'deepest ecological footprints' (ibid.). In sum, the dispositions, behaviours, and practices of the educated elite are collectively having severe impacts on our environment, economies, and societies, at local and global levels, and are contributing to and aggravating the sustainability challenges facing our world.

The paradox, then, is that education generally, and higher education specifically, is a double-edged sword: it advances knowledge and innovation, and can contribute positively to sustainable development, but the unsustainable behaviours and practices of the emergent population of graduates can threaten the sustainability of our planet and frustrate efforts to achieve SDG targets. Clearly, our education system needs to change as

The biggest polluters on our planet are also generally the wealthiest. a matter of urgency.

> The important role of education in militating against or alleviating the SDG challenges is articulated as a specific goal (SDG 4: quality education) in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and also in UNESCO's roadmap for implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development 2014–2020. So there is recognition internationally that education programmes and courses need to be reoriented to enable the development of learners who become sustainability change agents and thus graduates vested with competencies and knowledge that enable them to undertake actions for sustainability.

> Here in Ireland, the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (2014-2020) specifically calls on education providers, including those in higher education, to integrate sustainability education in curricula and practices. There is renewed interest in, and indeed grounds for, reorienting programmes and practices so that graduates at all levels develop sustainability-related competencies that contribute to enabling equitable and sustainable futures for all.

Attaining core sustainability-oriented competencies

Let's consider the core sustainability-oriented competencies that our education graduates need to attain, to enable them to respond to the key challenges set out in the sustainable development goals. Core competencies in this sense are the knowledge base, skill set, and specific forms of thinking that graduates would have developed during their study vis-à-vis sustainability.

Graduates need to have developed an understanding of the great challenges facing our planet and the role of human action or inaction in addressing those challenges. They must recognise the interconnectedness of people, planet, peace, and prosperity, and the role of partnership in protecting all living and non-living systems on Earth. This requires developing deeper, transdisciplinary understanding of the integrated nature of global challenges from sociocultural, political, environmental, and economic perspectives, and thus points to the need for integration in education programmes of marginalised or less-heard voices, and for sharing practices from multiple disciplinary, geographic, and political contexts. Graduates will thereby develop deeper knowledge of the context of sustainability, aligning with UNESCO's first pillar of learning for the twenty-first century: 'Learning to know', in this case knowledge about and for sustainability (Delors, 1996).

Need for development of specific forms of thinking

Becoming sustainability (re-)oriented also requires developing specific forms of thinking in the student, including the capacity for anticipatory thinking, systems thinking, strategic thinking, and critical thinking, all

in a values orientation that strives to enable sustainable and equitable futures for everyone (UNESCO, 2017). With anticipatory thinking competency, graduates are expected to be able to envision and critically evaluate multiple types of futures, including possible, probable, and desired futures. With systems thinking competency, graduates are expected to be able to recognise the interconnectedness of living and non-living systems on our planet, and to analyse complex systems and deal with uncertainty therein. With

Our education system needs to change as a matter of urgency.

strategic thinking competency, graduates are expected to be able to plan and implement innovative actions that address sustainability. With *critical thinking competency*, graduates are expected to be able to critically reflect on and analyse various contexts in the sustainability discourse, and to be able to articulate their position on these.

'Learning to do'

Becoming sustainability (re)-oriented also requires developing a skill set that enables students to plan and implement suitable small and large-scale actions that enhance ways of living and being, and to seek to mitigate or prevent the impact of the aforementioned global challenges, aligning with UNESCO's second pillar of learning for the twenty-first century: 'Learning to do' (Delors, 1996). These typically involve developing an *integrated complex-problem-solving competency*, which requires deep learning facilitated by engagement in authentic, ill-defined, complex-problem-solving activities in the area of sustainability, requiring substantive and sustained investigation at individual and group levels to develop viable and equitable solutions.

Learning to be and to live together

In terms of their values orientation, which speaks to the development of normative competency, graduates will be expected not only to have developed their self-awareness, but also to better understand what influences their norms, values, and thus actions for sustainability. They will be expected to have a deeper understanding of, and to be able to mediate, the tensions that can exist between conflicting values of self and others, thus responding to UNESCO's third and fourth pillars of learning for the twenty-first century: 'Learning to be' and 'Learning to live together' (Delors, 1996).

Learning to transform oneself and society

Ultimately, by developing these competencies, graduates will have engaged in 'Learning to transform oneself and society'. This pillar, recently integrated as UNESCO's fifth pillar of learning for the twenty-first century, is the one most directly aligned with promoting change agency for sustainability (Combes, 2001). The expectation is that graduates, particularly at higher levels, will have the aspirations, dispositions, knowledge base, and skill set to become change agents for sustainability, and thus they will seek to initiate and engage in behaviours and actions that prevent or alleviate the impacts of global challenges in striving for the SDGs.

Education providers are specifically called upon to integrate sustainability education in curricula and practices.

Some of the pedagogic approaches recommended for fostering sustainability specifically in higher education include: Experiential learning, Ethical Values-based learning, Constructivist learning, and Transformative learning (Holland et al., 2012; Makrakis et al., 2012; Besong, 2017).

The Experiential learning approach emphasises learning by doing, so is action-oriented, and calls for the integration of authentic activities and experiences that enable higher education students to engage in sustainability actions.

The Ethical Values-based learning approach emphasises the relational approach to learning, which requires educators and students to negotiate and reach consensus on their preferred learning pathways for sustainability, while critically considering and mediating influences of, and on, individual and collective choices and behaviours.

The Constructivist learning approach centres on facilitating activities that enable students to collectively consider multiple perspectives and contexts in developing solutions to sustainability challenges – a key aspect in fostering critically minded, action-oriented learners.

The Transformative learning approach sets out to activate change in self and of self. In the context of education for sustainability, the focus is on reorienting problematic mindsets among students towards becoming more open to being sustainable, with the ultimate aim of enabling action for sustainability. An example is the Visual Cues intervention designed by Tillmanns (2017), where students experience dissonance through encounters with disorienting dilemmas (disruptive visual imagery or media), followed by opportunities for individual reflection and group discourse to critique and consider the self in the context of sustainability.

Programmes and practices in education need to be transformed

Finally, it is clear that programmes and practices in education need to be reformed to foster ethical awareness of sustainability and to enhance students' capacity to address the complex global challenges articulated in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This reform is already under way across many sectors of education and is visible in higher education institutions in Ireland.

Many and varied models can be invoked to integrate sustainability principles and pedagogic practices in curricula and to foster sustainability competencies among students in higher education settings. Some theorists in educating for sustainability, such as Sterling and Thomas (2006), have argued that an infusion model is much more effective than an integrated model in higher education.

In the infusion model, sustainability is integrated across a programme by including relevant content in a range of modules, and through adoption of active and innovative pedagogic approaches. In the integrated model, a stand-alone module on education for sustainability is added to each programme, and higher education students typically engage in this module early in their programme of study, with little or no follow-up in subsequent years.

Choosing the right model of sustainability education

In practice, the chosen model of sustainability education is very dependent on resources and willingness at an institutional level to engage in wholesystem change for sustainability. Historically, the practice in Ireland and elsewhere provides ample evidence that the path of least cost and least disruption usually results in the adoption of the integrated model of sustainability education – more commonly referred to as the 'bolt-on' model; regrettably, this type of intervention has typically not facilitated the development of the full range of graduate sustainability competencies.

The inclusion of Education for

More enlightened approaches are being trialled in some institutions, such as Dublin City University (DCU), where mapping exercises are under way to ascertain the alignment of existing programmatic and learning outcomes

with the aforementioned graduate sustainability competencies. Follow-up interventions are planned with academic staff to address gaps in curricular content across a range of modules and to raise awareness of innovative pedagogic approaches that can be used to develop these competencies among students and enable change agency and action for sustainability.

The model of sustainability being adopted by DCU could be considered a hybrid infusion model, because while sustainability content and practices are being infused within programmes, there is recognition that a standalone education for sustainable development module may also be needed in some programmes.

Fostering sustainability-minded graduates

In sum, the inclusion of education for sustainability must be prioritised as a strategic action to redress the sustainability paradox in education. In doing so, education sectors more generally can foster sustainability-minded graduates who strive to reduce patterns of consumption and unsustainable practices that are frustrating efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals articulated in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ultimately this would contribute to more equitable and sustainable futures for all.

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Sustainability must be

prioritised.

Bridging the gap between staff and institute needs

The key to the success of an institutional framework for professional development (PD) is to find and maintain a balance between staff and institute-level goals. A PD framework is needed that supports staff to fulfil their personal PD needs in tandem with institutional goals. This article offers an approach to PD planning based on a discussion of goal-framing theory and contextualised by the National Forum's PD Framework.

Introduction

Institutes of education, at all levels, face ongoing challenges in where to focus resources and effort, and this also applies to professional development (PD) requirements for staff. As with any initiative, PD needs to be in line with, and strive to achieve, the institute's strategic objectives. While an institute and all staff who teach are likely to agree that the ultimate purpose of PD is to improve the learning environment, the route each would take to achieve that aim may differ. It is important to find a balance between the institute's and the staff's needs that gives some flexibility and autonomy to staff members.



Hibernia College, chair of HAQEF

During 2019, the HECA Academic and Quality Enhancement Forum (HAQEF) has been engaged in a dialogue on Professional Development (PD). HAQEF comprises representatives of the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA), many of whom are either responsible for PD in their institutes or can significantly influence decision-making. Those conversations have been driven by the efforts of HAQEF members to engage with the National Forum's PD Framework (2016) following publication of the National Forum's 2018 report on a pilot implementation of the Framework with which members of HECA colleges were engaged with.



Dr Tony Murphy Dublin Business School

This article, which is informed by those conversations, offers an approach to PD planning based on a discussion of goal-framing theory and is further contextualised by the National Forum's PD Framework. It also offers recommendations for interpreting the Framework at institutional level.

Defining professional development

The National PD Framework was developed by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education to provide guidance for the PD of all staff who teach, and to give direction to other groups involved in planning, developing, and engaging others in PD activities (National Forum, 2016). 'All staff who teach' (p. 1) is a purposefully flexible term that is inclusive to all roles involved in facilitating student learning so that the framework may be adapted for use across many roles in education, including both

THEMES

The PD Framework defines four types of PD:

- collaborative and non-accredited
- · unstructured and non-accredited
- · structured and non-accredited
- · accredited.

The priority for

the Self domain and

domains.

Discipline/Professional

the individual is

It allows institutes to map out PD against five domains:

- The Self, which 'emphasises the personal values, perspectives and emotions that individuals bring to their teaching' (p. 4) is intended to sit at the centre of all PD activity, emphasising the unique path that all individuals follow in engaging with any type of PD.
- Professional Identity, Values and Development in Teaching and Learning, which 'emphasises the importance of the development and self-evaluation of disciplinary/professional identity' (p. 4).
- Professional Communication and Dialogue in Teaching and Learning, which emphasises 'the importance of the excellent, clear and coherent communication skills required for the changing learning environment' (p. 5).
- Professional Knowledge and Skills in Teaching and Learning, which emphasises 'the importance of both disciplinary knowledge and disciplinary approaches to teaching (disciplinary pedagogies), while also drawing on inter-disciplinary experiences and approaches' (p. 6).
- Personal and Professional Digital Capacity in Teaching and Learning, which 'emphasises the importance of personal and professional digital capacity and the application of digital skills and knowledge to professional practice' (p. 7).

The PD Framework provides both a vocabulary to facilitate conversations about PD and a mechanism to allow higher education institutes (HEIs) and individuals to define, plan, and measure progress of PD.

Identifying the imbalance

The National Forum's 2018 report on the pilot implementation of the PD Framework acknowledged that participants felt they could start to engage with PD through any one of the five domains. But it also reported that 68% of participants began with the Self domain. During the pilot, participants engaged with all five domains, but again the Self domain saw the most engagement (26%), followed by Professional Identity (21%). The lowest engagement was with the Digital Capacity domain (14%). The pilot suggests a preference among staff who teach for the Self domain of the PD Framework. At first glance this is not surprising, given its central role in the framework.

academic and support staff.



Figure 1: Professional Development Framework domains (National Forum, 2016, p. 3)

As part of HAQEF's conversations in 2019 on the value and role of PD in HECA colleges, and the role of the PD Framework in contextualising those conversations, HAQEF members (n = 7) were surveyed on the perceived individual and institutional benefits and challenges of both PD and the PD Framework.

The institutional benefits of engaging with the PD Framework most reported were the opportunities to improve the overall learning environment through enhanced staff performance and engagement, the sharing of expertise and experience among staff, and the perceived subsequent benefits for the learners that resulted from overall enhancement of the learning environment.

At the institutional level, the challenges of PD planning were perceived as time and cost, where each institute needs to decide which PD activities to support financially and how to appropriately support staff by allocating time to engage in any PD activities. The most significant challenges cited for individuals were having enough time to devote to PD, access to PD activities, and institutional support to participate in PD.

The priority for the institute is improved performance of staff and an improved learning environment for learners.

The survey had a small number of respondents, but taken with the report on the PD Framework pilot, there is a suggestion that the priority for the individual is the Self domain and discipline/professional domains, whereas the priority for the institute is improved performance of staff and the effect of an improved learning environment for learners.

Figure 2 shows an interpretation of the potential conflict between individual and institutional priorities, where activities become more financially

prohibitive as they move towards accreditation. This is in line with the idea that there is ongoing tension in all organisations between individual motivation and an individual's motivation to participate in organisational goals (Birkinshaw et al., 2014).

The challenge for those responsible for PD in institutes, then, appears to be how to encourage engagement with PD by bridging the PD priorities of staff and the institute. Another consideration is where an institute's responsibility lies for facilitating PD of the Self. By definition, this could be considered the individual's responsibility. Latham (2004) argued that self-motivation is at least as important as motivating others' behaviour, and that goal-setting provides a structure for self-management without being overly prescriptive – suggesting that development is a dual responsibility between the individual and the institute.

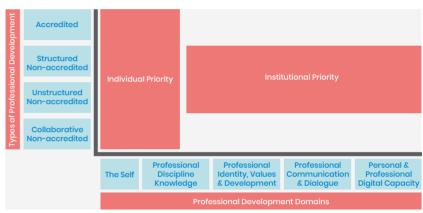


Figure 2: Institute/individual perceptions of the National Forum's Professional Development Framework

Performance management and professional development

Performance management, which can focus on individual or organisational productivity, has become very topical, with radical development after many years of incremental growth (Collings and McMackin, 2017). A successful strategy of performance management should fit with institutional strategy, culture, and values (ibid.). Setting objectives, giving feedback, and reviewing performance are key elements of performance management that allow institutional priorities to translate into individual performance. Working to achieve specific goals can make staff 16% more productive than if they were to do the same work without such goals (Latham, 2004). Thus, a structured approach allows both staff and the institute to maximise the benefits in the precious time available for these goals.

It makes good organisational sense to move away from traditional modes of performance management towards developmental structures (Cappelli and Tavis, 2016). Staff who work in environments of knowledge generation and dissemination are already deeply motivated by the potential for learning and advancement. Autonomy can be the developmental gift that staff need to grow, with appropriate supporting structures and ongoing feedback.

Rapid innovation and the need to stay current also mean that staff must become agile and keep improving their skills rather than doing things as they have always done them. To this end, it does not make sense to review and reward past performance. Rather, it makes sense for HEIs to focus on growth and training opportunities at individual and institutional level. A growth model provides a structure for employees who need additional support to grow into their potential, and for highly motivated and autonomous employees to continue growing. The value of PD to performance management therefore needs to be considered in the implementation of an institutional PD structure.

The suggestion here is that the challenge for PD planners with limited time and resources becomes how to devise an institutional PD structure that is aligned with the HEI's strategic objectives, helps performance management, and, most importantly, engages staff by bridging the gap between apparently differing HEI and staff priorities.

The key appears to be to provide an institutional PD structure that will allow staff to work towards PD that is more in line with the institute's priorities,

while retaining autonomy to develop their own foundation. In such a model, each staff member can forge their own path towards PD within the scope of the institutional framework.

A simple prosocial goal in education could be to deliver a high-quality learning environment for all staff and students.

Pro-social goals: Aligning individual and institutional priorities

Birkinshaw et al. (2014) queried how organisations can resolve the conflict between individual and organisational goals and the challenges of managing these dual objectives. They use goal-framing theory to provide an insight into how organisations can motivate their staff to work towards common goals. According to goal-framing theory, a person's major concern at any given moment leads them to prioritise certain aspects of their work over others.

There are different types of individual goals. 'Hedonic goals' are goals that staff pursue for individual enjoyment to the detriment of work, which is less satisfying. 'Gain goals' are goals that staff pursue to improve their prospects and increase their opportunities, such as a promotion or bonus, to the potential detriment of work, which will not increase their prospects.

In contrast, 'pro-social goals' are ones that involve a group working towards a common goal. Pro-social goals create a sense of purpose that transcends individual gain, motivating employees to work towards a common purpose. How, then, do we begin to alter this individual focus and maintain the delicate balance between achieving organisational goals and not compromising individual growth opportunities?

Strategies that successfully find and maintain this balance manage to translate ordinary goals into consistent action. These pro-social goals may be what employees are intrinsically motivated to achieve as individuals. A simple pro-social goal in education could be to Deliver a high-quality learning environment for all staff and students, which can be further defined by the PD Framework domains.

Traditional performance management terminology, such as key performance indicators (KPIs), imply a linear trajectory with a clear beginning and end. But institutes of education in all forms are complex working environments, and aligning individual and institutional goals is not linear. Yet it is important to find ways to measure progress and report that progress in public forums (Birkinshaw et al., 2014). We argue that institutes should move towards metrics that respect the diversity and multiplicity of objectives and perspectives and that give autonomy to employees to find their own PD path while simultaneously contributing to their institute's mission.

Using the PD Framework, institutes could create consistent mechanisms for guiding and reporting on progress, while allowing staff autonomy in how they reach goals. For example, someone may have a personal goal to increase their network, while an institute may prioritise the need for staff to increase their digital skills. An individual left to their own devices may choose to attend a conference to increase their network; but with this additional institutional priority, they may instead attend a digital skills workshop, where both goals can be achieved. This article suggests that an institutional PD structure that balances individual and institute priorities, as reflected in Figure 3, considers the following aspects:



Figure 3: Institutional PD structure and individual paths

Support Systems

Support systems are crucial to the success of pro-social goals. These systems can be formal, informal, or a combination. These systems and structures reinforce pro-social goals so that they are not driven by individual goals. Individual rewards and incentives also need to be aligned to organisational ones, to move away from individual mindsets.

Formal structures can include 'counterweights': formal mechanisms put in place to enforce pro-social goals, such as committees. If a committee is established to champion pro-social goals and their implementation across an institution, it is important that it has enough real influence to hold the institution to account if the purpose of pro-social supporting structures become blurred (e.g., if an enhancement metric begins to be used punitively rather than for growth purposes). Formal structures should be transparent

and ensure consistency in how PD is supported throughout the institution. This may include established policy and procedures on budgetary allocations, and should include an established institutional approach to time costs (i.e., how much time an employee can dedicate to PD).

Informal supports can be as simple as ensuring ongoing conversations with staff about goals and providing opportunities for discussion. Using the PD Framework to encourage group reflection on PD could be a semiformal reinforcing structure, with themed 'lunch and learn' events where attendees are rewarded with a free lunch or tea.

Motivation, reward, and incentive

Although in some roles individuals may be motivated by financial rewards, more people tend to have multi-faceted motivations (Latham, 2004). In recent years, traditional performance review culture, which emphasises individual accountability for past results, has been transitioning towards developmental cultures that favour frequent feedback arising naturally in the cycle of work (Cappelli and Tavis, 2016). Staff commitment to goals is highest when they perceive themselves to have a high level of choice in this process.

Performance feedback is often thought of in an employeeline manager relationship, but it can also often be associated with negative feedback and 'no news is good news'. This type of feedback can be demotivating and ultimately harm performance. Conversely, regular positive communication on performance, formal or informal, can increase motivation.

Institutes should move towards metrics that respect the diversity and multiplicity of objectives and perspectives.

The PD framework provides the scaffolding for those who work in educational environments to take their formal feedback into their own hands by reflecting on their experiences. Learning how to record PD effectively can also help staff and managers to maintain a formal record of PD, which is useful for both individuals and institutes. It can help ensure that staff are meeting their prescribed goals, identify barriers to participating in PD, and identify individual and institutional gaps and opportunities for growth.

Raison d'être

Birkinshaw et al. (2014) emphasise that front-line staff, such as academics in the classroom, have their *raison d'être* reinforced positively and organically through their roles. For support staff, it is easier to become disconnected from a higher-order purpose such as contributing to students' learning environment. Finding ways to tangibly manifest these goals in staff's day-to-day experience is one way to reinforce and remind them of the institute's mission: for example, flipped orientation, where students present to staff on their experiences, or videos summarising student feedback delivered by students.

Conclusion

After exploring PD planning from multiple perspectives, including the lens of goal-framing theory, the essential message of this article for educational institutes is as follows: The key to the success of an institutional PD framework is to find and maintain a balance between staff and institute-level goals. In line with goal-framing theory and the inherent pressures of time and workload in education, staff need to feel that their own needs and priorities are being fulfilled in order for them to willingly engage in PD.

In the absence of a consistently articulated institutional strategy and common goals towards PD, staff will naturally gravitate towards fulfilling PD needs in the Self domain almost exclusively. A PD framework is therefore needed that supports staff to fulfil their personal PD needs in tandem with institutional goals. HAQEF will continue these conversations throughout 2019 and 2020 by organising a PD-focused colloquium, developing resources for interpreting and applying the PD Framework at institutional level, and hosting a PD-focused National Forum seminar in April 2020.

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- Albert Einstein

A Reaction to Change and a Catalyst for Change

Creative Youth supports the evolution of our learning ecosystem, so that knowledge and creativity are equal partners in the formation of our young citizens – where schools can support creativity and innovation in teaching and learning in an integrated way.

Background

The core proposition of the Creative Ireland Programme is that participation in cultural and creative activity promotes individual, community, and national well-being. It seeks to support each citizen – whether individually or collectively, in our personal lives or in our institutions – to realise our full creative potential, by encouraging, facilitating, and supporting collaboration. The Creative Youth Plan is a manifestation of one of the programme's five pillars. It is about realising this overarching proposition and securing an opportunity for our children and young people to become creative, active citizens.

Creative Youth, a plan to enable the creativity of every child and young person, was published in December 2017. It states the government's commitment to ensuring that every child in Ireland will have practical access to tuition, experience, and participation in music, drama, arts, and coding by 2022.

But Creative Youth is more than just the latest scheme or programme aimed at providing greater access to artistic and cultural creative activities. Our aim is more audacious and ambitious: it is to promote a learning ecosystem in which knowledge and creativity are equal partners in the formation of our young people, both in the formal education system – where schools can support creativity and innovation in teaching and learning in an integrated way – and in non-formal or out-of-school settings.

Why? The answer is change. Today, and even more so tomorrow, we need to apply knowledge and expertise in previously unimagined ways. We needs the skills to be creative and inventive, to solve problems, to work collaboratively and experimentally, and to think conceptually and imaginatively.

Creative Youth seeks not only to arm future generations with the skills to thrive in this ever-changing society, but to be able to think and act differently, and to adapt to, master, and direct the continually shifting sands of technological advancement – and thereby contribute to continued, sustainable economic growth.

These same skills will enrich their personal lives, encouraging social responsibility and personal qualities related to well-being, such as



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resilience, empathy, and a capacity for connection and friendship. This contributes to their personal well-being and also enables them to play an active role in our wider society, to the common good and well-being of the nation.

Putting creativity, arts, and culture at the centre of education is vital in helping to develop these skills – to cultivate a diverse, accessible, and creative cultural ecosystem that sustains well-being for all. Our schools are already creative places; our teaching professionals are creative and inventive people. Creativity is not something new. The aim of the Creative Ireland Programme is to act as a catalyst for mainstreaming creativity, recognising its benefits and helping to anchor it across public life.

Creative Youth seeks to arm future generations with the skills to to be able to adapt to, master, and direct the continually shifting sands of technological advancement.

Significant work has been carried out over the past number of years to embed artistic processes in education, through the Arts in Education Charter and other initiatives, and there is now an opportunity to build on this through greater collaboration at national level, at local authority level, and between the various groups and professionals operating around the country.

The implementation of Creative Youth is the next stage. Creative Youth is not simply an arts or arts-in-education programme. It does not simply aim for its interventions to be an element of optional or elective activities. Creative Youth, and the entire Creative Ireland Programme, is about creativity in its widest possible sense. It is about being impactful at all levels – in schools and in the community.

Creative Youth works across three broad areas:

- Schools: enhancing arts and creativity initiatives in schools and early years settings.
- Teacher continuing professional development (CPD): increasing and enhancing teacher CPD opportunities across primary, post-primary, and early years settings.
- Out of school: improving cross-sectoral collaboration to support creativity for children and young people in the community.

The Creative Youth Plan is being delivered by a range of organisations – government departments, State agencies, and non-governmental organisations – and this delivery and implementation is being overseen by a working group of representatives from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), and the Arts Council.

This reflects the all-of-government, cross-departmental nature of the Creative Ireland Programme and the desire of government to see the programme's principles and objectives embedded in future public policy and mainstreamed across the system. An expert advisory group, chaired by Dr Ciaran Benson, is assisting the pillar 1 working group to achieve the broader long-term objective for the Creative Ireland Programme: to enhance cultural and creative education for all our children and young

people. Membership includes experts in the field of education, creativity, and arts in education.

A number of actions have been agreed within these strategies and are currently being developed, piloted, and rolled out by partners and stakeholders. These initiatives cut across a range of creative activities: supporting the further development and growth of youth theatre provision, developing new ways to enhance the delivery of group singing (both in and outside the classroom), supporting creative writing initiatives, and enabling the nationwide roll-out of Music Generation. But the most significant initiatives to date are taking place within the formal education system.

Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools

Creative Schools aims to understand, develop, and celebrate the arts and creativity in schools. The initiative supports schools to develop and begin to implement their own creative plan, and will develop and strengthen the relationships between schools and the broader cultural and community infrastructure in which they operate. At present, 300 schools are participating in the initiative, with a two-year engagement, an annual grant, and access to a creative associate to help the school develop and implement its plan.

The long-term aim is for every school to be supported to fully embrace the arts and creativity, ensuring a positive experience and strong outcomes for children and young people. Engagement in the arts requires rigour, discipline, and resilience, nurturing a child's sense of agency and selfworth. This combination of skills underpins all successful learning.

Creative
Schools aims to
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Creative Schools has been informed by research which confirms that schools play an important role in providing opportunities for children to participate in arts and culture, and that arts and cultural participation leads to a range of positive child outcomes, including socio-emotional well-being, cognitive development, and positive attitudes towards school.

Creative Schools provides tangible supports for schools to embrace these developments by placing the arts and creativity at the centre of school life.

Creative Clusters

Creative Clusters is a DES School Excellence Fund initiative led by and in partnership with the Teacher Education Centres (ATECI). Its purpose is to demonstrate how the arts and creativity can support clusters of schools to work together to address common learning challenges identified by those schools.

A Creative Cluster consists of two to five schools collaborating on the design, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of an innovative arts and creative learning project which supports them to address a common issue or challenge identified by those schools. Creative Clusters include schools at different stages of their journey in using the arts and creativity in

the classroom. Clusters can consist of primary schools only, post-primary schools only, or a combination of the two.

As with Creative Schools, the initiative has also been informed by recent curriculum reform in Ireland which, from early childhood to post-primary education, places emphasis on the development of key skills, such as being creative, communicating, and collaborating with others; and recognises the value of play, imagination, and enquiry in developing these skills.

Each Cluster is provided with training and is supported by a designated cluster facilitator linked to an ATECI full-time Education Centre and led by a designated lead school, with one of its teachers acting as lead school coordinator. Cluster schools are strongly encouraged to engage with their students to identify an area to be explored by that cluster. The scheme gives schools access to creative people, skills, and resources, and supports them to draw on their own skills and experiences and those in their wider communities.

Creative Clusters are also encouraged to engage with other initiatives under Creative Ireland pillar 1. This includes collaborating with Creative Schools or engaging in CPD provided at both primary and post-primary level. To date, 148 schools across 44 clusters have participated in the initiative, which began in the 2018–19 academic year.

At present, 300 schools are participating in the initiative, with a two-year engagement, an annual grant, and access to a creative associate to help the school develop and implement its plan.

Teacher Continuing Professional Development

CPD for teachers and for artists working in partnership with teachers is crucial to the long-term success and sustainability of the overall Creative Youth plan. To achieve the long-term objective of cultural and creative education, it is necessary to build a critical mass of education and arts professionals who are versed in the theoretical frameworks of arts and creativity education and equipped with the skills and techniques for delivering programmes.

To this end, we are working towards achieving the following goals:

- Early Years: The DCYA will support the development and roll-out of relevant early years CPD which promotes principles, guidelines, and pedagogical practices that broadly support practitioners in the development of early arts education for young children in early years settings. A working group has been established, and a research project to inform the basis for this CPD offering is about to begin.
- Primary: The Teacher/Artist Partnership (TAP) as a CPD model to support and enhance arts education is an arts-in-education initiative in which artists work in partnership with teachers. The Creative Youth Plan seeks to mainstream the initiative, and this has been substantially implemented to date, taking place across all twenty-one Education Centres (administered through Tralee Education Centre).
- Post-Primary: Arts in Junior Cycle consists of a series of professional development experiences for teachers to support engagement with the arts and learning in junior cycle. The workshops embody the principles and key skills which underpin the Framework for Junior Cycle and the

Arts in Education Charter, and provide teachers with practical and creative methodologies to engage with learning outcomes in their classroom. The initiative is based on partnership and collaboration with key elective partners across the arts and education sectors (administered through Junior Cycle for Teachers, Monaghan Education Centre).

In addition to the formal CPD offerings being facilitated through the Creative Youth Plan, other elements of the plan are having a 'spill-over' effect in CPD. Through the training provided to those involved in Creative Schools and Creative Clusters, as facilitators or coordinators, new skills and knowledge are being transferred and disseminated. That is, participation in developing the school's own plan, participating in taster workshops, and new activities are providing teachers with new skills and experiences. Furthermore, we are aware that schools involved in the programmes have organised and delivered specific CPD programmes for staff in after-school workshops and other contexts away from the classroom.

NAPD Creative Engagement programme

Creative Youth is also supporting the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals' (NAPD) Creative Engagement programme, whose aim is to encourage students' creativity, initiative, and expression. That Creative Engagement places the student at the centre of the creative process, that it strives to complement curricular learning in the arts, culture, and heritage, and that it seeks to establish new working partnerships, makes it an ideal partner for Creative Ireland. The voice of the child, consultation, and collaboration are core principles of the Creative Youth Plan.

The voice of the child, consultation, and collaboration are core principles of the Creative Youth Plan.

Where to next?

Creative Youth is about starting a conversation, trying things out, and trialling new ideas – ultimately with a view to making impactful change. To inform this, a formal evaluation of Creative Schools is starting, led by Dublin City University, and this will help inform us on the next steps in realising our part in contributing to a changed learning environment for future generations.

From an initial informal review of the first year of Creative Schools, we have learned that most participating schools are building new relationships with arts and cultural organisations in their own locality. Many participating schools have engaged additional artists and creative practitioners to deliver activities and workshops in their school, and as mentioned previously, the programme is giving teachers opportunities to continue their own development and learning journey. We hope that the torch has been lit, and that creativity is being accepted as a key element in building a forward-looking learning environment.

This initial impact is manifesting not only in the formal initiatives outlined above but also from broader engagement across the wider education and youth services communities. For example, the chosen theme of this year's DES Inspectorate conference is – creativity!

The education and learning environment is evolving, as it always does. The Creative Ireland Programme, and the Creative Youth Plan in particular, is but one actor in this change. Having sought collaboration and new partnerships, the Creative Ireland Programme will work with our partners to identify those elements, or combination of elements, from the programmes and initiatives that we have supported which may be carried forward to meet our shared objective: to enhance the wider learning ecosystem through recognising the importance of creativity and creative learning, arming young people with lifelong skills and confidence which will contribute to their personal and societal well-being.

Further information on the Creative Ireland Programme, including our Programme Overview and the Creative Youth Plan, is available at: www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/about.



Artist Fiona Kelly demonstrating printmaking to a pupil in Cappoquin NS as part of the Glucksman's Classroom Museum project that enables rural schoolchildren to participate in creative learning around contemporary artworks from the UCC Art Collection.

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The relationship between resources and HEI performance

Analysis shows there is a link between HEI resourcing and HEI performance both for Irish and UK institutions. Without an increase in resources, it is difficult to envisage how any tangible improvement in performance can result from the Technological University process. Indeed, the TU process could be counterproductive, as expectations created in key stakeholder groups may prove difficult to reach.

Context

The Irish higher education (HE) system is about to embark on a period of significant change, with a number of institutions poised to join together to form a much smaller number of Technological Universities (TU). This is likely to be the single biggest change to the sector in a decade. However, there has been opposition to this new policy, and many institutions have been looking over the precipice for some time now.

The notion of a TU first appeared in the Hunt Report in 2011 (Hunt, 2011). While some consideration was given to the process of designation, there was scant attention directed at the funding impact of such re-designation and consequent mergers.

Perhaps it is this lack of visibility on funding that is causing the resistance to change. The present article seeks to provide insights into the relationship between funding and organisational success. It is not an attempt to discuss the broader merits of higher-education-institution mergers or HEI re-designations.

The relationship between funding and HEI success

The debate on whether funding affects the success of a HEI is, remarkably, an open question. This is because there are no natural experiments in this arena. The question is further complicated by the multiple methods of resource allocation across different HE systems, and there are numerous (and contested) measures of success of HEIs. As a case in point, Liefner (2003), noting the many different approaches in use across a small (but international) sample of successful universities, concluded that 'the link between performance-based resource allocation and the success of universities must be weak'.

However, there are many studies and reports that tend to conclude there is a positive relationship between funding and HEI success. Hazelcorn (2007) reported: 'respondents said LTRS [League Tables and Ranking Systems, a potential measure of HEI success] were influencing key policy-making areas, e.g. classification of institutions and the allocation of funding' – a statement that does not make



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claims of a causal effect, more of a linkage between ranking and funding. (The study was authored by an Irish academic but not based on Irish data.)

Numerous studies have considered particular aspects of higher-education funding. Some have analysed the efficacy of funding strategies that have attempted to incentivise HEIs to adopt certain desired behaviours, for example funding for retention and access initiatives (Hillman et al., 2015).

In recent years a growing number of studies have considered the impact of the broader political economy on higher-education funding. Many of these are US-based, however (e.g., McLendon et al., 2009), and while they make interesting policy observations, the uniqueness of the US system, or any other country, means the results are not generalisable to other jurisdictions.

The funding landscape in Ireland relative to the rest of the world

The prevailing narrative on higher education spending is that Ireland values higher education and has resourced the sector accordingly. But Ireland spends less on higher education, as a percentage of GDP, than the OECD average. In 2015, the most recent year for which data is available, Ireland spent 0.8% of GDP on its tertiary education institutions, with the OECD average being 1.5% and the EU average 1.2%. This puts Ireland right at the lower end of the developed nations (OECD, 2018a), second last out of twenty-seven countries.

Could this be because Irish GDP has been inflated by asset shifting on the part of some major multinationals in Ireland? If the analysis focuses on public expenditure on tertiary education per full-time equivalent (FTE) student in 2015, the relative allocation of resources paints an improved picture – but one that might still be considered out of step with the dominant narrative. Ireland spends \$13,229 per FTE student, which is at the mid-point of thirty-two countries. But this is below both the EU average of \$15,656 and the OECD average of \$15,998 (OECD, 2018b).

Ireland spends 3.1% of government spending on tertiary education, ranking midway (eighteenth out of thirty-five countries). This is above the OECD average of 3.0% and the EU average of 2.6% (OECD, 2018c). The reason for the above-average government spend and the below-average spend per FTE student is demographics – Ireland has a greater proportion of its population at college-going age than many other European countries.

While government spending on tertiary education does not rank Ireland very high, the benefit of being educated to honours degree level is greater in Ireland than in many other countries. If a person with just secondary education in Ireland has earnings of 100, those with an honours bachelors degree earn 167: 67% more. That puts Ireland well above the EU average of 136 and the OECD average of 144 (OECD 2018d), sixth out of twenty-nine countries in the education premium ranking. This could be considered an apparent contradiction – or could it indicate the need for further education, beyond Leaving Certificate, in order to 'succeed' in Ireland? Indeed, for female students, Ireland ranks highest in terms of the private net financial returns of attaining tertiary education compared with returns to upper-secondary education (OECD, 2018e).

In summary, relative to the rest of the developed world, Ireland does not spend more on higher education. In fact, Ireland could be considered to spend slightly less than the average country, depending on the dimension used. However, the private returns to higher education beyond a secondary-school education are more pronounced in Ireland than in most other countries.

The higher education funding landscape in Ireland

In Ireland the funding for higher education operates on a two-tiered system. The universities attract the majority share of resources, while the institute of technology (IoT) sector operates at a much lower level of funding. This is true in terms of the total resources available to the university sector and the resources available on an FTE student basis (see table).

Resourcing of Ireland's HEIs¹

	Students: Total FTE	Resources: Net Revenue €'000	Revenue per FTE Student	Resources: Capital Investment €'000	Capital Investment per FTE Student
Universities (7)	115,166	€2,005,971	€17,418	€692,686	€6,015
Institutes of Technology (14)	80,401	€797,513	€9,919	€133,254	€1,657

The disparity in resources across the sectors is considerable: 75% greater funding goes to the university sector on an FTE student basis. There is an even greater disparity in capital funding. Much of this has occurred because in recent years the universities have accessed debt to fund capital projects. The total borrowings and capital commitments of the university sector are almost €1 billion, according to the universities' most recently available audited financial statements.

The two-tiered resource system leads to considerable challenges for the IoT sector in terms of student recruitment and service provision. The cost to the individual of attending a HEI is the same for both sectors. Even ignoring any other differences, it is clear to see why a student might select a university over an IoT. Each student attending university gets an effective additional subsidy from the government. The additional capital and recurring funding provided to the university sector has an impact – this is not

Whether funding affects the success of a HEI is, remarkably, an open question.

an unreasonable conclusion, otherwise the greater allocation of resources to the university sector would be difficult to justify – hence the student recruitment advantage that is afforded to the universities.

The TU project could be seen as an attempt to remedy this disparity and at the same time address some of the regional higher-education imbalances. To date, however, very little additional funding has been promised. This is an important aspect of the TU argument: the prevailing narrative is that the

Does lower funding drive poor performance, does poor performance lead to lower funding, or are there other unobserved factors?

new TUs will have a transformative impact on their regions (see final section below). At issue is whether this impact can be achieved on current resources, or whether combining existing IoTs into TUs will require significant additional resources to achieve the promised outputs.

It is reasonable to question the requirement for additional funding for these organisations: Do greater levels of funding to HEIs lead to improved organisation performance?

Resources and performance linkages in Irish HEIs – do they exist?

Measuring 'performance' is a challenge. One approach is to consider the ranking systems as a proxy. This is open to the charge that the rankings are flawed measures, and there is considerable literature on this. But university presidents appear to believe there is a strong association between ranking and university performance:

- Responding to an increase in their ranking, Professor Cathal Kelly, chief
 executive and registrar of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland,
 said: 'Our strong performance in the THE World University Rankings
 is an affirmation of RCSI's strategic investment in the expansion of our
 educational and research activities' (Carolan, 2017) (italics added).
- While a fall in rankings elicits a predictable response: 'Irish universities have endured a decade of under-investment. The impact of the funding cuts over the years, while invisible in the short term, are now being seen directly as our universities are outperformed by better-funded international competitors' (Jim Miley, director general of the Irish Universities Association, as quoted by Ryan, 2018) (italics added).

Many other examples could be provided of university presidents and equivalents offering reasons why their university has fallen or risen on a particular ranking scale. Resources are often a key part of any explanation.

There are numerous organisations that purport to offer university ranking systems. Many of the systems are global, reflecting the growing international nature of higher education. From an Irish perspective the ranking systems can be divided into two categories:

- 1. The international ranking systems. These tend to rank just the universities, with DIT often included; the other IoTs are not usually ranked by these systems. This analysis used the QS World University Rankings, THE World University Rankings, and CWUR World University Rankings.
- 2. National ranking systems. These rank all the national HEIs. There are fewer of these in operation, particularly those that offer a complete ranking. This analysis used the *Sunday Times* Irish Good University Guide and UniRank Irish University Ranking.

While the ranking systems all use different methodologies, the results are broadly consistent: Trinity is the highest-ranked Irish institution, although the precise global ranking number can differ.

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What is the relationship between ranking (as a proxy for performance) and funding?

Based on the national ranking systems that rank all the HEIs (n = 21), the correlation between ranking and revenue per full-time equivalent student is high, over -0.78, indicating a strong negative correlation between funding and ranking.² This is true for a variety of correlations tested using both the product moment correlation coefficient and the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. In all cases the coefficient was statistically significant at the 1% level of significance.

This would indicate a strong relationship between funding and ranking. But correlation coefficients are abstract. Consider the following: the average revenue per FTE student for the top three ranked institutions is €20,383 (same for all ranking lists), whereas the equivalent for the bottom three is €9,172 (using the Sunday Times list for 2018, but the differences are minor for the other ranking lists).

It is a similar tale for the international ranking systems. Recall that these apply only to the university sector (and DIT), so the sample size is small: eight institutions. Again, the correlation between ranking and revenue

Without an increase in

improvement in

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increase in

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per full-time equivalent student is strong: over -0.87. This is true for a variety of correlations tested using both the product moment correlation coefficient and the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. In all cases the coefficient was statistically significant at the 1% level of significance.

Even on the international ranking lists, the disparity in funding per FTE student is correlated with the ranking obtained. On a more concrete basis, the top three ranked universities have an average revenue per student of €20,383, with the other four universities reporting an

average of €14,277. The average ranking of the top three universities is in the low 200s, while the average for the other four is in the low 500s.3

There does appear to be a link between funding (as measured by revenue per FTE student) and organisational performance (as measured by various ranking systems). However, there are other considerations:

- The population is small for the international ranking systems, just eight institutions are included, whereas the Ireland-only ranking systems comprise twenty-one institutions.
- Although there is a link, this does not imply causation. Does lower funding drive poor performance, does poor performance lead to lower funding, or are there other unobserved factors?

Higher education funding in the UK

Perhaps a consideration of the UK higher-education system will help to produce more robust results on the nature and extent of the link between funding and organisational performance.

The higher education sector in the UK is considerably larger than in Ireland. The original sample of 147 institutions was reduced to 131 for this analysis due to a lack of a full set of data. Institutions that did not offer undergraduate education (e.g., Cranfield University) were also excluded.

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Student enrolment data was obtained from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for the academic year 2016-17. Funding information was obtained from the audited annual financial statements of the institutions for the year ended 31 July 2017 (all HEIs in the UK have adopted a similar financial year end). There are numerous UK-only ranking systems: the Complete University Guide Ranking System was used here. The ranking systems are broadly similar: the same universities appear at the top of all the ranking systems.

Without a funding model, the TU could be counterproductive

There is considerable disparity across the UK higher education sector in terms of the size of an institution (based on enrolments), the revenue per institution, and the revenue per student. However, the average revenue per student is £15,500: similar to the Irish university sector (using an exchange rate of 0.88). But the UK funding per student is over €7,000 higher than the average funding per student in the Institute of Technology.

The correlation coefficient between funding per FTE student and university ranking in the UK is similar to Ireland: the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is -0.75. The correlation coefficient is significant at the 1% level.

Again, to make the argument less abstract: the top twenty ranked universities in the UK had an average revenue per student of £28,450, whereas the bottom twenty had an income per student of £9,127. The chart below shows the distribution of income per full-time equivalent student when the universities are sorted by their ranking. It is clear that the highest-ranked universities are funded to a much greater extent than the lowest-ranked universities.

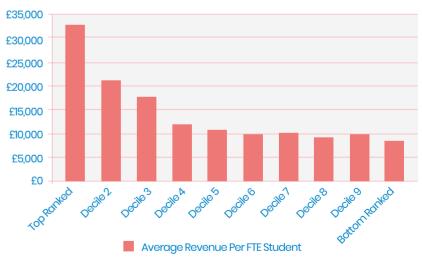


Figure 1: Distribution of average revenue per FTE student by rank decile (n = 131; 13 per decile). UK Universities

In the UK, the data suggests a strong relationship between the funding of a university and its success based on its ranking position.

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Impact on TU process and conclusions

Without an increase in funding, it is difficult to see how any tangible improvement in performance can result from a TU. This does imply a relationship between performance and funding, in opposition to one of the caveats above. An alternative argument is: If significant benefits can be realised by simply merging and re-designating existing institutions, then why wasn't this done decades ago?

This may impact on the better-performing IoTs/TUs from challenging the traditional university sector - the TU could be a process of averaging out the better-performing IoTs with weaker IoTs to create a 'mediocracy'.

The TU process is unlikely to resolve the regional economic imbalances and regional under-provision of higher education. Indeed, it might make the situation more difficult, as the expectations of local stakeholders are raised without giving the institutions the resources to deliver on the promises made on their behalf. The Munster Technological University website (www.mtu.ie) says, 'MTU graduates will experience enhanced employability both in Ireland and internationally, while the Technological University of the South East website (www.tuse.ie) says:

There is a strong between HEI funding and organisational success - but we can make no claims on causality.

It will provide leadership as the cohesive force at the centre of knowledge, research and innovation in the region and will also facilitate an external focus allowing the region to capitalise on other economic drivers, nationally and internationally. It will cultivate future generations of active and engaged citizens across the South East and will be a driver of social inclusion, social justice and of cultural and artistic activity in the coming decades.

This paper has shown there is a strong relationship between HEI funding and organisational success. However, we can make no claims on causality.

Unless there is a step change in the funding model, it is difficult to argue for any tangible improvement in performance from a TU.

Indeed, without a funding model, the TU could be counterproductive. The increased expectations created in key stakeholder groups will be difficult to reach, undermining the credibility of the institution.

ENDNOTES

- 1. Sources: Total FTE is from HEA 2016–17 Enrolment Data (part-time and remote = 0.5 of a full-time). Net revenue is from the most recent audited financial statements of the HEIs. Net revenue is revenue less pension fund deficit contribution where appropriate. Revenue per FTE is net revenue divided by total FTE. IoTs include the former IoTs that now make up TUD. Capital investment is current year and prior year fixed asset additions and committed capital projects from the most recent audited financial statements of the HEIs – this is a proxy for recent and likely capital investment in higher education.
- 2. The relationship is negative because as funding decreases (in numerical terms). ranking increases (in numerical terms – goes from, say, 5 to 12: this is an increase in numerical terms but is often conveyed as a fall in the rankings when discussed). The coefficient is less than -0.7 (greater than +0.7) \rightarrow the relationship between the

variables is considered to be strongly negative (strongly positive). See Saunders et al. (2009), p. 459.

3. This is not a fair average – the ranking systems are not the same; they have different sample sizes. However, the underpinning analysis is reflective of the data: UCC, UCD, and TCD are consistently ranked higher on average than NUIG, NUIM, UL, and DCU. On some of the rankings NUIG does buck the trend, ranking higher than UCC, but on others UCC does better, thereby restoring the old order.

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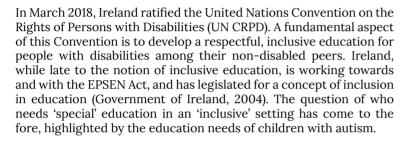


Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil."

- C.S. Lewis

A reality for learners with autism in mainstream primary schools

This article presents stark evidence that the current practice of inclusion of children with autism in mainstream primary schools reflects a containment approach, and is maintaining the idea that being a 'different' learner requires a 'special' approach and environment.



This article presents evidence of placement and educational experiences of children with autism that requires us to consider how inclusion is constructed and structured in our mainstream primary schools. It provides evidence of the stark reality that inclusion in practice reflects a 'containment' approach. Further, we are maintaining a concept that being a 'different' learner requires a 'special' approach and environment. This article argues that ethical sinkholes are created when there is little introspection on the ideology and practice of inclusion.

Intolerable phenonemon

A research project to explore the literacy practices of children with autism in our mainstream primary schools required a 'walk through' seven schools across Ireland. It aimed to explore how children with autism engaged and showed their ability to participate and relate to a multimodal society in both school and community structures. It was immediately apparent that in Ireland we have created an intolerable phenomenon and need to have a conversation about our ideologies and practices for better inclusion outcomes for children with autism.

We have undoubtedly made a positive step towards supporting families in the education of their children with autism and other developmental disabilities. In 2017, one thousand special education classes were established to provide an appropriate education for children with autism (Banks and McCoy, 2017). In the space of only two years this figure has increased to 1,500, according to our education minister (McHugh, 2019).



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Evidence from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE, 2018a) provides an estimate that 82% of special class provision is specific to autism support. Pressure for mainstream placement is again an issue. A news article recently drew attention to a lack of access to mainstream education, suggesting that some children are without a school place for the start of the school year 2019/2020 (O'Brien, 2019). Considerable government expenditure has been allocated to establishing special class provision for children and young people who have autism.

What constitutes inclusion?

So it is time to ask, Are we doing the 'right' thing or doing things right? What constitutes inclusion for children with autism in our mainstream primary school system? Dillenburger (2012) asks a pertinent question: Why reinvent the wheel? We know what inclusion is. No matter what research, policy, or practice document you read on the topic, it will state clearly that inclusion is about:

- having the same educational experiences as non-disabled peers
- having access to an authentic and appropriate curriculum
- connecting and belonging to your peers in a culturally and socially respectful manner.

So is this ideology of inclusion being achieved, or do we need to reinvent the wheel?

Do we need to reinvent the wheel?

A starting point is to review what we mean by an inclusive environment. Legislation mandates an 'inclusive setting', but 'inclusive environment' is not clarified in the EPSEN Act. There is also a clause in the Act that recognises the need for appropriateness of setting where the identified needs of the child dictate an alternative environment.

An initial exploration of the term 'inclusive environment' leads us to think that it is purely a matter of architecture. It is well documented that children with autism may present with complicated sensory difficulties and learning styles and patterns that are different from others, and therefore they may require support to engage and participate in education and to be socially included.

Established primary schools are asked to take on an autism classroom in an endeavour to provide access to education for local children. Funding is provided and classrooms are attached to existing building structures. Schools being newly constructed are required to ensure that a 'special' classroom is created within the new structure.

One of the challenges for children with autism is language and communication, which presents as a substantial barrier to integration and participation in social life. An aim in education therefore is surely to scaffold and support engagement with peers in authentic social contexts. Contemporary thinking on childhood and autism must embrace the notion of identity as an evolving construction of the self through interactions and engagement with society.

The lived experiences of all children, regardless of ability or disability, reflect the evolving person. The design structures of autism classrooms around Ireland present a very challenging reality. Six of the seven schools in this project show how architecture can create and embed exclusionary practices and generate other social vulnerabilities for these children. The project also documents how the social and emotional needs of children with autism are not articulated in the design structures of these classrooms.

Inclusion is about belonging

Young autistic people themselves have stated clearly in Goodall's (2018) research that inclusion is about belonging. While children with autism may have specific challenges with sensory issues and self-regulation, this doesn't warrant what Imrie and Kumar (1998, p. 365) call 'back door treatment'. Table 1 below presents some realities for our consideration. When reviewing this table, ask yourself:

- What is the intention of bringing children with autism into mainstream education?
- How is the construction of 'special' part of the inclusion process?
- Do you think a sense of belonging is being generated or established?
- Is this 'containment'?
- Is this what Imrie and Kumar call 'apartheid by design'? (1998, cited in Mitchell, 2014, p. 238)

Table 1: Data from all schools in the project

School data	
Age of building and position of classroom	The schools were built in the 1950s, 1970s, 1990s, and 2000s. They are one- and two-storey buildings with a variety of purpose-built prefabricated portable cabins and permanent structured classrooms as additions to the end of school buildings. All classes have an alternative entrance and exit.
Arrival to school	In all cases, most pupils are bussed to school on the school transport scheme with other autistic peers, and a bus transport SNA helps with transitions. All autistic pupils are then escorted through a separate entrance from mainstream peers. In two cases the bus arrives after all mainstream peers have started their school day, and collects the pupils again before the mainstream pupils exit the building.
Movement around school	Two of the schools have locked doors with no movement outside of the classroom. There are no yard or play opportunities with mainstream peers. Three of the schools have unlocked but lockable doors, there is some movement to other classes in mainstream for art-based activities, and some yard times occur. In two schools, there are no restrictions, and pupils with autism are assigned to mainstream with SNA support.

Evidence from the physical structure and placement of the autism classrooms is vital to the conceptualisation of inclusion and inclusive learning. The physical separation observed in the structure of these autism classrooms appears to create a predetermined notion of the behavioural needs of autistic pupils and the general continued 'normal' function of the mainstream system.

The locked and lockable doors, while serving the 'fright and flight' traits of children in anxious or stress-related states, compound the 'contained' status of these children. It might be evident that we in Ireland are doing the 'right' thing in a 'rights-based approach' to bringing children with autism into the structure of the mainstream – but are we answering an appropriate 'needs-based approach'? What is evidenced is that segregation remains a significant issue.

In Ireland, we have created an intolerable phenomenon and need to have a conversation about our ideologies and practices for better inclusion outcomes for children with autism.

So are we doing things right in these segregated autism spaces? We should ask: How do children with autism benefit from education in these settings?

Evidence from empirical research has given us a justification for an autism theoretical approach to teaching and learning. We have learned that a strong understanding of the theories of autism enables us to make good decisions on curricula design and pedagogical approaches for each child diagnosed with autism (Baron-Cohen, 2008; Guldberg, 2010; Barton and Harn, 2012; Powell and Jordan, 2012; Conn, 2016). An eclectic approach is advised, and autism-specific

approaches are evidenced in practice, such as interactive approaches (Dir™ Floortime), communicative approaches (PECS), integration approaches (LEAP), behaviour approaches (contemporary ABA), and discrete trial training (TEACCH) (O'Síoráin et al., 2018; Ring et al., 2018).

The investment in teacher education in Ireland for better outcomes for pupils with autism is a phenomenon in and of itself. In fact, Banks and McCoy (2017) suggest that 60% of the overall budget for special education in Ireland is spent on autism provision. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is inundated annually with applications from teaching professionals to upskill in the area of autism evidenced-based teaching and learning approaches. So:

- What does a snapshot of teaching and learning look like from the 'inclusive environments' outlined above?
- What educational and social experiences do children encounter in these setting?

Good autism practice promotes a pupil-centred approach to curriculum development, emphasising communication and interpersonal skills and the specific teaching of cultural norms and meanings. Functional skills are important but balanced with academic and life skills (Powell and Jordan, 2012, p. 21). Conn (2018) argues for 'favourable interactional ecologies', enabling children with autism to show capabilities and competences at tasks, using personal language constructs to build connections and understandings to their social situations. Physical activity and playful learning are essential elements in social and emotional learning.

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Tables 2, 3, and 4 below provide a snapshot of the observations of teaching and learning that took place in this research project. Three case examples are presented, with additional coding for anonymity of participants. When reviewing these tables, ask yourself:

- Is there evidence of communication and language learning?
- How are interpersonal skills being taught or modelled?
- Is new learning happening?
- Is play being supported and developed?
- How are group activities used to enhance children's responses?
- Are lessons about compliance or skills development?
- Are children with autism experiencing learning with non-disabled peers?

The study recorded 27 hours of observations (9 hours in each term) across each classroom. The observation tool used was High Scope IEA Pre-Primary Project Observation Schedules (2007), Child and Adult Observation. The observations provided a view of the classroom schedule as the sessions rolled out.

Each case presented below is a snapshot of the use of time and an assessment of the tasks based on Powell and Jordan's (2012) thesis that a balance of direct learning, life skills training, and functional activities is required in good autism teaching and learning. Observations provide evidence on direct teaching, functional activities, and general classroom routine.

Table 2: Case Example School 1 - Observation Term 2 (2)

Case Example School G: six pupils, one teacher, two SNAs			
Time	Activity	Learning: routine (life skills) or functional	Comments
9.00	Free play area	Functional	On arrival all children free to decide, all roam
9.10	Morning song / roll call	Routine	Same song and activities from term 1
9.15	Free choice	Functional	Free to decide what to do – all pupils roam the room
9.23	Motor sensory class for P(a)	Physical lesson: motor skills development	Individual session on structured physical activity – OT-directed
9.35	Independent desk work	Functional	3 designated tasks for fine motor and L–R tracking
9.50	Free play area	Functional	Free to play – 3 pupils roam, 1 pupil seeks book, 2 pupils seek computer
10.00	Lunch	Functional/routine	Watching video while eating
10.20	Yard	Functional	No peers
10.40	Music time	Listening and responding	Singing, clapping, and circle
10.50	Phonics	Listening and responding, reading	Jolly phonics on interactive white board
11.00	Independent desk work	Functional	As above with jolly phonics task – same for all learners

11.15	Ball pool	Sensory support, functional	2 learners at a time, 2 at motor skills, 2 remain in class on independent desk work
11.30	Free play area	Functional	Free to choose – as above
11.40	Music time	Using instruments and following instruction	Teacher-led activity
12.00	Observation ends		

Table 3: Case Example School 2 – Observation term 2(2)

Case Example School F: six pupils, one teacher, two SNAs			
Time	Activity	Learning: routine or functional	Comments
9.05	'Movement' class	Physical lesson: motor skills instruction	Teacher leads station work
9.25	Theraputty activity for P(c)	Functional with instruction	Using fine motor movements
9.32	Reading class P(d), P(e), P(b)	Reading and comprehension instruction	Teacher models, leads and directs learning
9.43	Free play	Functional	All move to play area, roaming and moving around toys, SNAs interact
9.50	Writing class with P(c) and P(a)	Formation of the letter 's' instruction	Teacher-led
10.00	Bingo word game – sight word task	Word identification task	Teacher leads
10.10	Yard time followed by small lunch	Routine	Yard with peers and SNAs
10.45	'Circle time' roll, weather, song	Routine, teacher uses questioning to check comprehension	SNAs away to break, teacher gives lead to 1 pupil, jobs are distributed
11.05	Story time	Reading strategies modelled	Teacher leads
11.15	Homework review with P(d), Maths instruction	One-to-one direct instruction	Teacher and SNAs on one-to-one and small group tasks
11.50	Yard and big lunch	Routine	Yard with peers and SNAs
12.00	Observation ends		

Table 4: Case Example School 3 – Observation term 2 (2)

Case Example School E: Twelve pupils, two teachers, four SNAs				
Time	Activity		Learning: routine or functional	Comment
9.00	Pupils arrive to autism class, T1 and T2 review homework journal and send all learners to mainstream classes. Classes held across school – all autism pupils in mainstream education with peer class, except one pupil		Very busy session, all pupils attended to and SNA schedules distributed, all movement to specific classrooms	
	Group Maths work with P(a), P(b), P(e) and peer from mainstream. T2 leads. 1 SNA supporting	learni in mir in hou T2 rev	to-peer ng: seconds nute, minutes ur, riews time this morning	Teacher leads activity and asks questions, latency is observed and teacher waits for answer
11.45	Maths cont. T1 leads	and lo currer and to sched	nal schedules ocating nt time ask, SNA lules, T lules, pupil lules	Transition activity move from clock to schedules
	Maths continued. T1 and T2 co-teach	timeta and li with p		Transition – 2 teachers team-teach – both lead lesson
	Maths continued. P(c) and P(d) join group. 2 more SNAs join	transi indep	with T and tions to endent work ns with task	6 pupils now in lesson, teachers remain team-teaching, 2 SNAs join group and direct 2 pupils each on task
12.30	Observation ends			

From the tables above it is evident that inclusion is approached very differently across all three classrooms.

There is evidence in some autism classes that there is no movement of pupils outside of the class and that no social or play interactions occur with non-disabled peers. In fact, the lack of supported play and direct teaching indicates that little learning is experienced. Doing the same things in the same way, singing the same songs and engaging in the same actions daily does not promote new learning, thinking, or understanding of their social worlds. Significant teaching and social opportunities are lost in some case examples. There is evidence that little introspection on teaching and learning is occurring, and more significantly that an inappropriate concept of an inclusion approach is holding pupils in a confined space.

What is the purpose of bringing learners with autism into this mainstream school? No interpersonal skills are being developed; no connecting to themselves, to their peers, or to the outside world is happening. Play as

a free choice for children with autism is problematic, and evidence in this project posits the need to support and prompt play. Teachers in some cases were not observed as 'play partners', and opportunities to relate socially through play were lost (Theodorou and Nind, 2010). This approach to inclusion and autism is creating greater vulnerabilities for these children, their parents, and the community at large.

There is evidence in some autism classes that there is no movement of pupils outside of the class and that no social or play interactions occur with non-disabled peers.

In some autism classes there is a focused approach to teaching and learning, and the pupils experience a variety of learning in groups among their fellow autism classmates. Language and communication skills are being taught but at a very low level, and opportunities for 'free talk' and conversation starters are minimal; this has implications for interpersonal skills development. The teaching tasks are action-based and reflect the academic learning needs of the group. The pupils do get to play with non-disabled peers during break times, but there was no evidence of structuring play and playful experiences to enable the pupils to engage with peers and learn social rules.

Teaching and learning in some settings are very intense, with six tasks occurring in an hour. Pupils are well settled and transition well between tasks, enabling the teacher to engage learners in high levels of learning. However, questions arise. Why are learners not moving into mainstream for academic work? Why are mainstream learners not coming to learn alongside these learners? How is the construction of 'special' part of inclusion in this school? Could a review of pupils' growing capabilities change the function of this classroom over time?

In one school all pupils are supported in learning in their mainstream class and return to the autism classroom for specifically targeted lessons to enable them to remain in mainstream at a good social and academic level. Team teaching is evidenced, and the use of scheduled SNA movement means

The social and learning needs of children with autism are not articulated in the design structures of these classrooms, and the lack of opportunity to develop a sense of belonging is compounding difference.

that higher levels of support are available as the lessons and tasks increase in complexity. Teacher time is well spent on direct teaching and management of learning. Pupils in this school gain a sense of belonging, because they exist in the mainstream mindset of all teachers and pupils. A can-do attitude exists, and children with autism are enabled to gain the soft skills or key competencies (McGuinness, 2018) necessary for twenty-first-century living.

Conclusion

This research project proposes that segregation remains a significant issue for a significant number of pupils with autism in mainstream education. The findings indicate clearly that the structure of the classrooms and positioning

of the units happen before pupils enrol, and therefore set in motion a persistent negative expectation for problematic behaviour associated with autism. The social and learning needs of children with autism are not articulated in the design structures of these classrooms, and the lack of opportunity to develop a sense of belonging is compounding difference.

The evidence from this project suggests that some children with autism are limited in their literacy practices and learning experiences by the bounded nature of the 'autism' built environments and by 'autism' teaching and learning. This project calls for an urgent national collaborative focus on supporting teachers in autism classrooms to reflect critically on inclusion ideologies and practices for better pupil engagement and social learning opportunities. 'Inclusive practices' without introspection create exclusion and other vulnerabilities for autistic learners.

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ADHD handbook authored by primary teaching students

Titled Including Pupils with ADHD: A Practical Guide for Student Teachers on School Placement, the handbook was compiled by final year students on the DCU's BEd (primary) programme and focuses on inclusion in schools and classrooms. The student teachers had experience of working with pupils with ADHD on at least one of their placements over the four years of their course.

The co-authors believe the handbook will support student teachers to consider their planning, and therefore their teaching, to effectively include a pupil with ADHD in all lessons. Furthermore, they believe that much of the advice will be applicable in any primary classroom and therefore the handbook could potentially support the work of all student teachers on placement.

The handbook was launched by Dr. Anne Looney, Dean of DCU's Institute of Education, who said it was a ground-breaking initiative. Published jointly by DCU and ADHD Ireland, it is available at: http://hadd.ie/article/including-pupils-adhd-new-booklet-dcu-and-hadd-adhd-ireland

A Universal Design Approach

Universal design has the potential to transform the educational system to be an equitable and inclusive environment that celebrates the idea that 'it's normal to be different', through co-designing a learning experience between the learner and the educators that is rewarding and empowering for all.

A vibrant school can nourish an entire community by becoming a source of hope and creative energy. ... Poor schools can drain the optimism from all the students and families who depend on it by diminishing their opportunities for growth and development. (Robinson, 2015)

Background

In the context of education, we rarely consider ourselves as designers. We have managers, quality assurance officers, educational technologists, professional services staff, senior administrators, professors, lecturers, teachers, heads of departments, educational developers, technicians, estate managers, sports officers, students' union officers, chancellors, deans, directors, heads of school, and principals, all involved in design – but there is an inherent reluctance to call ourselves designers.

Yet we are all responsible for the design of the educational experience of all our learners. In Ireland, a recent Higher Education Authority report (HEA, 2019) suggests that our current design reproduces societal inequalities, while a UK study has shown how deeply these differences extend for people living in regional areas:

Rich and poor areas in Britain are not only divided by wealth, income or access to public services. The differences now extend into the very DNA of people living there. In some ways, this new inequality reaches deeper than before. As a society, we have not yet come to terms with this, or thought seriously enough about how to deal with it. It's time we start.

While this paper recognises the complexity of educational systems, described by Snyder (2013) as multiple systems administered through a traditional approach, with the focus on top-down versus bottom-up initiatives, it argues that now is an opportune time to consider a more organic model. Such a model would focus on an ecological systems theory of human development and recognise the many layers of our environment that influence our development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Central to implementing this system, we suggest that a universal design approach can enable the transformation of education from an inequitable learning environment for many students to a more holistic, student-centric experience.



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THEMES

The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports 'systematic challenges' in global educational systems, such as under-resourced supports and an ad hoc division of responsibility across the government departments of education, health, and social protection, leading to too much focus on 'special' supports rather than inclusion and equity (WHO, 2011). There has also been a lack of legislation and targets on inclusion, compounded by school-level barriers including problems with physical access, inflexible and inappropriate curricula and pedagogy, inadequate teacher training, and discriminatory attitudes, which are seriously undermining inclusion and reinforcing marginalisation.

The WHO argues that a paradigm shift is needed to address these significant problems, moving away from just 'accessibility' – which provides basic access and usability of facilities, products, and services for people with disabilities – to a universal design (UD) approach that enables independence and social participation for all through continual improvement in all contexts.

The WHO's International Classification of Function (ICF) offers a personcentred system to understand the functional ability of learners entering education in different contexts, through a useful distinction between performance and capacity. Common to the ICF, both UD and UDL (Universal Design for Learning) focus on the interaction between person and environment (Bencini et al., 2018). The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, 2006, endorses UD as the preferred approach to inclusion and advocates that it should frame national policies on the design of environments, products, services, and information communication technologies (ICT).

The concept of UD can be traced back to the internationally recognised architect, product designer, and educator Ron Mace in the USA in the 1970s. Mace, himself a wheelchair user, believed that architects should design environments to be 'usable by everyone to the greatest extent possible'. He and his colleagues developed the Seven Principles of Universal Design to guide better and more inclusive design of environments, products, and ICT.

These principles are now widely used across the globe and here in Ireland and are the bedrock of the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD), which was established through legislation in 2005. The legislation defines UD as 'the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability'. In brief, the seven principles are:

Equitable use	Design is accessible and useful for people with diverse abilities, e.g., information, products, and services in formats accessible for a broad range of abilities, disabilities, ages, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.
Flexibility in use	Design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities, e.g., the design provides a choice to read or listen in class or through a digital recording of the textbook.
Simple and intuitive	Design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level, e.g., testing in a predictable, straightforward manner.

Perceptible information	Design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities, e.g., an emergency alarm system with visual, aural, and kinaesthetic characteristics.
Tolerance for error	Design minimises hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions, e.g., a software program that provides guidance when the student makes an inappropriate selection.
Low physical effort	Design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue, e.g., software with on-screen control buttons that are large enough for students with limited fine motor skills to select easily.
Size and space for approach and use	Appropriate size and space are provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility, e.g., an adjustable table and work area that is usable by students who are right- or left-handed or have a wide range of physical characteristics and abilities.

A UD system recognises the multiple layers in the ecological framework that affect human development, in particular in the educational ecosystem, at multiple levels:

- Micro level: Individual needs and abilities catered through teaching practices, classroom design and layout, and technologies, including assistive technologies. Learning resources and spaces, shifting the focus of education from institutional to individual learners, reorientating education towards the user and user involvement in the co-design of their own education.
- A universal design approach can enable the transformation of education.
- Meso level: Institution level covering governance, policies, and procedures, as well as linking to families and community-based initiatives, now known to be critical for growing and sustaining innovative learning.
- Macro level: Establishing directives and legislative acts, developing standards, promoting awareness, and ensuring the diffusion of universal design and its adoption at national and local educational system levels.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was introduced into education by the work of Rose and Meyer, who recognised that many of the resources and adaptations needed for students with disabilities could be applied across the curriculum and would benefit all students. They wanted to improve education for all learners through innovative use of modern multimedia technology and contemporary research in the cognitive neurosciences.

UDL is a proactive method for designing and delivering flexible approaches to teaching and learning. It recognises that all students bring unique social and academic backgrounds to the classroom, and that disability lies not with the individual but with environments that are disabling. By understanding the why, what, and how of learning, it is possible to design materials and methods to accommodate all learners with a diverse range of abilities, characteristics, and preferences without the need to retrofit

or remove the student from the classroom. Based on UD, the principles of UDL provide a framework to ensure:

- multiple means of representation: give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge
- multiple means of expression: give learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know
- multiple means of engagement: tap into learners' interests, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation.

In Reach Everyone, Teach Everyone (2019), Tobin and Behling argue that UD can enable many schools, colleges, and universities to move from simply 'doing inclusion' or 'doing diversity' to providing an inclusive learning experience that benefits all students, reducing barriers to learning while maintaining academic rigour.

These principles, when applied in whole or in part, can have profound effects on learners' lives, experiences, and expectations. Because we must question our 'taken for granted' sense of reality – Jonathon Mooney (2019) writes eloquently of his own struggles with dyslexia: 'I left that school asking myself, what do we miss – what do we wilfully ignore, misunderstand, fail to know – about ourselves and others when we make difference the problem. Everything, I think.'

Many of the resources and adaptations needed for students with disabilities would benefit all students.

The challenges of designing a modern education sector are global. In Ontario, 'there has been no serious rethinking of the design of the entire post-secondary system by those in a position to do something about it since the 1960s' (Clark et al., 2009, p. 16). In the US, Gilbert et al. (2018) write that 'in the coming years, long-standing models of higher education that prefer tradition and stability will be supplemented, if not displaced, by

new models that embrace organisational innovation, responsivity, and adaptation. Design thinking offers important pathways for shaping these important new models.' In Ireland, CEUD has been developing UD and UDL guidance and standards through a range of initiatives, its motto being 'It's normal to be different' (CEUD, 2017).

Why do we need universal design for education?

To date, mainstreaming has involved fitting students into a subject- and content-centred process, with the success of 'integration' or 'participation' measured against norms rather than individual ability and growth. The aim of inclusion, according to the HEART study (Howgego et al., 2014, p. 7), is to move beyond simply focusing on 'access' to an appropriate and responsive educational system, with fundamental changes in teaching and learning methods.

In Ireland, a report for the National Council of Special Education (NCSE) on the provision of assistive technology (AT) found the system to be reactive, slow, and failing to include the family and the opinions of the student. Rather than focusing on their functional needs, students must be assessed and diagnosed with a disability before the requisite technology is provided for access to the curriculum. The NCSE report says that many current problems could be alleviated and substantial monies saved by adopting a UD approach, where planning and designing an inclusive environment from the start ensures a supportive and inclusive educational journey for all students.

Craig Calhoun (2002, p. 6), referring to Pierre Bourdieu, who wrote extensively on education and its impact on social inequality, remarks:

His awareness of what his classmates and teachers did not see - because it felt natural to them - informed his accounts of the centrality of doxa - the preconscious taken-for-granted sense of reality that is more basic than any orthodoxy - and of misrecognition in producing and enabling social domination.

McLeskey et al. (2014) outline the following barriers that continue to exist in education for many students, including those with disabilities and other marginalised groups: a lack of understanding of inclusion among many educationalists, a failure to recruit and retain qualified staff, an inability to modify the curriculum or design new curriculum to ensure inclusivity, and the segregation of students such as those with significant intellectual and behavioural disabilities, who are often located in separate sites.

As Rose and Meyer (2005) write, current education systems are ineffective for students 'at the margins', particularly students with disabilities or exceptionally talented students. This paradoxically highlights the weaknesses in the current educational system and curricula that impede teaching and learning for all. Presently, children who are said to have 'special' education needs may be assigned to 'special' classrooms, schools, or other facilities, separating them from their peers and contributing further to their isolation.

Many current problems could be alleviated and substantial monies saved by adopting a UD approach.

'Global inclusionism', Le Fanu argues, has led to the withdrawal of support through the closure of special schools without first investing in the development of support systems for inclusive learning with the mainstream schools, leaving many children in a worse situation. UD transforms the pressures of diversity into opportunities for all learners, because it does not resist diversity as the traditional curriculum, largely centred on the printed, by insisting that all learners fit the one mould. Instead, UD recognises that diversity in learning abilities and styles can be an important asset if educationists are willing to reconsider how curricula and schools are designed and how teaching is practised.

Marmot suggests 'proportionate universalism': that we resource and deliver universal services at a scale and intensity proportionate to need. This approach aims to improve education for the whole population, while simultaneously improving the education of the most disadvantaged at a faster rate. It recognises the continuum of need and the greater needs of some, resulting from social, cultural, and economic disadvantage. It requires understanding of the impact of social inequalities on educational outcomes, while recognising that the educational journey needs to be designed to be universal.

Central to Marmot's view is the recognition that disadvantage starts before birth and accumulates throughout life. It acknowledges the importance of policy objectives that prioritise giving every child the best start in life, with all children and adults given the opportunity to maximise their capabilities, control over their lives, a chance of fair employment, and a healthy standard of living, while developing sustainable places and communities.

The future

In designing environments that are universal, inclusive, and integrated, it is simply more cost-effective to have a range of technology in place (Wynn et al., 2016). Providing mainstream technologies that have built-in accessibility features such as voice recognition, text-to-speech output, modifications such as Braille and alternative formats to print will substantially decrease the costs and time of individual assistive-technology solutions.

Class design can include 'breakout spaces' for children who may have behavioural issues, as well as adaptations to physical spaces such as ramps, accessible toilets, and sound-field systems. Supports for students in classrooms such as note takers need to be mainstreamed as a provision for all students as a more cost-effective solution. In many respects, proactive

changes in a UD framework can transform the educational

environment. A good example of this is the Access Inclusion Model (AIM), developed and implemented by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, which takes universal as the starting point.

Responding to these design challenges as a collective rather than a hyper-competitive sector is worth greater consideration. To achieve this ambition, we must bridge the gap between knowing and doing. Knowing how to do something is easy today, but being prepared to bring a

potentially magical experience to our audience of learners is very different. This was a key theme of the international congress Universal Design and Higher Education in Transformation, held in Dublin in 2018 (UDHEIT, 2018).

We must be committed, connected, and generous and design the equivalent of the 'Wild Atlantic Way' of educational experiences for all our learners (McNutt, 2015). Ireland's newest university designed its campus on UD principles, and Technological University Dublin was honoured to receive the Recognition of Excellence Award from CEUD for its three founding institutions, IT Blanchardstown, DIT, and IT Tallaght and the university's ongoing commitment to embed UD at macro, meso, and micro levels. It is interesting to note that the HEA reported recently that the 'socio-economic profile of the student body at the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (now part of Technological University, Dublin) most closely mirrors that of the national population' (HEA, 2019).

An ambitious agenda at an important juncture in Irish history in how we address the inherent systemic inequalities in our design of education provision will have profound implications for generations to come. To bring about the necessary change, our response must be emotional - we must feel the need for change and challenge our own values, beliefs, and assumptions.

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THE FUTURE OF IRISH EDUCATION

The disruptive forces that will rock our system



The pace of change is dramatic. We have longer life spans, increased global competition, and the huge impact of technology and artificial intelligence on future jobs. Irish education needs to adapt and innovate to remain relevant in the future.

5-

Peter Cosgrove Future-of-work expert

Introduction

It has never been a more exciting but also potentially a more challenging time for Irish education. The world is more connected, and technology is reshaping all parts of business and society, and has its eyes firmly focused on the education sector. Competition has always been strong for well-educated talent, but never before have there been so many innovative ways to learn.

While history is great at helping us with lessons from the past, we do need to think differently when it comes to the future of education. The pace of change is not linear, and it is vital we realise that many of the structures we have may need to be challenged for us to remain competitive, innovative, and able to give future generations the best education options. The Irish education system will need to change and adapt, and given the rapid pace of change across society, we will need to move faster than we are comfortable with.

Globalisation

The world has become a much smaller place. Look at how the pace of change has increased. Britain took 154 years to double its economic output, while China and India have done it in twelve and sixteen years respectively, each with 100 times as many people. In other words, economic acceleration is roughly ten times faster than in the Industrial Revolution and is 300 times the scale – so we are looking at an economic force 3,000 times as large.

It's fair to say that the world is changing faster than we can comprehend. The speed of change is being supercharged by technology, which is changing the nature of almost everything and is proving difficult to keep up with. These changes will have profound effects on the future of work, jobs, and skills.

Intel's CEO was quoted as saying that if you compared Intel's first microchip in 1971 to its latest chip on the market today, you would see that its latest chip offers 3,500 times more performance, is 90,000 times more energy-efficient, and is about 60,000 times cheaper. If we applied these developments to the car industry, the 1971 Volkswagen Beetle would today be able to go 300,000 mph, get 2 million miles per gallon, and cost 4 cents!

This rapid change is causing huge disruption in industry and jobs around the world. Look at the disruption that has already happened: the largest hotel company in the world is now Airbnb, and it does not own any hotels; the largest car company is Uber, and it does not own any cars; and the largest publisher is Facebook, and it does not publish anything. All are less than twenty years old. Jobs and livelihoods are being affected faster than ever before. We need to ask ourselves, what exponential changes can we envisage for the education sector?

Jobs

There are many studies and surveys about jobs being lost to artificial intelligence and robotics. The most famous is Frey and Osborne from Oxford predicting 47% of all jobs potentially being displaced by technology. We can already see this starting to happen – drones and driverless cars will have a huge impact on jobs. If you looked at a map of the US in 1978 and plotted the number one job in each state, you would see a huge variety: farmer, teacher, secretary, machine operator, truck driver, or bookkeeper. Roll the clock forward to 2014, when they last looked at this, and 41 of the 50 states have truck driver as the number one job - and we already have some driverless trucks on the road! That is over 3 million jobs that we know will be lost in the near future.

It is not just the blue-collar jobs: whether in accountancy, law, or medicine, many jobs may be taken over by technology. Many roles in accountancy and law are very processoriented and are being replaced by artificial intelligence. How does a human compete against a machine that can work twenty-four hours a day, never gets sick, never gets tired, and never makes a mistake? The answer is that we

Many roles in accountancy and law are being replaced by artificial intelligence.

cannot compete in those sorts of jobs, but we need to focus on jobs that use unique human skills. As the MIT economist David Autor puts it: 'If it's just a technical skill, there is a reasonable chance it can be automated, and if it is just being empathetic or flexible, there is an infinite supply of people, so a job won't be well paid. It's the interaction of both that is virtuous.'

The World Economic Forum, in its Future of Jobs report, highlighted that the key future skills would include complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, and decision-making. It also estimated that 65% of children entering primary school will find themselves in occupations that today do not exist. What we cannot do is fret about what jobs may or may not exist. The reality is that while lots of jobs will be destroyed, many new jobs will be created. Agriculture and farming used to be 40% of the economy; now it's less than 4%, but we found many new industries to employ people, and this will continue to happen even if we cannot imagine what these are.

The goal is not to predict the future but to equip the next generation of students for this future. Computers will be great at giving us the answers, but we humans need to be asking better questions, and that is where education comes in. Where does this lead educators and the future of education? How do we prepare students for a world that is changing so rapidly that we cannot predict future jobs?

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Education or trade

More and more we hear companies complaining that the graduates of the future do not have the skills that they need. When you look more closely, what they are often saying is that they want the universities to train students to be ready when they join the workforce. This has never been the role of schools or universities, and should not be; all the talk about coding in schools is somewhat overblown. The reality is that all coding jobs could disappear in twenty years, as machines will do it at a thousand times the speed.

That said, coding should be learned not for a job but for the skills you gain in complex problem-solving and critical thinking. We need to focus on the learning, not on what job we will create at the end of it. Few of us who do algebra will actually use it for our job in the future, but it is mental weighttraining. It improves your ability to think logically, helping you become whatever you might want to be. We need to equip students to be ready for a flexible and agile working lifestyle, not for a particular job.

The flipside of the idea of a university education is that we also need to equip many who will not go to third level. We must ensure that apprenticeship

> programmes keep up with the pace of change in jobs and skills. This may require a much more agile approach to apprenticeships and training schemes.

> While apprenticeships seem to suffer from snobbery, and there is an argument to rebrand the name, this will be only a minor concern compared to the lack of applicable courses in twenty years if we do not look up and out at what other countries are doing to stay relevant. This is an area where we may need to look at wholesale change.

Technology is a double-edged sword: there are huge areas that can support education, but there are still huge concerns around the impact of time on screens.

Technology

It is a now a regular occurrence to hear of someone getting knocked down because they were crossing the road while on their phone, or having a car accident because of texting and driving. In some countries they have split pavements in two, with a text lane and a non-text lane for walking. So while technology has lots of positives, we also need to be somewhat wary of it. It is a double-edged sword: there are huge areas that can support education, but there is also a danger that we think technology is a panacea.

There is no doubt that technology is enabling education online for those who do not have easy access. It is supporting teaching with excellent tutorials and videos, and there are many online learning platforms like Coursera or Khan Academy which support the learning environment. It is important therefore to keep up with ways to improve how education is offered. But this needs to be balanced with the growing battle of screen addiction among our kids.

We now have more schools adopting the iPad instead of school books, and many have already anointed this a great success although it is much too early to judge. I worry that we move too quickly, and just because we can do things does not always mean we should. There are still huge concerns around time on screens, the poorer learning experience on screens, and even the impact that screens have on REM sleep. Though I am not a Luddite, I do think we should be considering these factors before we move everyone to screens.

One of the most important skills of the future will be creativity. One step before being creative is often to be bored and alone with your thoughts. The moment you give someone a screen, they are never bored, as these are 'weapons of mass distraction'. One of the key additions to our school education programme should be a more philosophical approach - how we teach pupils how to think as opposed to preparing them for the workforce.

One of the most exciting areas of technology will be the imaginative and creative ways there will be to learn. Students can now be transported anywhere via the internet and even more magically via virtual and augmented reality. The walls of the classroom are no longer a barrier, as technology enables new ways of learning, communicating, and working collaboratively. Students can learn about the rainforest by following the expedition of scientists in the region, watching a livestream of their expedition, reading their blog posts, viewing their photos, emailing questions to the scientists, and even talking live with them via Skype.

We now have access to every teacher giving every lecture online. This could improve teaching immeasurably, as teachers use these resources to support and enhance their own courses. Schools in time will go further by offering live streaming and online classes.

One of the most important skills of the future will be creativity.

Role of parents and educators

The terms 'helicopter' and 'lawnmower' parenting have become more in vogue as parents increasingly take on the challenges set for their children. Imagine a beautiful butterfly struggling to squeeze its way out of a crack in its cocoon. It strives to get out of a hole that looks too small, and it seems to work for ages and get nowhere. After a long struggle it seems to give up. Imagine that you decide to use a pair of scissors to help the butterfly escape, but instead of opening its wings and flying, it falls to the ground. The struggle to get out of the cocoon is nature's way of getting fluid to the wings, which is so necessary to strengthen them for flight.

Parents have such a huge role in their child's education, but they also must let the child struggle, make mistakes, and learn. For any of us who remember the story of Odysseus, you will recall that he goes on a journey and is tested to the limits of his imagination. He is rescued in the end by Athena, his protector. Athena, it turns out, created the storm to send him off course in the first place. She forces him to improvise, change direction, and problemsolve. Parents need to let their students face their own challenges, as that is part of growing up.

This leads on to access to third level and the inordinate number of students who feel they have to go to university. If so many of the purported future key skills are all about questioning and problem-solving, and many Arts courses like history and philosophy give those skills in abundance, why is Arts not seen by many as a first choice?

We still have that dreaded phrase, 'Don't waste your points', which often means students eschew Arts courses as they cannot see a specific career at the end of it, or they feel they need to use their points to take a higher-points course. With children born today potentially going to work until they are seventy-five or eighty years old, we need to set education up for the lifetime of the individual.

Career guidance and equality of opportunity

There are limited opportunities currently for career guidance teachers to upskill themselves on the rapidly changing job market. The top ten skills in demand today did not exist twenty years ago, so we need to educate both career guidance teachers and, just as importantly, parents on the new jobs and skills in the workplace and those that need to be developed. In most schools and colleges there is inadequate funding given to career guidance.

The idea that many students either finish at Leaving Cert or after college and never learn again will be a thing of the past. With such rapid change, it will be normal for the next generation to have over ten careers in their lifetime, and this highlights the importance of engendering a love of learning. Now,

more than ever, with more people not going into traditional jobs but perhaps looking at freelancing, the gig economy, a portfolio career, or a career that did not exist five years earlier, the career guidance industry needs more funding and support to equip them in such a rapidly changing world.

With much more focus on STEM subjects, there need to be more role models in girls' schools so that girls can recognise their own potential. Boys effectively have the 'privilege' of predominantly seeing men leading in the workforce (and elsewhere) and very few men as the primary caregiver. The impact of gender stereotyping is particularly pronounced in relation to STEM subjects and careers.

To ensure that all students are gaining access to the best careers, we need at a very early stage to address the unconscious biases in society that will affect girls and the choices they may make. We also need to address the potential challenge that single-sex education is having on subject choice and more holistically on children's ability to work alongside the other gender.

Role of sleep

Matthew Walker, a sleep scientist, has provided us with huge research on the importance of sleep – not just for our health but for our ability to retain information better. There is certainly a growing trend to start school earlier, and Walker has warned of the dangers of this approach and how it is far from conducive to teenagers. He cites a study of a school in Minnesota that changed its start time from 7.35 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. and showed an almost 20% increase in the students' state exam scores.

Walker's research highlights that the ability to retain information is closely linked to quality of sleep, and the earlier starts were very disruptive to teenagers. Sleep is a growing issue with the addiction to screens, the busier

A key addition to our school education programme should be a more philosophical approach - how do we teach pupils how to think as opposed to preparing them for the workforce.

24-7 lifestyle, and the longer working hours of parents. We also need to look at the value of some of the homework assigned to children. Much of the work given is time-consuming but not always very beneficial educationally.

Conclusion

Change has never happened so fast, but it will never happen so slowly again. Irish education is at a critical time. Many will hear this and say that we have heard it before, but just look around at every area of your life and you can see seismic changes happening. We are no longer operating in an Irish context: we are operating in a connected global world, and we need to take advantage of this but also be aware of the challenges it may pose. We have to embrace the idea of lifelong learning, and not just a university or further education course after school. Education and learning will have to be something that is happening throughout our lives.

Technology is going to be a massive catalyst for change, but first we need to work out what we want this technology to do. We need to be careful about adopting new solutions before we consider some of the unintended consequences of doing so. We also need to be conscious of the separate but intertwining roles of government, education, and institutions. There needs to be more cross-pollination, but first there needs to be a common goal and objective.

I want the next generation to take advantage of the exciting changes to give them a great education experience. However, it still needs to be a school experience. They need to be bored, they need to do repetitive tasks to build concentration and resilience, and they need to have time away from technology to learn how to think.

The education sector is at a very exciting juncture, but the teacher will remain the key conduit to make learning a rewarding and quality experience. It will be up to government in partnership with other benefactors to support them as they hold the future of our society in their hands. The future of Irish education will have to change, but we have all the right talent to enable this to happen if we open our minds and then put our minds to it.



The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it.

- Steve Jobs



Speakers at the 'Japan Education Forum for Sustainable Development Goals', which took place in Tokyo in February 2019.

Professor Mathias Urban, Director of the Early Childhood Research Centre DCU (2nd from left), was invited keynote speaker.

The event was part of the framework programme connected to the Japanese presidency of the T20 and G20 summit.

The conviction in this chapter is likely to trigger epiphany moments as the penny drops that radical and systemic change is required in our approach to Early Childhood Care and Education.

WINDS OF CHANGE?

A tale of intended and unintended consequences



In policy and practice it has been an eventful year for early childhood education and care in Ireland. This article outlines the most important events, developments, and controversies in Irish ECEC in 2019. It looks at the choices made and those that lie ahead, and considers the implications for future developments.



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Preface

2019 has been an eventful year for policy and practice in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Ireland, and perhaps not an easy one to give a coherent account of. Before venturing into my subjective perspective on the markers of another year of change, it is pertinent to mention a global milestone for our field: the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The decades since 1989 have seen unprecedented attention to young children and their development. Many countries have introduced ambitious policies to address ECEC and initiatives to establish and support early childhood development programmes. In the process, as I have discussed elsewhere (Urban, 2014, 2015), policymakers have moved their focus from the individual child (who has to be cared for and educated) to an entire critical period in human life. Early childhood – the phase of life from birth to eight years – has become what we might call a 'matter of concern' (Latour, 2004).

The importance of this shift cannot be overestimated. It has resulted, in principle, in the acknowledgement that we all share collective responsibility for the youngest members of our societies. Going beyond the questions of policymaking, it is a reminder of the ethical imperative of being human in a dramatically changing world. Woodhead (1996) argues succinctly that realising children's rights is much more than a legal obligation, something adults do *for* children. It is a critical element of what it means to be human:

Children are not incomplete human beings to be shaped into society's mould. They have needs and aspirations of their own, and rights which must be respected. Above all, their childhood is an opportunity. Each young child has a unique potential for development of human capacities, for communication and cooperation, for skill and feeling, for reason and imagination, for practicality and spirituality, for determination and compassion. These themes are not new. The status and importance of human childhood has been widely recognised in traditions of nurturance, training and initiation throughout the world, among societies that are economically, religiously, and politically diverse. What is new is that these themes are being widely articulated and discussed, researched and written about. The proper care of

CHAPTER 1 - EARLY CHILDHOOD

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children is no longer solely a matter of tradition, passed on from generation to generation by example, and through the counsel of elders. To a much greater extent, it is becoming a planned process, a self-conscious activity of appraising and constructing environments that foster a new generation of young children. There are choices to be made and alternatives to consider. (p. 9)

Woodhead's words, while written with the global picture in mind, are as relevant to the Irish context today as when they were formulated over two decades ago. Society's relationship with young children, their families, and their communities manifests in the collective choices we make and the alternatives we choose to consider – or not. What choices have been made in Irish early childhood education and care in 2019, and what choices lie ahead? What alternatives have been considered or dismissed, and what are the implications for future developments?

Early childhood 2019 – key events and developments

Early childhood is an idea whose time has come. In Ireland it has been coming for some time. Not only does 2019 mark thirty years of recognition of children's rights, it is also twenty years since the White Paper on early childhood education *Ready* to *Learn* was published (DES, 1999), based on

John Coolahan's Report on the National Forum for Early Childhood Education (1998). Much of the shape of the Irish early childhood system today can be traced back to the vision laid out in this landmark report.

The following shortlist of important events in Irish ECEC is based as much on my own observations as it is on a straw poll of fellow early childhood scholars at my home university, DCU (thank you for your contributions, you know who you are!). The list of five is by no means complete, but I would argue that these events will be as influential for the future development of the sector as the White Paper was in getting us to where we are now.

The proper care of children is becoming a planned process, a self-conscious activity of appraising and constructing environments that foster a new generation of young children

- Woodhead

A holistic strategy with implications for ECEC

Following the launch of First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and Their Families in December 2018 (DCYA, 2018), the implementation of the most comprehensive vision ever for early childhood in Ireland has got seriously under way. As a long-term strategy, First 5 has the potential to become the blueprint for a fundamental change in how we realise *all* children's rights to education, care and development from birth.

Though it is not a dedicated strategy for ECEC, First 5's broad vision includes a commitment to build 'an effective early childhood system' as the fourth of its five goals. I read this as the Irish manifestation of what I have tentatively come to call a globally emerging 'systemic turn' (Powers and Paulsell, 2018; Urban et al., 2018) which recognises that early childhood services do not exist in isolation but require a 'competent system' of support that connects policy, practice, resourcing, professional preparation and development, and research across all layers of the system (Urban et al., 2011, 2012). Crucial elements of such a system are listed as building blocks of the strategy:

1. leadership, governance, collaboration

- 2. regulation, inspection, quality assurance
- 3. skilled and sustainable workforce
- 4. research, data, monitoring, and evaluation
- 5. strategic investment.

The litmus test for the ECEC element of *First* 5 will be whether it moves from ambition to action – and by how much. Early indications are mixed; they give reason for both hope and concern, as I will discuss below.

A workforce strategy for the early childhood sector

Professionalisation of the early childhood and care sector has been a thread running through the debates since 1999. Building on solid foundations (e.g., DES, 2010; Urban et al., 2017), and as part of the implantation strategy for First 5, the Department for Children and Youth Affairs has announced a Workforce Development Plan (WDP) for the sector. A steering group and stakeholder group have been established, and work is under way.

This was broadly welcomed by the sector, but the composition of the groups has led to legitimate criticism: while it is fully justified to have strong representation of government departments and bodies, it is questionable whether a high-level steering group for the reform of the early childhood workforce should have been established without representation from that workforce.

It is questionable whether a high-level steering group for the reform of the early childhood workforce should have been established without representation from that workforce.

Various groups that represent elements of the ECEC workforce are part of the stakeholder group, and effective protocols for consultation and communication between the groups have been set up. The expected outcomes of the process (to be published in 2020) will be a welcome alignment of professional roles, entry routes, and career pathways with international and European recommendations (Council of the European Union, 2019).

An autonomous body for the ECEC profession

My reading of the WDP process to date is that it is symptomatic of the fragmented and still under-organised early childhood sector. The collective ECEC profession, while comprising highly committed (and increasingly qualified) practitioners, has yet to mature (Miller et al., 2012). The WDP process has offered a welcome opportunity to initiate the development of a collective professional identity.

Following an invitation by DCU Early Childhood Research Centre and a group of senior early childhood advocates, three organisations representing significant parts of the workforce have formed a coalition. The Association of Childhood Professionals (ACP), PLÉ (the association of early childhood academics in higher education), and the trade union SIPTU formed a working group to establish an autonomous body for the ECEC profession. It published a joint statement that spells out the coalition's starting point and work plan:

We firmly believe that the development of a collective professional identity can neither be imposed nor achieved by influences that exist mainly outside that profession. Instead of 'professionalising' the workforce, it is government's responsibility to create the conditions for the profession to emerge and self-organise. We find our position supported by international evidence (e.g. governance and systems research, and a sound body of research into professional systems) and by examples of how other autonomous professions operate, in Ireland.

Central to the development of a collective professional identity of the early childhood education and care profession is the existence of a self-organised body that serves as a focal point for the profession.¹

What's in a name? The curious incident of the disappearance of education

For good reason, international policy documents, beginning with the first OECD Starting Strong report (OECD, 2001), have adopted the term ECEC to refer to our field:

Early childhood education and care refers to any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age, which may vary across the EU. It includes centre and family-day care, privately and publicly funded provision, pre-school and pre-primary provision.

ECEC sums up the hard-won consensus that education and care are inseparable in early childhood. It is the basis of professional practice for all early childhood educators. However, the authors of First 5 introduced a new terminology that sets Ireland apart from the international convention. The sector is now referred to as Early Learning and Care/School-Aged Childcare (ELC/SAC). The change was made without consultation with the profession and has sparked much disagreement. To me, both the renaming of an entire sector without consultation, and the reaction to it, indicate two critical issues in need of urgent addressing:

ECEC in Ireland has yet to become 'a profession thinking and speaking for itself'. We are still spoken to, and critical decisions are made for us, not with us.

- 1. The lack of an organised and articulate collective professional identity. ECEC in Ireland has yet to become 'a profession thinking and speaking for itself' (Urban and Dalli, 2012). Unlike other established professions, we are still *spoken* to, and critical decisions are made for us, not with us. I am confident that the new professional body, once established, will change this imbalance.
- 2. The absence of a broad public, professional, and political consensus on the *purpose* of our society's collective engagement with young children and, in consequence, the purpose of early childhood educators.

A detailed discussion of the implications and importance of terms is beyond the scope of this article. Nonetheless, I would like to sketch out a few pointers for the necessary debate:

- (Early) Learning: Children learn all the time (we all do), from the moment they are born, and arguably before birth. Learning is an active process through which children make sense of the world.
- (Early Childhood) Development summarises the unfolding of a child's inherent potential ontogenetics in interaction with the physical, social, spiritual, etc. world we are born into.
- (Early Childhood) Education is the purposeful interaction of adults
 with children to give orientation and direction to their learning (and
 their development, to some extent). It is, as Austrian educator and
 psychoanalyst Siegfried Bernfeld (Bernfeld, 1925, 1973) wrote, 'the
 sum total of the social reaction to the fact of ontogenetic postnatal
 development'.
- (Child) Care is a fundamental value for every human society. But is it valued? Or is it taken for granted as in under- and unpaid care work? The question of who cares, and whether or not we care, is fundamentally political (Cameron and Moss, 2007; Lynch et al., 2009).

While children develop and learn anywhere and all the time, *education* is a purposeful practice (and hence political and contested), based on values, interests, and judgements. As educators we have to position ourselves: What are our values? How do they relate to other possible positions in society? Paulo Freire (Figueiredo-Cowen and Gastaldo, 1995) insisted that educators must decide: Are we, through our educational practices, maintaining the status quo (i.e., inequality, injustice, oppression) – or are we educating for change (i.e., more just and equitable outcomes for *all* children)?

Scandals and isolated bad practice – or persistent dysfunction and a call for change?

Freire's insistence that we cannot educate without taking a stand leads me to my final observation on the critical events in our field in 2019. Six years after the last report of abusive practices in early childhood services, 2019 brought another *Prime Time* investigation into the breakdown of professional practice in Irish early childhood service, and the failure of the regulatory body to act on persistent abuse and maltreatment of children.

The Irish scandals might be more systemic than we want to admit.

The case of the Hyde and Seek crèche in Dublin triggered a flurry of activity, including calls for more rigid inspections and stronger powers for the inspecting body (Tusla) to shut down services that fail to adhere to legal requirements, existing regulations, and children's rights. While these are legitimate concerns that require immediate action, the question here is

much more profound. What could be framed as bad apples appears to me an indication of the more general state of the barrel. The critical questions arising from the scandal point to the general structure of the Irish early childhood education and care sector.

Internationally, the connection between over-reliance on private for-profit services and poor quality for children and families has long been established and reported (e.g., OECD, 2006, p. 46). Ireland, like other countries that rely on a market model, has responded with increased regulation and a system of inspections for services. However, examples from other countries show that the Irish scandals might be more systemic than we want to admit.

New Zealand has seen dramatic changes in its early childhood sector. Starting from a situation not dissimilar to ours (a diverse range of small, community-based private and voluntary services), the sector has been taken over by larger, international, for-profit chains that now provide more than half of all services . In correlation, the number of complaints about malpractice has risen sharply, from 247 in 2012 to 430 in 2018.² This has led to calls to 'turn the tide away from a privatised, profit-focused system's and to include systematic deprivatisation in the new strategic plan as a priority.

A similar debate, held in public, on the future structure of the early childhood education and care sector in Ireland has yet to be held. I am convinced that such a debate is necessary if we are serious about realising the aspiration of a sustainable, rights-based early childhood system that benefits all children, their families, and society as a whole.

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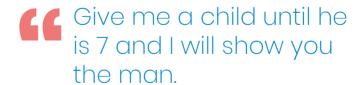
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- 1. www.ececprofessionals.ie/jointstatement.
- https://educationcentral.co.nz/reports-of-abuse-and-neglect-investigated-at-ece-services/.
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Aristotle

CURRICULUM PLANNING FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS

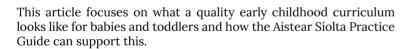
Playful, emergent, and inquiry-based learning

A curriculum for babies and toddlers is often difficult to conceptualise, raising questions such as: What does it look like? Where does it happen? Who develops it? This article looks at these questions and how using Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework can support this.

Introduction

From birth to three years is a critical stage of child development. As noted in First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families, 'the pace of growth and learning is unequalled at any other stage' (Government of Ireland, 2018, p. 23).

Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009b) and Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education [CECDE], 2006) support the learning and development of all children from birth to six years across a range of early childhood settings. In 2015, the NCCA established the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide, an online resource to support early childhood practitioners to develop and implement a curriculum underpinned by the principles of Aistear and Síolta.



A curriculum for babies and toddlers

Curriculum is defined in Aistear as 'all the experiences, formal and informal, planned and unplanned in the indoor and outdoor environment, which contribute to children's learning and development' (NCCA, 2009b, p. 54). Therefore, a curriculum for babies and toddlers must include the totality of children's experiences – the broad goals for their learning and development, the activities and experiences through which they can learn and develop, the approaches and strategies used to support and enable children to achieve their goals, and the environment in which all of this takes place. In essence, a curriculum for babies and toddlers is a reflection of their everyday lived experiences.

An emergent and inquiry-based curriculum

Aistear aims to help practitioners to plan and build a curriculum that supports children to develop positive dispositions, skills, attitudes, and values, as well as knowledge and understanding. In developing a curriculum, practitioners respond to children's



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interests and questions, extend their learning, and promote challenge and engagement through enjoyable and motivating experiences, be they planned, spontaneous, or regular daily care.

The Aistear Síolta Practice Guide notes that 'an emergent and inquiry-based curriculum uses children's and practitioners' interests, questions and experiences as starting points for curriculum planning'. Therefore, children's everyday routines and interactions, such as feeding, nappy changing, and learning to crawl, walk, explore, and play, form an integral part of curriculum planning for babies and toddlers.

In supporting early childhood practitioners to develop and implement an emergent and inquiry-based curriculum, the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide lists six pillars of practice that practitioners should consider: building partnerships with parents; creating and using the learning environment; learning through play; nurturing and extending interactions; planning and assessing using Aistear's themes; and supporting transitions. These are discussed in the sections below.

Children under three years of age have unique and distinct needs that set them apart from older children, so they need a specialised curriculum.

Interactions

The quality of early childhood experiences has a direct and long-term influence on children's learning and development (Hayes, 2007). Moreover, children under three years of age have unique and distinct needs that set them apart from older children, so they need a specialised curriculum that meets the individual needs of each child.

The Aistear Síolta Practice Guide emphasises the importance of adult–child interactions in meeting these needs. Practitioners who spend time caring for, playing with, and talking to babies

and toddlers are supporting the development of secure attachments. Babies and toddlers need a secure attachment to at least one adult in their setting. This relationship provides comfort, reassurance, and security. Respectful and consistent interactions increase the child's confidence and competence to respect, explore, develop, and learn.

Babies and toddlers interact and communicate non-verbally through movement, gestures, and facial expressions, and verbally through sounds and words. Practitioners need to be responsive to these cues in order to help children form secure attachments with their caregiver and progress their learning. Equally, babies and toddlers notice and respond to the non-verbal cues of their caregiver, such as tone of voice, body language, and responsiveness. They interpret these cues to form ideas and concepts about their own abilities and position in society; this, in turn, can influence the development of their learning dispositions, values, and attitudes.

To ensure that secure attachments are given priority in developing a curriculum for babies and toddlers, a 'key-person' approach is used in many early childhood settings. This approach aims to support children's learning and development by ensuring that children experience warm, responsive, and nurturing relationships, with a consistent and trusted adult who enables them to feel confident and competent.

When planning a curriculum for babies and toddlers, early childhood practitioners must remember that ongoing consistent relationships, predictability, and continuity of care are fundamental aspects of quality practice (French, 2018). Care-giving routines, such as with nappy changing, sleep times, and meal times, are a critical aspect of the interactions between the key person and the young child. Every moment in these routines is an opportunity for learning and development and is thus an important part of the individualised curriculum provided to children under the age of three.

Parent partnerships

The curriculum provided for babies and toddlers should reflect their lived experiences. A quality early childhood service commits to working in partnership with parents to provide an environment in which babies and toddlers are happy, feel they belong, and can develop to their fullest potential. In this environment, parents and practitioners work together to share information and expertise, and this communication is two-way in a trusting relationship (NCCA, 2009c).

The learning environment

A quality learning environment that promotes learning and development for babies and toddlers is nurturing, challenging, and stimulating. In this environment, practitioners must develop the skills of observation and reflection to facilitate planning that supports and extends learning.

Aistear refers to learning and development that occurs both 'in the indoor and outdoor environment', and so both environments should receive equal emphasis and planning in the curriculum. In fact, many of the activities that babies and toddlers enjoy indoors can be achieved outdoors and with greater freedom (French, 2007).

Early childhood practitioners must remember that ongoing consistent relationships, predictability, and continuity of care are fundamental aspects of quality practice.

Play

The NCCA identified play as one of the key contexts for children's early learning and development:

"Much of children's early learning and development takes place through play and hands-on experiences. Through these, children explore social, physical and imaginary worlds. (NCCA, 2009c, p. 11)"

Children require time, space, and support both to play and to develop their play. As curriculum developers, practitioners need to create an indoor and outdoor environment that provides for a wide range of play opportunities.

Planning and assessing

Aistear defines assessment as 'the on-going process of collecting, documenting, reflecting on and using information to develop rich portraits of children as learners in order to support and enhance their future learning' (NCCA, 2009b, p. 72). Planning and assessing form part of practitioners'

day-to-day interactions with babies and toddlers. Practitioners continually make judgements about their key child's learning and development, and use the information to progress learning. These everyday observations and interactions form the basis of planning and assessing a curriculum for babies and toddlers (NCCA, 2009a).

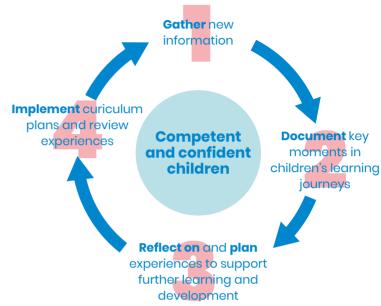


Figure 1: Cycle of planning and assessing for learning

Transitions

The importance of supportive and smooth transitions in early childhood cannot be overestimated. Aistear recognises a transition as the process of moving from one situation to another and taking time to adjust. Major transitions often represent significant milestones in a child's life and signify change for children and their families, such as the move from home to the first out-of-home setting. This transition is best handled by a key worker who will provide a consistent approach to enable the baby or toddler to feel more secure and hopefully adapt well.

Other types of transition are more frequent, for example the transition from one room to another in a setting, or from one activity to another. Consideration must be given to the number of transitions a baby or toddler experiences in a day and whether these meet the child's individual needs in a consistent, predictable, and caring manner. Good relationships are key to ensuring that all transitions happen as smoothly as possible.

Conclusion

This article has emphasised the importance of interactions and relationships when developing a curriculum for babies and toddlers. These interactions and relations frame the learning and development of and for young children. According to First 5:

"A curriculum that recognises learning and care forms 'an inseparable whole', offers opportunities for play, exploration and active participation by children and their parents, and is responsive to children's interests and abilities is also an essential component of quality. (Government of Ireland, 2018)"

Aistear provides the framework, and the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide provides the resources to support and enable early childhood practitioners to develop and implement an individualised curriculum that meets the learning and care needs of all children.

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Jess Lair

NURTURING A CREATIVE PEDAGOGY

Everyday creativity through a flow state



Creativity involves deep exploration and practical skills. It also requires a high level of focus and critical thinking. For teachers, the goal is to create conditions where creativity can begin. Many learning and care settings hinder the conditions required for children to enter a state of flow. Children must be given the opportunity and conditions to move into this state.



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"The best moments in our lives are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times. ... The best moments usually occur if a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile". —Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 1990

Ken Robinson defines creativity as 'the process of having original ideas that have value', and emphasises imagination and innovation as being vital components. Without imagination, creativity is not tested, and without innovation, creativity is not practised. Robinson describes creativity as a possibility in all areas of human life; it is a natural energy in all humans, but, as Corita Kent said, it can remain too often in a 'seed state'. The seed must be given the right conditions to grow, allowing it to develop creative powers, increasing skills, knowledge, and ideas.

Creativity involves a deep level of exploration and practical skills. It also requires a high level of focus and critical thinking. For teachers, the goal is to create conditions where creativity can begin. When children are motivated to love learning, their creative mastery flourishes.

Young children have a natural predisposition towards play, creativity, collaboration, and enquiry. Creativity is at the heart of childhood and learning. However, to nurture a pedagogy of creativity in early learning and care settings, a shift is required: from teacher direction to transformational teaching. This means the teacher's role in early learning and care settings is to support children as they make meaning of the world around them through enquiry, shared learning, and the community.

Research now tells us that children are rich in competence and open to all kinds of possibilities. They have a deep capacity for learning and complexity. Too often, however, learning is interrupted by the teacher through instruction. Alison Gopnik, one of the leading cognitive scientists of our time, tells us that direct instruction limits children's possibilities. Through play, children make their own discoveries and are emerged deeply in creativeness. Gopnik refers to childhood as the 'research department'.

Children immersed in an activity can consistently be observed in a state of 'flow'. This state of mind and body continues to satisfy throughout the stages and ages of life. Gopnik writes that 'successful creative adults seem to combine the wide-ranging exploration and openness we see in children with the focus and discipline we see in adults'. To be in a state of flow is to be totally absorbed, and completely unaware of what's going on around. Time evaporates, and there is a drive to remain immersed in the activity. In such conditions of physical and mental synchrony, creative processes are more likely to develop. It is energising, with an overall sense of serenity.

The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalvi is famous for his theory of flow, which he described as:

"the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it". (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4)

Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory is evidenced when young children are given the time and opportunity for uninterrupted play, exploration, and

possibilities. Children experience and exhibit intensity and enjoyment in these moments. But to be in a state of flow requires space and time, as it is fundamentally connected to an emotional state of being. Csikszentmihalyi described the feeling of flow as:

- 1. completely involved in what we are doing focused, concentrated
- 2. a sense of ecstasy of being outside everyday reality
- 3. great inner clarity knowing what needs to be done, and how well we are doing
- 4. knowing that the activity is doable that skills are adequate to the task
- 5. a sense of serenity no worries about oneself, and a feeling of growing beyond the boundaries of the ego
- 6. timelessness thoroughly focused on the present
- 7. intrinsic motivation whatever produces flow becomes its own reward.

As Vialle and Botticchio (2009) highlight, Csikszentmihalyi's model of creativity raised the question: Where is creativity?, making the connection between people and their sociocultural contexts. Csikszentmihalyi also made a distinction between two types of creativity. Little-c creativity is in the everyday; it is what makes us human. Big-C Creativity relates to an area and to innovators or inventors in that area; it has a significant impact on our lives. Both are unique, but they are also interconnected, and big-C Creativity can influence little-c creativity.

Many learning and care settings hinder the conditions required for children to enter a flow state. Too many daily transitions, for example, can significantly impede conditions for flow. In practice, learning conditions make children transition from activities in very short time frames. Daily routines may also move children out of environments when they are experiencing joyful play moments. Children may experience time constraints which give them insufficient time to complete or immerse themselves in concepts and ideas.

in an activity can consistently be observed in a state of and body continues to satisfy throughout the stages and ages of life.

Children immersed 'flow'. This state of mind When teachers observe children engaged in play, generating play ideas, and displaying high levels of concentration, they must consider how to maximise time for extended play and enquiry. The experience and facilitation of flow in learning settings and everyday situations is a factor of creativity. When children are given the opportunity and conditions to move into a state of

Early Learning and Care settings are environments where rich observation and innovation can develop. Teachers must embed ongoing reflective thinking, such as:

• Does this environment enrich experiences?

flow, they are more driven to recreate these practices.

- Does it create missed opportunities or nurture creative opportunities?
- Does it deepen knowledge, enhance skills, and allow for children to express themselves?
- Does it create shared learning experiences?
- Do we interrupt children?
- · What techniques are children learning, what are they solving or expressing, and do they need to think?
- How are you choosing materials, and are they available every day?
- Are the materials challenging and arranged thoughtfully?

For babies, flow can be routinely observed through a fixation on the movement of an object, being drawn to light, and connections made with their own body.

The teacher aims to promote intrinsic motivation to generate a flow state. It can happen through a curriculum rich in child-led opportunities, based on the needs and interests of the individual child and the group. Flow is observed when the competent child is playing without thinking and with joy. However, the group dynamics in Early Learning and Care settings should allow for children to 'flow together'. This form of flow can provoke reciprocal happiness and immense shared satisfaction - it is arguably the most meaningful form of flow.

For babies, flow can be routinely observed through a fixation on the movement of an object, being drawn to light, and connections made with their own body. When a baby concentrates and is unaware of what is happening around them, they are absorbed and in flow. To encourage flow in older children, teachers can use questioning, problem-solving, and supporting self-motivation when children are engaged in activities. Children need time to explore, think, and imagine; this is where they move into a state of flow.

In Early Learning and Care environments, children need to be encouraged to explore their worlds through a variety of materials and activities and with their peers. As Gerhardt (2015) tells us, the brain is built through actual experiences; creativity does not develop in isolation, and children need rich experiences to express themselves and make sense of their ideas and thoughts. Encouraging a child's creativity, and welcoming and responding thoughtfully and respectfully, can lead children to feel immense pride. This leads to unexpected surprises and extended ongoing investigations.

The aim for teachers is to develop environments and experiences that extend beyond one-off and time-dependent activities. Children need experiences that can be repeated and returned to, that lend themselves to ongoing involvement. For example, loose parts, open-ended materials, and natural elements like twigs, leaves, clay, paper, and wooden blocks all promote endless opportunities.

The ongoing nature of creative spaces and experiences ensures that children's engagement becomes deeper and richer. As Vygotsky so importantly highlighted, creativity is not in the results: it is a 'product of creation'. This requires that teachers be tuned in to creative learning. The quality of a setting does not exceed the quality of its teachers: the teacher needs to be innovative and committed to new ways of being and doing to nurture the creative spirit in all children.

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Flow: the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it.

 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi famous for his theory of flow

MO SCÉAL: ONLINE REPORTING TEMPLATES

An initiative of the NCCA to help ease the transition from pre-school to primary



This article outlines the process behind publication of the NCCA's *Mo Scéal* reporting templates. *Mo Scéal* means 'My Story', and the templates provide an opportunity to tell the story of the child's interests, strengths, and challenges. The reports can be shared by preschools with parents and, with parents' consent, with the primary school. The article also lists the types of resources provided by the NCCA to support this important transition.



Mary Daly
Education Officer,
National Council
for Curriculum and
Assessment (NCCA)

Project overview and background research

The impetus for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's (NCCA) work on the transition from preschool to primary school was 'Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011–2020' (Department of Education and Skills, 2011). In the strategy, the NCCA was asked to develop online reporting templates to share information on children's learning and development. As preparation for this project, the NCCA commissioned three research reports:

- a review of literature nationally and internationally (O'Kane, 2016)
- a review of data transfer and transition processes internationally (O'Kane and Murphy, 2016a)
- an audit of transfer documents in Ireland (O'Kane and Murphy, 2016b).

These are available at www.ncca.ie.

Key messages from the research

The research confirmed that a positive transition to primary school is a 'predictor of children's future success in terms of social, emotional and educational outcomes' (O'Kane, 2016, p. 13). The key messages from the research reports are:

- A positive experience for children during the transition is important. It is vital that children feel welcome and develop strong relationships in their new school.
- Certain dispositions, skills, and knowledge are important for children at this time and should be focused on in preschools.
 There is a good degree of consistency about the importance of focusing on social and emotional skills, communication and language skills, and positive learning dispositions such as independence, curiosity, and resilience, with less focus being placed on academic skills.
- Greater alignment in curriculum and pedagogy across preschools and primary schools is critical. Interactive, playful learning and teaching are needed in schools, and more

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formal teaching approaches have the potential to impact negatively on children. In Ireland, Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2009) is key, as it can be used to inform practice in both preschools and primary schools.

- Supporting transitions is a shared responsibility between children, families, preschools, primary schools, and communities. What really matters is the development of trusting, respectful relationships between all involved.
- The concept of children's 'school readiness' that dominated in the past has been replaced by a broader approach. Children need to be 'school-ready' in the broadest sense, and 'ready schools' are equally important.
- A range of social, economic, and demographic factors influence children's transition to primary school. Some, though not all, children experiencing disadvantage, children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) may need extra supports at the time of transition.
- The transfer of information on children's learning and development is an important part of the transition. It can provide valuable information about the child as a learner, and act as a lever in opening up relationships between preschools and primary schools.
- The transition cannot be hurried. It takes time for the child to develop a sense of belonging to the school, and it takes time for preschools and primary schools to build trusting, professional relationships (O'Kane, 2016; O'Kane and Murphy, 2016a).

NCCA's preschool to primary school transition initiative

Following on from the research, the NCCA developed draft reporting templates. In 2017, the project team worked with a group of preschools and primary schools in a transition initiative that focused on the key messages from the commissioned research, along with piloting two draft templates. The NCCA collaborated with Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta on the Irish-medium settings involved.

Everyone affected by the transition was involved in some way – children, families, preschools, and primary schools. Preschool practitioners and teachers were brought together for four workshops. The NCCA project team visited each preschool and primary school twice, and provided ongoing email and telephone support. Participant feedback was used to improve the draft reporting templates and to learn about the kinds of supports needed to facilitate the transition.

A positive transition to primary school is a 'predictor of children's future success'.

Overall, the initiative was viewed as a very worthwhile, timely, and positive experience for all involved – families, practitioners, teachers, and the NCCA. The evaluation showed that the transition from preschool to primary school was a positive experience for most children. But it also spotlighted many challenges in supporting transitions, such as difficulties in building professional relationships, lack of time, and extra work (NCCA, 2018a). This replicated research findings both nationally and internationally (O'Kane, 2016; O'Kane and Murphy, 2016a, O'Kane and Murphy, 2016b).

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Mo Scéal: transition templates and support materials

The Mo Scéal reporting templates and accompanying support materials were published on the NCCA website at www.ncca.ie/earlychildhood in December 2018. Mo Scéal means 'My Story', and the templates provide an opportunity to tell the story of the child's interests, strengths, and challenges. The reports can be shared with parents and, with their consent, with the primary school. At present there is no requirement for preschools and schools to use the Mo Scéal templates (NCCA, 2018b).

Mo Scéal templates have four sections:

- Section 1: Practitioner offers space for the practitioner to provide information on the child's learning and development.
- Section 2: Parent/Guardian provides space for parents/guardians to share information on their child.
- Section 3: Child gives the child an opportunity to share something important to them with the teacher, such as art or a photograph, and helps include the child's voice in the process.
- Section 4: Parent/Guardian Consent asks for parental/guardian permission to share a copy of the completed document with the primary school.

Everyone affected by the transition was involved in some way – children, families, preschools, and primary schools.

The combined information in the document will give the teacher unique insights into the child's learning and experiences from home and from preschool. This will be useful particularly in the initial weeks of junior infants.

The reporting templates are available in two formats. In each format, only Section 1: Practitioner is different. Template 1: Section 1 provides space for narrative descriptions based on

Aistear's four themes of Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communicating, and Exploring and Thinking. Template 2: Section 1 provides ten statements related to each of Aistear's four themes, accompanied by a 4-point rating scale. Sections 2, 3, and 4 are identical in both formats.

In addition to the templates there are lots of resources available on the NCCA website to support this transition. Table 1 outlines these.

Table 1: Templates and support materials

Mo Scéal Preschool to Primary School Transition	
Mo Scéal Reporting Templates	The templates along with guidance on how to complete and transfer them.
Skills and dispositions	Videos along with a tip sheet on Helping young children develop positive learning dispositions.
Transition activities	Videos of different preschool activities along with a tip sheet on Suggested activities for preschools to support a positive transition to school. Videos of different activities to support 'ready schools', along with a tip sheet on Suggested activities for schools to support a positive transition to school.

Building relationships	Tip sheet on Joint transition activities for preschools and primary schools as well as videos on preschools and schools collaborating.
Children's thoughts on moving to primary school	Videos of children talking about the transition from preschool to primary school.
Working with parents	Videos about helping parents with the transition.
Research	Research related to the transition from preschool to primary school.

Conclusion

NCCA's online publication of the Mo Scéal materials is timely given the publication of First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019–2028 (Government of Ireland, 2018), which has a strong focus on the transition from preschool to primary school. Going forward, as part of First 5, the NCCA will work closely with the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and relevant partners to develop guidance and pilot support processes for those focusing on this important transition.

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At present there is no requirement for preschools and schools to use the Mo Scéal templates.

EARLY CHILDHOOD IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE:

Competent systems for sustainable development



A global consensus is emerging that early childhood services, and the policies to develop them, can only be sustainable and beneficial for all children and all families once we take public responsibility and start building a coherent 'competent system' of supports around them. This article looks at what that means in practice in Ireland, based on best current international thinking.



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According to an overused proverb of uncertain origin, it takes a village to raise a child. In our globalised times, the village extends to the entire planet. In 2018 the Department for Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) launched the ambitious First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and Their Families (DCYA, 2018). The systemic perspective it adopts, while not explicitly stated, is very much in accordance with an emerging global consensus that early childhood services – and the policies to develop them – can only be sustainable and beneficial for all children and all families once we take public responsibility and start building a coherent 'competent system' of supports around them (Urban et al., 2012).

The authors of this article, based at the Early Childhood Research Centre (ECRC) at Dublin City University (DCU), together with an international team, work with global partners in policy, practice, and research to help bring about much-needed systems change.

Every year, the governments of the world's leading economies gather to 'develop global policies to address today's most pressing challenges' – the mission of the annual G20 summits.¹ G20 coincides with the annual summit of T20, a global network of think tanks and research institutions that provide policy advice to the G20 governments.² Since 2018, when Argentina held the G20 presidency, education has been identified as a key tool for addressing the challenges facing humanity on a complex planet with an uncertain future. Arguably most, if not all, critical issues –economy, democracy, peace, and our species' collective survival – rest on the question of how we, as individuals and societies, educate our children and ourselves.

Education for all, too, is central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the global community aims to achieve by 2030,³ and it is enshrined as every child's right in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. But education does not start with children entering primary school. Children learn from the day they are born, and how they encounter and experience the world matters. This is why early childhood services, including services for the youngest children, ought to be so much more than a 'service', 'childcare', and a commodity for working parents.

The sector (in

Ireland) has

behind comparable

beyond.

countries in Europe and

I (MU) have the privilege to lead a group of international experts⁴ who developed the early childhood policy briefs for T20 that were presented to the G20 summit in Argentina in 2018 and in Japan in 2019. We are currently drafting the policy brief for the 2020 summit that will be held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in spring.

What do the policy briefs recommend?

The key message of the 2018 policy brief draws on a strong body of international research evidence showing that early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, provided they are of high quality, benefit children, families, and society as a whole. Achieving that level of quality, however, requires coordinated, long-term strategy and collaboration of actors across all aspects of the education and care system. It requires a shared vision, an action plan, proper public investment, a qualified and well-paid workforce, and professional and democratic accountability. Probably most of all it requires courageous political leadership and effective governance. Hence the title of the policy brief: It takes more than a village. Effective early childhood development, education and care services require competent systems (Urban et al., 2018).

A competent system? This is where the global policy debate becomes relevant to the reality of Irish early childhood education. We can no longer ignore the fact that how we educate and care for young children disregards their rights, is unaffordable for families, is financially not viable for early childhood educators and service providers, and - as the Economic and Social Research Institute has confirmed - is damaging to the economy.6

Without doubt the government, and especially the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone, are to be commended for their efforts to increase both the quality and funding of services. But as the minister rightly recognises, the sector has been neglected and critically underfunded

for decades, and public expenditure lags far behind comparable countries in Europe and beyond. Measured in percentage of GDP, Ireland remains at the bottom of OECD countries and has a long way to go to even reach the OECD average of 0.8% GDP.

Analysis by our research team for the Department of Education and Skills in 2016 (Urban et al., 2017) points out that lack of funding is only one challenge facing the Irish ECEC sector. The lack of resources is exacerbated by systemic problems of governance at all levels of the early childhood system, by fragmentation and vested interests of groups competing for insufficient resources, and by over-reliance on a supposed 'market' in providing childcare and early childhood education. Our findings confirm what internal experts and international observers have consistently been reporting for years. The result is a dysfunctional system that, at a high cost for society, families, and the workforce, fails to provide best-quality care and education for all children.

Yes, we need substantial investment in early childhood education and care services in this country. But in order for more money to make a difference,

an action plan, proper public investment, a qualified and wellpaid workforce. and professional and democratic accountability.

level of quality **Achieving a high** requires a shared vision,

we need systemic change: change in how services are seen and run. There is a need for a broad, public, and democratic debate about what - and who - early childhood services are for. At DCU ECRC we enter this debate from a clear understanding that early childhood education⁷ and care is (a) the right of each and every child, (b) a public service for all families, and (c) a public good and public responsibility.

Early childhood development education and care: the future is what we build today

The title of the policy brief we developed for the T20 summit in Tokyo, Japan, in May 2019 takes inspiration from a quote from Paulo Freire's book Letters to Cristina (Freire, 1996):

The future isn't something hidden in a corner. The future is something we build in the present.

The text builds on the analysis and recommendations of the 2018 document and extends them to a necessary reconceptualisation of early childhood

> programmes and services in the light of a global sustainability crisis. The arguments we lay out in the policy brief are based on the recognition that, on a global scale, distinctions between approaches to early childhood programmes in the Global South and Global North are no longer tenable.

been neglected and critically underfunded for decades, and public Broadly speaking, policymakers and international expenditure lags far

organisations have been promoting programmes for early childhood development (ECD) (focusing on health and nutrition) in countries in the Global South, and on early childhood education and care (ECEC) in countries in the Global North, representing different priorities for children in so-called developing and developed countries. But the distinction

between 'developing' and 'developed' has become meaningless, and so has the artificial distinction between ECD and ECEC.

Even in the most affluent countries (e.g., in North America and Europe, including Ireland), children are growing up under what some, naively, used to call Third World conditions: persistent poverty, exclusion and inequality, violence, displacement and forced migration, hunger, and malnutrition (Social Justice Ireland, 2015). In both the Global South and the Global North, inequality within countries has become as damaging to children as inequality between countries. This, we argue, requires urgent reconceptualisation of what (and who) early childhood services are for, and what kind of services they should be providing.

Yesterday's solutions still being posited

That early childhood has been given a prominent place in the 2030 SDGs (Goal 4) is a welcome recognition of its global importance. However, most of the initiatives have focused on increasing access to, and participation in, ECD/ECEC programmes, as spelled out in SDG 4. Increased access and enrolment figures alone are not a sufficient measure for meaningful participation in high-quality programmes that are effective in making a positive difference in children's lives. Even when more children access

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ECD/ECEC services, they enter and participate in very diverse and unequal programmes. Furthermore, little attention has been paid to questions of purpose and content of ECD/ECEC in the context of sustainability. 'Yesterday's solutions' continue to be supported by policymakers and donors alike, and programmes still tend to focus on:

- deficiencies rather than the capabilities of children, families, and communities
- externally predetermined models and outcomes rather than culturally and locally appropriate approaches
- decontextualised and borrowed education practices and approaches (Reggio, Montessori, HighScope, Project Zero, etc.) rather than culturally appropriate and locally developed sustainable solutions

money to make

a difference, we need

change in how services

systemic change;

are seen and run.

- narrowly defined 'early learning' curricula (literacy and numeracy), extending from countries in the Global North to the Global South
- narrow and unsustainable notions of 'development' at individual, collective, country, and global levels – that originate in supremacist and colonialist thinking
- naïve extrapolation of today's socioeconomic contexts into the future, including the assumption that, for instance, 'digital' and 'AI', are both the main challenges and the solutions to development and education. (adapted from Urban et al., 2019)

The 2019 policy brief was adopted by the T20 summit in May 2019; its key recommendation is included in the final communiqué that was received by G20 heads of state. In it we summarise the task (and possibility!) at hand:

Reconceptualise ECD/ECEC in the context of existential global crises and develop a roadmap to integrated early childhood development, education, and care for sustainable development. The approach to the initiative should be three-pronged:

- 1. commitment to increasing access
- commitment to 'whole-systems' approaches to developing, improving, resourcing, and governing early childhood programmes in order to achieve the sustainability of programmes and services
- 3. reconceptualise early childhood development, education, and care across G20 countries as societal, democratic realisation of early childhood as a common good and collective responsibility, and contribution to achieving sustainability on a global scale, i.e., in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. (Urban et al., 2019, p. 8)

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 Build on support whole-systems approaches to ECD/ECEC (Competent Systems), in order to overcome persistent, wasteful, and ineffective fragmentation and silo mentality

(Co.) Living FOD/FOCO as a static result was to recommend.

- (Re)claim ECD/ECEC as public good and public responsibility - counter privatisation, corporatisation, and phase out for-profit programmes
- Extend the ECD/ECEC agenda from SDG4 to all 17 SDGs
- Initiate programme and policy review with a focus on centent, values and ethics rather than access and enrolment ony.
- what should we be developing?
- what should we be educating for to achieve sustainability on a finite planet?

Goal 1: No poverty Goal 2: Zero hunger Goal 3: Good health & well-being Goal 4: Quality education Goal 5: Gender equality Goal 6: Clean water & sanitation Affordable & clean energy Goal 7: Decent work & economic growth Goal 9: Industry, innovation & infrastructure Goal 10: Reduced inequalities Sustainable cities & communities Goal 11: Goal 12: Responsible consumption & production Goal 13: Climate action Goal 14: Life below water Goal 15: Life on land

Goal 16: Peace, justice & strong institutions

Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Key policy recommendations

It is promising to see that the recommendations developed in a collaboration of experts from Latin America, Africa, and Europe are being adopted at global policy level. However, action will have to be taken locally and this requires leadership by national governments.

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ENDNOTES

- 1. https://g20.org
- 2. In parallel with the G20 summit, seven official 'engagement groups' develop policy recommendations on important issues such as business (B20), civil society (C20), women and economic development (W20), labour market (L20), youth (Y20), science (S20), and knowledge to shape global governance (T20).
- 3. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs.
- Jennifer Guevara (Early Childhood Research Centre, DCU, Ireland), Alejandra Cardini (Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth [CIPPEC], Buenos Aires, Argentina), Rita Flórez Romero (Universidad Nacional de Colombia), and Lynette Okengo (African Early Childhood Network [AfECN], Nairobi, Kenya).
- 5. The DCYA contributed to the travel expenses for delivery of the policy brief to the 2018 T20 summit.
- www.esri.ie/publications/maternal-employment-and-the-cost-of-childcare-inireland.
- 7. We refer to 'education' in the broadest sense as a holistic concept that transcends the often narrow understandings of children being taught to acquire formal skills, e.g., early literacy and numeracy and general 'school readiness' that prevail in English-language contexts. Education, in our view, is Bildung (the unfolding of a person's full potential) as much as it is Educação (Freire's practice of liberation and emancipation).

Globalization, Transformation, and Cultures in Early Childhood Education and Care
Reconceptualization and Comparison

Edited by Stefan Faas - Dagmar Kasüschke - Elena Nitecki Mathias Urban - Helge Wasmuth

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Published in 2019 by Palgrave Macmillan

"In a world that is being intensely transformed by the strong waves of globalization, this kind of crosscultural comparative work is critical as it allows for more inclusive and balanced perspectives on the lives of young children. This excellent collection of chapters will be of vital interest to all concerned with early childhood education and development across cultural contexts."

— Amita Gupta, Professor of Early Childhood Education, City University of New York, USA

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:

Transforming Ireland's early learning and childcare system



The government's First 5 strategy identifies over 150 actions across the domains that affect young children's lives, including ambitious and farreaching actions related to the early learning and school-age childcare sector. In this article the Minister summarises the challenges facing the sector and the actions planned and currently being taken to meet them.



Katherine ZapponeMinister for Children
and Youth Affairs

Maria Montessori, one of the most influential early childhood educators, once said: 'Early childhood education is the key to the betterment of society.' Montessori dedicated her life to finding a better way to teach young children so that they would fully develop their skills and reach their full potential. In similar ways, many of our early years practitioners working in the sector today are dedicating their lives, their energy, and their enthusiasm to children's development, and by doing so are creating a better future for us all.

We still face challenges in ensuring that those working in the sector get the recognition they deserve for the important work they do. But these are challenges we are seeking to address in all the ways we possibly can. It is critical to improve conditions in the sector, given the importance for child outcomes of recruiting and retaining qualified staff and upskilling the current dedicated workforce. There is a need to recognise the true value of the work carried out by early learning and care and school-age childcare professionals every day, the work that is changing lives, transforming communities, and making our society better, one child at a time.

Addressing these challenges is a priority for me, as I know what a positive difference those who work in the sector can make to children's lives and how valuable their work is. As you know, my Department is not the employer of early learning and care and school-age childcare staff – in that it does not pay the wages of staff and cannot set wage levels or determine working conditions for the staff. However, I am doing all that is in my power to improve wages and working conditions in the sector. I have repeatedly called for the sector to pursue a Sectoral Employment Order, which offers a viable mechanism to establish appropriate wage levels. My Department will readily cooperate with such a process if and when it is under way.

In 2017 I established a sustainability fund for the early learning and care and school-age childcare sector to assist high-quality services that were experiencing financial difficulties to transition themselves to a sustainable footing. This is part of a range of supports to services. In Budget 2020 I have increased the funding available under this fund to €2.2m and have asked that the use of the fund now be extended to support the sector in the event that the Labour Court introduces a Sectoral Employment Order in a sustainable way for the providers.

During my time as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, my Department has increased its investment in Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare by 137%. The new National Childcare Scheme (NCS), which opens for applications on 20 November 2019, is the first ever statutory entitlement to financial support for early learning and care and school-age childcare. It will establish a sustainable platform to enable the Department to continue investing for years to come, and it is designed to be flexible, allowing income thresholds, maximum hours, and subsidy rates to be adjusted in line with government decisions and as more investment becomes available.

The NCS entails a fundamental shift away from subsidies grounded in medical-card and social-protection entitlements, and towards a comprehensive and progressive system of universal and income-based subsidies. By making this shift and by tangibly reducing the cost of quality early learning and care and school-age childcare for thousands of families across Ireland, the NCS aims to improve children's outcomes, support lifelong learning, make working outside the home possible, and reduce child poverty. It is also designed to have a positive impact on gender equality in labour market participation and employment opportunities. It will support families with children aged between 24 weeks and 15 years who are attending any participating Tusla-registered ELC or SAC service, including any Tusla-registered childminder.

I am also pleased that I was able, as part of Budget 2020, to secure additional hours of subsidised income-based childcare. From September 2020, the maximum hours for the new scheme will increase from 40 to 45 hours per week, particularly benefiting parents of school-age children who need before-school and after-school childcare to include time for work and commuting. Low-income parents who are not working or studying will have their hours increased from 15 to 20. Also, parents who currently benefit from subsidies for 17 hours of School-Age Childcare per week will be subsidised for up to 22 hours of school-age childcare. These measures, I believe, will support our objective of promoting employment and reducing child poverty.

There is a need to recognise the true value of the work carried out by early learning and care and school-age childcare professionals every day.

2028.

I was also able to secure additional funding in Budget 2020 to extend the 'savers' schemes beyond August 2020. This means that people who are registered on the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) or Training and Employment Childcare (TEC) schemes before they close, and who retain their eligibility, will be able to remain on them indefinitely, until they no longer require early learning and care or school-age childcare. Parents using the saver arrangement can of course, at any point, move over to the NCS.

Another significant element of the increased early learning and care provision in Budget 2020 is the additional funding secured for the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). AIM enables children with disabilities to access and fully participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The increased funding will enable an additional 1,000 children to access targeted preschool supports, bringing the number availing of the scheme to approximately 6,600 children in 2019/20. This measure supports more equal access for children with disabilities to participate in high-quality early childhood care and education, which is critical to optimise their early development and better outcomes.

All of these initiatives support our ambitions under First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019– 2028), which was published in November 2018. First 5 identifies over 150 actions across the domains that impact on young children's lives, including ambitious and far-reaching actions related to the early learning and care and school-age childcare sector. First 5 commits to at least doubling the investment in early learning and care and school-age childcare by 2028. A key vehicle to ensure that such significant additional investment delivers for children, families, and the State will be a new funding model for the sector.

The new funding model will be a crucial mechanism to deliver additional investment for early learning and care and school-age childcare, in order to improve affordability for parents, sustainability of providers, conditions for staff, and most importantly quality of services for children.

To lead the development of the funding model, I have appointed an expert group with expertise in early learning and care and school-age childcare systems, funding, and quality, as well as skills in economics and policy

development. The group has been convened to examine the current model of funding for early learning and care and school-age childcare and its effectiveness in delivering quality, affordable, sustainable, and inclusive services. It will make recommendations on how additional funding for the sector can be structured to deliver on these objectives. Although this is a complex project and is likely to take some time to be developed, work is under way, and the expert group held its

First 5 commits to at least doubling the investment in early learning and care and school-age childcare by first meeting on 29 October 2019.

> I have also set out my vision for the early years workforce, in First 5; indeed, First 5 contains a commitment to develop a Workforce Development Plan, which will ensure appropriate levels of ELC and SAC staff at all levels in the sector. As Minister I am acutely aware of the difficulties faced by providers in terms of recruitment, retention, and financial incentives for staff. The Workforce Development Plan aims to address these difficulties by establishing role profiles, career pathways, qualification requirements, and associated policy mechanisms. It will set out plans to raise the profile of careers in early learning and care and school-age childcare, establishing a career framework and leadership development opportunities and work towards a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce.

> The Workforce Development Plan will be carried out in two stages. The first stage will involve preparation of a core report that sets out a high-level vision for the early learning and care and school-age childcare workforce for 2020–2028 and a pathway for achieving the commitments set out in First 5 for developing that workforce. It will include qualification requirements for different roles in the sector, including ELC, SAC, and childminders. This stage is expected to conclude by mid-2020. The second stage will involve completion of implementation plans by working groups to be specified in stage one. Stage two is expected to be completed by mid-2021.

While much has happened over the last few years in the sector, and we have definitely reached many milestones, I fully accept that there is still a lot of work to be done. I believe that my ambition and vision for the early learning and care and school-age childcare sector can be fully realised during the lifetime of the First 5 Workforce Development Plan – and that we can transform one of the most expensive early learning and care and school-age childcare systems in the world to one of the best, one that is fully accessible, affordable, and high-quality.



'Exploring the Confident and Competent Child through the San Miniato Approach'

An Early Childhood Ireland event held in partnership with Carlow Institute of Technology in September 2019.

Speakers: Aldo Fortunati and Barbara Pagni, *Bottega di Geppetto*, International Research and Documentation Centre on Childhood



'An Appreciation of Meaningful Documentation'

An Early Childhood Ireland event held in partnership with Technological University Dublin in September 2019.

Speaker: Wendy Lee, Early Learning Project, New Zealand

DIVERSITY, EQUALITY, AND INCLUSION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

A conceptual shift from needs to rights



The much-needed resources put in place by DCYA to address diversity, equality, and inclusion in early childhood education and care (ECEC) are welcome. However, an ideological shift from needs to rights is required to provide a comprehensive diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) approach to ECEC policy, training, and practice.



Colette Murray Lecturer, TU Dublin, and Coordinator of Equality and Diversity Early Childhood National Network EDeNn

Most of the recent policy developments for children and early childhood education and care (ECEC) show an orientation towards diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI). But much remains to be done to introduce a comprehensive DEI approach to policy, training, and practice. A growing body of international research confirms the importance of addressing DEI issues in ECEC, and of how ECEC educators' own attitudes towards diversity affect their pedagogy (Murray and Urban, 2012; Bloch et al., 2014). This, however, requires educators to be open to facilitating a socially just approach to working with children and families.

The publication of First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (DCYA, 2018) is an important development. The strategy states its commitment to vindicate the rights of the child and to address principles of inclusion and non-discrimination. However, when we examine how diversity, equality, and inclusion are identified and actioned in the strategy, the emphasis is primarily welfare- and needs-based rather than situated in a children's rights framework. This raises questions about what the identified actions might mean for everyday practice.

Diversity in Context

Diversity has always been a reality in Ireland (Murray and Urban, 2012), but it is now more visible and acknowledged following a significant period of cultural, social, and religious change. As such, early childhood educators are working with multiple diversities in families and communities. Children are connecting and engaging with diversity in their daily lives. They are exposed to gender, 'race', ethnicity, (dis)ability, age, sexuality, and class, and as adults and educators we are charged with recognising and taking that seriously.

Reading through the intentions as stated in the ECEC policy documents, it could be said that DEI has been mainstreamed – even though it is only relatively recently that ECEC policy has become more proactive in implementing specific initiatives. This development is welcome and appreciated in opening a more inclusive discussion, and it is significant for supporting understanding of social inequalities and for 'doing' social justice education.

CHAPTER 1 - EARLY CHILDHOOD

Despite unprecedented economic growth and policy efforts to address child poverty, Irish society remains profoundly unequal (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). It is well documented that inequality goes hand in hand with prejudice, discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and classism. We know from research that the most vulnerable and marginalised people are experiencing increasing inequality and negative actions in Ireland (McGinnity et al., 2017). This is against a backdrop of political populism, increasing global nationalism, and unregulated social media.

The vast majority of us abhor the assumptions and actions that can manifest from these forms of hate, and we would never be perpetrators, but we ignore the actions of others in our society at our peril. Negative attitudes and fear of difference can spread like a virus and disrupt the thinking of those ordinarily open to difference, raising unfounded suspicions. Research confirms that majority and minority children are not immune to the effects of exclusion and discrimination (MacNaughton, 2003). Early childhood educators are in a unique position to make a positive difference in children's lives, as they think through and critically engage with children about diverse issues. Hence it is vital that we address diversity, equality, and inclusion robustly and broadly at policy, training, and practice levels.

Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion in Early Childhood

In 2016, the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) (DCYA, 2016a) was launched and the revised Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines (DCYA, 2016b) were republished, following a ten-year period where little progress had been made to implement the initial Diversity and Equality Guidelines (Office of the Minister for Children, 2006). AIM is a model of

supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme (DCYA, 2009). It is an innovative approach providing training, resourcing, therapeutic supports, and human resourcing for children with 'disabilities' at preschool age.

The training supports include a Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years (LINC) special purpose award (level 6 qualification with extra capitation for the service provider) aimed at enabling early childhood educators to carry out

the role of an inclusion coordinator (INCO) (DCYA, 2016a). Concurrently there is a fifteen-hour DEI training (non-accredited, no extra capitation) built on the Preschool Education Initiative for Children from Minority Groups,¹ to support the implementation of the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines. Additional free professional development training is also provided through AIM, including Irish sign language, Lámh.

It is right that the DCYA has put in place much-needed resources and supports for 'children with disabilities' (AIM: https://aim.gov.ie/) and 'additional needs' (LINC: https://lincprogramme.ie/), and that the role of the INCO includes helping to implement the DEI Charter and Guidelines. The AIM and LINC initiatives refer specifically to a focus on 'disability and additional needs', while the DEI Charter and Guidelines – which according to the Minister's foreword form the foundation of AIM – take a broader, holistic approach to DEI. The disconnect between the LINC

Negative attitudes and fear of difference can spread like a virus and disrupt the thinking of those ordinarily open to difference, raising unfounded suspicions.

or hierarchies of diversities, and in so doing can hinder a cohesive and connected way forward. For example, training is not mandatory, and there is no requirement for those attending LINC training to also attend the DEI training, and vice versa.

and DEI training programmes, however, compounds the idea of divisions

From Needs to Rights

In First 5 it is evident under Goal C for early learning, Objective 8, Strategic Action 8.3, that inclusion is to be achieved through the 'integration of additional supports and services for children and families with additional needs' (DCYA, 2018, p. 95). Culturally appropriate services for Traveller children (ibid., p. 58) are referred to in relation to other policy documents promoting inclusion and addressing discrimination, for example the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) (DJE, 2017). But on closer inspection of NTRIS, Action 12 refers only to access for Traveller and Roma children to the ECCE scheme, and to AIM for those with disabilities.

AIM is an innovative approach providing training, resourcing, therapeutic supports, and human resourcing for children with 'disabilities' at preschool age.

Interculturalism and anti-racism are specifically actioned for primary and post-primary education but not for ECEC. It is problematic that culturally appropriate, anti-racist, or anti-bias practice for young children remains unspecific in NTRIS and First 5. We also know there is a dearth of information about Traveller and Roma children in the ECEC system, and neither NTRIS nor First 5 have actions to gather disaggregated data on Traveller or Roma children. A strategy for ECEC based on children's rights would foreground equitable outcomes for all children as an entitlement, which the current needs or welfare emphasis seems to omit. This is particularly important for children who are powerless, marginalised, and discriminated against in society.

An 'End of Year One Review of the Access and Inclusion Model' was published on 17 October on the AIM website (DCYA, 2019). The findings are broadly positive, with identified areas for improvement. An end-of-year-three evaluation is expected to take place over the coming months. This should offer an opportunity to validate survey findings with more in-depth qualitative research (e.g., focus groups). It will enable a more detailed exploration of fundamental issues and identify further useful lessons, provided it focuses on questions such as:

- Is the orientation of First 5 towards *all* children's rights followed through in AIM?
- How is diversity understood and evaluated, including multiple identities (ethnicity, ability, gender, family status, etc.)?
- How do service providers make sure to implement a genuinely comprehensive approach and avoid consciously or unconsciously targeting (stigmatising) children accessing and associated with AIM?
- How do service providers define an inclusive culture?
- How is the 'required shared learning' from the training monitored and evaluated, and by whom?
- Who receives the training, who does not, and why not?
- How are consistency of approach and staff turnover addressed?

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- How will an evaluation explore coherence and connection between the DEI and LINC training?
- Is there a need for a mentoring programme to support the implementation of the LINC and DEI training?
- What changes will have to be introduced to arrive at a genuinely comprehensive DEI approach in ECEC?

These questions would enable and enrich a meaningful discussion on the potential for a comprehensive diversity, equality, and inclusion strategy, building on what is currently available to the ECCE programme and ECEC sector. It would be a strategy that enacts rights for all children, beyond a focus on needs. It would progress and realise *all* children's rights through a comprehensive approach.

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ENDNOTES

 The Pre-school Education Initiative for Children from Minority Groups was funded by the Department of Education and Skills, Early Years Education Policy Unit under Dormant Accounts. Funding was granted for the period 2011 to 2012. See the evaluation report by Duffy and Gibbs, 2013, at www.EDeNn.org.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR EARLY EARNING AND CARE SETTINGS

Design for all



Universal Design ensures access for all to buildings and premises and ensures those premises are easy to use and understand. These guidelines, funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, show how ELC settings can make their environments, inside and outside, easier to access, understand, and use.

Introduction

Máire Corbett

Tom Grey

Teresa Heeney

Prof. Emer Ring

Dr Lisha O'Sullivan

In 2017, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) asked the Centre of Excellence for Universal Design (CEUD) at the National Disability Authority (NDA) to coordinate the development of Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care (ELC) settings. A consortium, led by Early Childhood Ireland and made up of Early Childhood Ireland, TrinityHaus, Mary Immaculate College, and Nathan Somers Design, was formed to develop materials in collaboration with the DCYA, CEUD, and NDA.

The Guidelines were launched by Minister Katherine Zappone in June 2019 and comprise a literature review, the Guidelines document (with ten case studies), and a self-audit tool. They form part of the suite of supports provided under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). This article outlines how the Guidelines were developed and summarises their content.

UniversalDesign(UD) is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability. This includes public places in the built environment, such as buildings, streets, and spaces to which the public have access, products and services provided in those places, and systems that are available, including Information Communications Technology (CEUD/NDA, 2018) (www.universaldesign.ie).

The brief was to use the principles of UD to help operators of ELC settings ensure that their environments, indoor and outdoor, are easy to access, understand, and use to the greatest extent possible. This includes existing settings, which, by using the self-audit tool, can get ideas on minor modifications that can be made as well as larger retrofit projects or new builds.

Case studies

A typology was developed to enable the identification of ten Early Childhood Ireland (ECI) member settings to take part, using location, size, building type, and other criteria. We were guided by the Pobal Early Years Sector Profile (2016–17). The ten settings were located

all over Ireland and featured sessional and full day-care, private and community settings, in urban and rural locations.

The settings ranged in size from 14 to 105 children and included a variety of building types.

Before the visits, a comprehensive range of information materials were circulated to address ethical considerations and ensure informed consent from all involved. Willing participants read the materials, were given the opportunity to ask questions, and signed consent forms. Children's assent was sought as we spoke with them and took photos. All requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations were complied with.

The visits were undertaken by Tom Grey of TrinityHaus and Máire Corbett of Early Childhood Ireland. Surveys were sent in advance to each setting for a sample of practitioners and parents to complete. On the visits, a smaller number of parents and staff were interviewed. We observed how the environment functioned for all users. Children took photos of the part of the environment they liked best. This data informed the content of the Guidelines. The children's photos are included in the Guidelines.

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.

The key findings from the case study were as follows:

- There was a general lack of space, especially indoors, for children, staff, parents, and storage.
- Narrow front doors made entering and exiting difficult for wider buggies or wheelchairs.
- All settings had an outdoor area, but sometimes it was quite small and had few natural features. In some settings, children had limited opportunities to be challenged physically. This was highlighted by parents as well as practitioners.
- A lack of directional signage, especially in larger settings, made finding specific rooms difficult for those unfamiliar with the layout.
- Shelter and access were problematic in some cases.

A multidisciplinary advisory group, from the fields of architecture, planning, and early childhood, inspectors, government departments, and parents, met at key points in the process. Two stakeholder workshops were held, in Cork and Dublin. Nearly thirty settings contributed photos. Photos were also sourced from settings in Italy and Japan. Five settings submitted learning stories to show exemplars of practice in specific contexts.

Literature review

The literature review was undertaken by Prof. Emer Ring and Dr Lisha O'Sullivan, Mary Immaculate College, and Tom Grey, TrinityHaus. The international and national literature that was examined related to both environmental design and pedagogy. The review was framed by seven of Siolta's sixteen standards.

IRELAND'S YEARBOOK OF EDUCATION 2019-2020



Figure 1: Key Design Issues framed by Síolta

Each standard was examined in the pedagogical literature and related to the literature on UD. Here we sketch out some of the main spatial and design considerations for each standard.

Standard 1: Rights of the Child

- Ensure that all children's interests and voices are represented and that children are free to express themselves through various media, displays, and materials.
- Provide environments where the children can freely circulate and communicate with adults and peers.

Standard 3: Parents and Families

- Create accessible, welcoming spaces that reflect family diversity so they can build relationships with staff and each other. This includes space for staff-parent meetings and gatherings.
- Make the curriculum visible through organisation of space and materials.

Standard 5: Interactions

- Provide large and smaller indoor and outdoor spaces for children to explore and navigate, including quiet spaces for children to be alone or in small groups.
- Create spaces to maximise communication, connections, and engagement.
- Modify stressful environmental stimuli, for example particular sounds, smells, or lights.

Standard 6: Play

- Ensure accessible space for children to play, with constant access between indoor and outdoor, when possible.
- Consider covered areas outside that facilitate play and support people with physical, sensory, or cognitive needs, who might need additional shelter outdoors.
- Provide a range of spaces and materials to attract and stimulate children's interests, promote communication, identity and belonging, and encourage problem-solving and critical thinking.

Standard 11: Professional Practice

 Encourage a culture of reflection, by allocating space for practitioners to discuss and reflect.

Standard 16: Community Involvement

 Promote visibility in the community through permeable boundaries, with displays and materials that capture local diversity.

Principles for a universally designed Early Learning and Care setting

The following four key principles for a UD ELC setting are outlined in the Guidelines.

- Integrated into the neighbourhood
 Urban or suburban settings that are centrally located and within easy reach of the community will make the setting more accessible for pedestrians, cyclists, and those using public transport. It will help embed the setting in the community and create connections and relationships between children, staff, families, and people in the local community.
- Easy to approach, enter, and move about in

 A setting with entrance footpaths that are at least 2 metres wide
 (preferably up to 2.4 m) will provide a safe, accessible entrance route
 for all users, be it a parent with a buggy, an older childminder or
 grandparent, or a staff member or visitor with sensory, physical, or
 cognitive challenges. Wide entrance doors or double doors allow ease
 of movement at peak times and comfortable access for wheelchairs and
 double buggies.
- Easy to understand, and safe to use and manage
 A calm, legible setting where the layout is easy to understand and use
 will provide a supportive environment for all users, particularly those
 with sensory, physical, or cognitive challenges. Fixtures and fittings
 that are clearly visible, accessible, and intuitive to use make the setting
 comfortable, safe, and easier to operate and manage.
- Flexible, cost-effective, and adaptable over time ELC settings must cater to a wide diversity of ages, abilities, and sizes and will benefit from moveable partitions, flexible furniture, and

The environment should provoke and celebrate investigation, risk-taking, and critical thinking.

other features that allow spaces to be reconfigured. This will provide multipurpose spaces that can be used for play, dining, or special events. Such flexibility and adaptability will reduce costly and disruptive building modifications that may otherwise be required.

An ELC setting underpinned by these four principles will not only provide a more accessible and inclusive environment but will also confer an advantage for operators, as it offers a supportive and attractive environment to a wider section of the community.

The self-audit tool is designed to enable people to assess how UD principles are being used and to plan improvements. The key aspects are listed, and irrelevant criteria (such as sleep spaces in a sessional setting) can be excluded. The format mirrors the Guidelines. It encourages reflection and promotes planning to ensure that the environment is easy to access, understand, and use.

Conclusion

When settings are integrated and connected to the community, local context, and natural environment, this forges positive relationships between the children, educators, families, and the locality. There must be space for play, movement, adventure, and challenge through the creation of a flexible, interesting, and diverse setting, both indoors and outdoors. The environment should provoke and celebrate investigation, risk-taking, and critical thinking. It must promote engagement with all the senses and consider users with sensory, physical, or cognitive challenges.

The full suite of materials can be found at: https://aim.gov.ie/universal-design-guidelines-for-elc-settings/.

If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn.

- Ignacio Estrada



Summer Camps

The Centre runs two-week summer camps during July and August for children aged 5-12 years and teenagers aged 13-16 years. Activities are many and varied - participants paint, sculpt, sketch, make pottery and clay items, weave, do batik and paper crafts.

Portfolio Preparation

There is also a Portfolio Preparation course during the summer for young people aged 16-19 years. This course is provided with a view to helping young people organise and expand portfolios with Art College and /or Leaving Cert in mind.

Courses during the year

The Centre runs courses during the Halloween, Christmas and Easter Holidays. Birthday Parties and Team building events.

School Groups Activity Days

School Art and Craft activity days are available from March to June.

Parent and Child Art & Craft Days

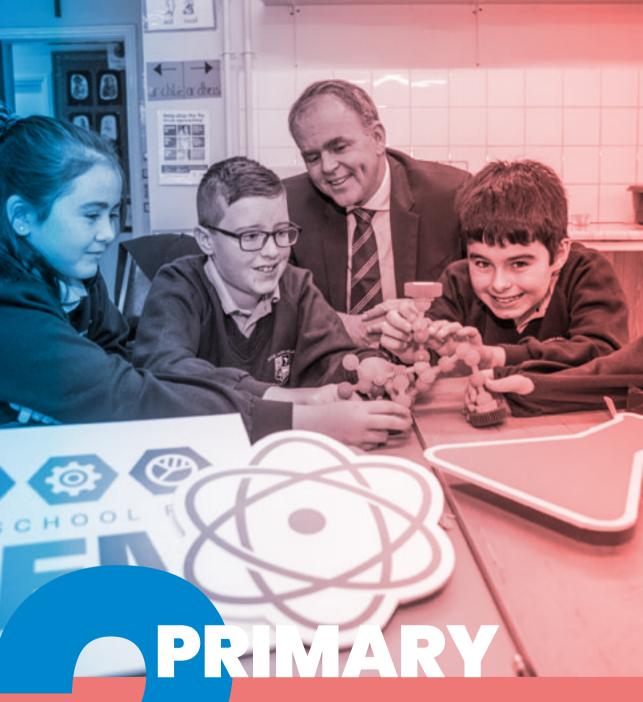
Held on the last Sunday of each month.

PINE FOREST ART CENTRE

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Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh visited St Naul's primary school in Inver, Co Donegal, to launch *Back to School for STEM*, a new national initiative promoting science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).

The initiative is being rolled out by the biopharmaceutical company AbbVie with the aim of informing teachers and students about the exceptional career opportunities that STEM qualifications can unlock.

"Innumerable stones are being turned at the present time to advance primary education and ensure a happy and nurturing environment for all students, for parents, for teachers, and for leaders."

SUSTAINABILITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IS THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

A year in review



All educational initiatives are introduced with good reason. They are based on good principles and are developed with the best of intentions by well-informed, driven people, whose only motivation is to improve the learning of children. Outcomes will decide whether the initiatives succeed or fail.



Damian WhitePresident, Irish
Primary Principals'
Network

"The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil. It is not for you to choose what he shall know, what he shall do. It is chosen and foreordained and he only holds the key to his own secret."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

As I write this article, debate is raging on the radio as to whether Swedish teenage environmental activist Greta Thunberg, whose interest in the environment led her initially to begin protesting outside the Swedish Parliament with only a poster for company, should be back at school. Inside a year, she has mobilised the children of the planet into the most powerful force for change since the 1960s anti-war movement. She has voiced the concerns of her generation and those to come with simple, stark messages on what we must do to secure the future of the planet.

I want her back at school too – so I can sit at her feet and learn from her.

All educational initiatives are introduced with good reason. They are based on good principles and are developed with the best of intentions by well-informed, driven people, whose only motivation is to improve the learning of children. Outcomes will decide whether the initiatives succeed or fail. And we move on to the next initiatives.

A child in primary school in Ireland today, judged against Emerson's assertion, is in a pretty good place. Teachers are striving to improve their schools through honest self-evaluation and consequent school-improvement plans, while Discovery Learning is at the core of what we try to achieve. Opportunities abound for children to learn, with the teacher steering the process through. Children are allowed to be expressive and have opinions heard. Children with special educational needs are guided and taught in ways best suited to support their learning, and individual support plans for them are drawn up with the views of teachers, parents, and the children themselves taken on board.

Children in Ireland can support the call of Greta Thunberg and strike for a better and more sustainable future for the planet, with the support of their teachers. CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

So how can schools themselves be sustained? How can principals, 55% of whom have full-time teaching duties, continue to run schools in a way sustainable to the school and to themselves? How can deputy principals, 90% of whom are full-time class or SEN teachers, support them in this?

Prioritise, Implement, Embed, Wait - PIEW

PIEW is a model of planning, proposed by the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), which will ease the burden on school leaders by assisting them to prioritise competing areas of school life. It offers a way to deal with all the initiatives on the school's planning horizon. It also allows schools, after following the Looking at Our School framework, to plan for changes and the implementation of initiatives in a manner which is cohesive, transparent, and sustainable in the school's context.

At the IPPN's Deputy Principals Conference in 2018, Chief Inspector Harold Hislop urged school leaders to do things differently. He advised schools to consider identifying priorities bearing in mind their capacity and context – priorities informed by Looking at Our Schools 2016 and linked to the School Self-Evaluation/School Improvement Plan.

Taking this into account, PIEW represents a realistic and sustainable way for schools to deal with initiatives and the flow of new ideas that are constantly presented to school leaders as essential for their schools to embrace.

'P' stands for Prioritise. Each school should identify the key areas to be given priority in implementing new strategies or changes of approach, for example a new literacy curriculum. Depending on the school's context and how far down the road the school finds itself in terms of implementing its

objectives, it should set realistic targets for what can be achieved in two years.

Certain approaches may be trialled in individual classes or class groups, and close monitoring of progress will indicate how the initiative will roll out further. This will bring the school to 'I' for Implementation, a period that will consolidate the initiative. After four years, it will have been monitored, tweaked, and improved to reach the 'E' or Embedded stage and be firmly part of school culture.

All the while, other areas will have been prioritised in a cycle that continues over several years and through which many initiatives and practices will be introduced, at a pace and in a context that is sustainable for school leaders, staff, and most importantly pupils. The 'W' stands for Wait - a list of good initiatives and ideas to be introduced when capacity and need allow.

Of course, there are always imperatives that will trump other initiatives in terms of importance, such as Child Protection procedures and GDPR. The PIEW model provides for such situations and is further informed by the provisions of DES Circular 44/2019.

Chief Inspector Harold Hislop urged school leaders to do things differently... to identify priorities.

Supporting new principals

Meeting with a long-retired principal and listening to his astonishment as I filled him in on the supports available to new school leaders caused me to reflect on how supports have improved substantially over relatively few years.

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) continues to deliver the excellent Misneach course for all newly appointed principals. A

two-year personal and professional development programme, Misneach seeks to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and qualities of beginning school leaders, empowering them to respond effectively to the realities of managing and leading in the Irish school context. The training is designed to give them the confidence and courage to challenge and be challenged as

they work for the betterment of their schools.

As well as focusing on the imperative to ensure quality student outcomes and ongoing school improvement, Misneach guides new leaders towards sustainable leadership, building capacity for self-reflection, self-awareness, and self-care. It fosters professional autonomy and local decision-making

in collaboration with pupils, parents, and management, working towards a values-based shared vision. It supports the creation and maintenance of professional learning communities which promote highly effective networking and collaborative peer supports.

Misneach is guided by the five core principles that underpin good practice in school leadership:

- 1. Moral purpose (the improvement of learning for every child in your school)
- 2. Courage to act

Misneach seeks to develop the

knowledge, skills,

leaders.

attitudes, and qualities

of beginning school

- 3. Modelling of good practice
- 4. Sustainability (by empowering others to develop leadership skills)
- 5. Situational awareness (knowledge and consideration of your school's context).

The Centre for School Leadership (CSL), since its inception in 2015 as a partnership with the IPPN, the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), and the Department of Education and Skill (DES), has acted as a catalyst for collaboration in the system and introduced mentoring and coaching as leadership tools. To date, almost 700 newly appointed principals have accessed support from 450 trained mentors, 700 principals have accessed one-to-one coaching, and more recently 100 schools have accessed team coaching.

The CSL Post-Graduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL) began in 2017 in collaboration with UL, NUIG, and UCD, and 800 aspiring leaders have engaged with this course. CSL has also researched and developed a Model of Professional Learning for school leadership, and has identified a continuum of leadership in Irish schools. It plans to invite providers of professional learning to engage with the CSL endorsement process to ensure that Irish school leaders have access to the highest quality of professional learning. It is also supporting 101 schools in 24 leadership clusters nationwide that are focusing on building leadership capacity both within and between schools.

Well-being

Since the publication of the government's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023, schools have been anxious to ensure they are in line with best practice and recommended pathways for the best results for children. It is also significant that the document contains a significant section on the welfare of teachers.

Well-being is present 'when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical well-being and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life' (adapted from the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health).

For many schools, planning around well-being will involve acknowledging good practice already in place and building on that. It will be an intrinsic part of school self-evaluation to identify strengths, gaps, and weaknesses. Schools will require the commitment of

all sectors of the community to implement good well-being practice towards sustainable benefits for all children and education staff.

It must be remembered that schools operate in different contexts. PIEW is the best model for successful and sustainable school welfare initiatives to be introduced and maintained.

Other issues discussed included the difficulties schools face in filling board of management (BOM) positions...

Primary Education Forum

The Primary Education Forum was established to facilitate the exchange of information between the DES, its agencies, other public bodies and agencies, school management bodies, school leadership organisations, and teacher representative organisations regarding actions in the Action Plan for Education and their implementation in the primary school sector. It is chaired by a senior DES official, and the Minister for Education and Skills has attended a number of meetings.

This forum has provided a credible platform for the IPPN, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), and the management bodies to highlight the issue of principals' workload and the need for a 'calendar of reform' for introducing new initiatives and policies. This is in keeping with the aim of the Forum: 'to support the planning and sequencing of change in the primary school sector and to exchange information on the intent and impacts of the actions in the Action Plan in order to look for synergies and opportunities for schools to streamline implementation and address workload issues'.

In July 2019, a symposium on 'Strengthening and Supporting Small Schools' was attended by all relevant agencies and, significantly, by Joe McHugh, the Minister for Education and Skills, and Michael Ring, his counterpart in the Department of Rural and Community Development. IPPN CEO Páiric

Clerkin gave a well-received outline of the challenges facing teaching principals as regards workload, initiative overload, and teacher well-being. Other issues discussed included the difficulties schools face in filling board of management (BOM) positions, funding and school transport, the value of schools to the life of rural communities, and innovative ways of sharing resources.

Admissions to Schools Act 2018

New entrants to schools will now be governed by the Admissions to Schools Act 2018, certain sections of which will be implemented immediately, while others will be phased in over a number of years. Thanks to contributions at the Primary Education Forum, certain aspects of the Act will be delayed to give schools adequate time to prepare for them.

Every school must make an explicit statement in its admission policy that it will not discriminate against applicants for admission on any of a number of grounds specified. The Act includes provision for single-sex and denominational schools to reflect, in their admission policy, exemptions applicable under equality legislation.

Schools must outline their characteristic spirit. They must give details of arrangements for students who do not wish to attend religious instruction.

Section 62 provides that a school must prepare its admission policy after consultation with the school community and must publish the policy. It provides for a default position that all applicants must be enrolled if the school is not oversubscribed. It also sets out the selection criteria that schools are prohibited from applying.

By the start of 2021/22, all schools will be required to prepare and publish a notice each year prior to accepting applications for admission. This annual admission notice sets out important

information on how the school's admission policy and enrolment application forms can be obtained, the relevant dates for the admission process, and the number of places available for the school year concerned.

The patron or Minister may issue direction to a BOM or Education and Training Board (ETB) in relation to the admission of students and may appoint an independent person. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) or Tusla may designate a school if a child cannot gain enrolment.

There will be an amended appeals process for student expulsion, suspension, or failure to gain admission. The Act amends the Equality Status Act in relation to admission, and there are further amendments in relation to admission for students of minority religions. The Act requires school principals to administer the enrolment directly and be accountable to the BOM in that regard.

All applicants shall be admitted unless the school is oversubscribed or parents fail to give a written undertaking to accept the code of behaviour.

Schools must outline their characteristic spirit. They must give details of arrangements for students who do not wish to attend religious instruction. They must provide details of selection criteria where there are excess applications for available places, and procedures for appealing refusal to

admit a student. The siblings rule continues to apply, but a cap of 25% has been fixed on places allocated to children of past pupils.

Changes to standardised testing

Standardised testing is monitored through the Educational Research Centre (ERC). The latest review began in 2016 with a review of existing tests and followed with piloted new versions, analysis of results, the establishment of norms, and the development of certain elements of the test to be taken online.

The new tests were designed to reflect changes in curriculum, society, and engagement and to develop the possibilities of computer-based testing. It was also essential to establish up-to-date norms, allowing for the phenomenon of 'norm drift', whereby tests become easier over time as familiarity with their content increases. With older tests, most pupils were scoring above the mean, which skewed the national bell curve and gave increasingly improper readings of capabilities. National standards had also improved beyond these tests, as reflected in National Assessments in 2014 in Mathematics and Reading, TIMMS 2015 testing in Mathematics and PIRLS, and ePIRLs tests in 2016 in Reading.

Student and Parent Charter

In September 2019, the DES published the Student and Parent Charter. It is clear that the DES has taken a legislative approach to the development of this charter, which will influence how schools interact with parents and pupils. Relationships are central to the work of schools, and a positive school culture is paramount. For the vast majority of interactions between pupils and parents and their schools, those relationships ensure positive, empathetic, and pleasant exchanges, where the views of all are respected and the child is kept at the centre of the conversation. 'The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil' is a central tenet of how we approach each day as education professionals.

The new tests were designed to reflect changes in curriculum, society and engagement and to develop the possibilities of computer-based testing.

It is the view of the IPPN that the charter largely ignores this reality. The charter was an opportunity to promote the sharing of responsibility between schools, parents, and pupils. The way the press release and draft charter are framed makes it clear this is not the Department's preferred approach.

Partnership for Schools

Partnership for Schools Ireland is a joint initiative by the National Parents Council Primary (NPC) and the IPPN. Better outcomes for children are the main objectives of a 'Partnership School', achieved by the whole school community planning and working together on agreed activities.

The model originated in America and is becoming very popular around Ireland. It seeks to encourage children, school staff, parents, and community partners to work together to form an effective partnership in their school

for the benefit of the children. The Partnership Schools Ireland programme is now in its third year, with twenty-nine schools participating. It hopes to develop further and involve more schools across the country.

When setting up the first Partnership Team in the school, the principal chooses the membership, ensuring that those involved will be committed to this partnership style of working. After training, the Partnership Team will then:

- develop a one-year action plan with activities linked to goals selected by the partnership: two curricular, one behavioural, and one to improve the welcoming climate in the school
- monitor each goal and work together to overcome any barriers in achieving it
- recruit and invite others to help and achieve goals each year
- at the end of each year, identify how each goal has benefited the children and the school's partnership progress
- ensure the board of management, parent association, and parents are informed of the Partnership Team's activities and celebrate its achievements.

Getting honest input from children, parents, teachers, and community members is both refreshing and informative and brings richness and vitality to projects which may otherwise be difficult to achieve.

School secretaries – placing a proper value on their work

If there is one thing all parties involved in primary education would agree on, it is the value to the school of a good secretary. Comparing the role of the secretary today with that of yesteryear, when typing, answering the phone, and photocopying formed the bulk of the work, reveals a vastly changed and infinitely more complex role.

Today's secretary is central to the recording and storage of vital data, to maintaining the school's day-to-day accounts and keeping within the parameters of the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) regulations, and to handling numerous visitors, callers, emails, and letters. It is a key role which should have proper remuneration and paid holidays in line with civil service personnel with similar duties.

Summary

Primary education in Ireland is mostly in a good place. However, for sustainable results, we must have sustainable leadership. This must come from realistic expectations of what schools can deliver and the timeframe in which reforms, where needed, can happen. Those expected to lead change must be given the time, professional respect, and supports to do so.

When school leaders are given the time to lead in a sustainable way, the children will be the great beneficiaries as they face the uncertain world of tomorrow.

PRIMARY CURRICULUM REVIEW

Summary findings from parents on a future curriculum

As part of the NCCA's review of the primary curriculum, twenty focus group sessions were held in October 2018 with parents of children attending primary school. The sessions were an opportunity to gather parents' perspectives and suggestions for a redeveloped curriculum. The parents represented different school contexts



Introduction

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is reviewing and redeveloping the curriculum for primary schools. Phase one of the work took place in 2017 with the consultation on Curriculum Structure and Time. It provided the first opportunity to step back and consider how the curriculum is structured and how time is used across it.

Phase two, in progress since the beginning of 2018, focuses on the development of the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework. During this phase, the NCCA is working with teachers, early childhood practitioners, school leaders, parents, and children as part of a Schools Forum established in May 2018. We held twenty focus group sessions with parents from the Forum whose children were attending primary school. The purpose of the sessions was to develop an understanding of what parents would like to see children learning in primary school, how they would like to see children learning, and what skills they would like children to develop which would benefit them now and in the future (see Appendix 1).

The informal sessions lasted approximately one hour, providing opportunities for parents to interact with each other, listen to all views, and give a good airing to the issues. The largest session had fifty-five participants, while the smallest had five. Approximately 400 parents in total attended a parent focus group across a fourweek week period (see Appendix 2 for venues). What follows is a snapshot of the main findings, presented under four themes, with a concluding section on other ideas.

What would parents like to see children learning in primary school?

Parents indicated a strong preference for children developing positive dispositions and moral values. There was clear agreement that children need plenty of opportunities to develop a range of positive dispositions which would benefit them both in and out of school. There was also strong feeling that from a young age, children should have the opportunity to learn a language other than English and Irish.

Arlene Forster

Deputy Chief Executive. NCCA

Hal O'Neill

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Claire Reidy

Education Officer, NCCA

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Director, NCCA

Some parents felt that children should be exposed to the cultural aspects of language learning and have the opportunity to develop foreign language skills. Some attention was given to including ethics as part of children's learning. Parents spoke of an ethical framework that would not necessarily be part of Religious Education. They debated the importance of citizenship and societal values and how children should experience an inclusive school community. Parents felt that technology is and will continue to be an important part of children's lives, and many would like to see more focus on computers and basic IT.

How would parents like to see children learning?

Parents voiced their preference for learning experiences that are practical while being *fun and enjoyable*. Children should be exposed to a range of learning materials and experiences both inside the classroom and outside in the local environment. The overall view was that children benefit from group learning and interacting with their peers. The importance of *collaboration* and *cooperation* was referenced. Integration and thematic learning were mentioned in terms of *core subjects being integrated more and cross-subject learning*.

Some parents felt that thematic learning would *allow teachers more freedom* and help to reduce curriculum overload. Interestingly, a specific preference was expressed – albeit from a minority of parents – for thematic learning rather than subject-based learning in the junior classes. The theme of playful learning featured prominently, with parents seeing many advantages to it. There was a suggestion that play stops too early in primary school.

What skills would parents like to see children develop?

Parents felt that children should acquire life skills that will enable them to thrive. The overall view was that social and emotional skills, well-being,

and preparation for the real world are critical for all children. There were suggestions that the primary curriculum should therefore support the development of children's <code>self-care</code>, <code>self-esteem</code>, and <code>self-belief</code>. There were many references to the importance of coping skills and to children needing flexibility in attitude. High value was placed on communication skills.

Parents also suggested the inclusion of skills that they felt would support and enhance learning, the most frequent being critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving, and information-management skills. Parents in most groups commented favourably on the value of children learning

general IT skills in primary school: children growing up in a digital age need to embrace technology in a safe and productive way. Referring to their children's experience of *CoderDojo*, some parents suggested the future inclusion of coding in a redeveloped curriculum.

The purpose of the sessions was to develop an understanding of what parents would like to see children learning in primary school.

CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

Are there particular subjects that are important or no longer as important for children in primary school?

The future of English and Mathematics generated considerable discussion, with strong views expressed about the importance of both subjects for children's education and future prospects in life. Many parents felt that children would benefit from an increased focus on science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) education – science, in particular. Some references were made to engineering and opportunities for children to work with Lego.

Parents spoke about the importance of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), with calls for time allocated to it to be increased. There were also calls for more focus on emotions, feelings, and relationships in Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Physical Education (PE) was referenced positively a number of times. When parents raised the importance of visual arts and music, they called for them to be retained and expanded.

It was felt that Irish in schools should be part of a national discussion about the role of Irish in society. Its importance in a redeveloped curriculum was questioned by those who considered the language to be in decline, and although many acknowledged the value of second-language learning, they suggested that the time spent learning Irish could be better spent on a modern language. Where Religious Education (RE) arose, parents had a range of views: some expressed support for it; others questioned its place in the curriculum and felt that the focus should be on values and ethics.

Parents spoke about the importance of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), with calls for time allocated to it to be increased.

Other ideas from the consultation with parents

In responding to the questions, parents took the opportunity to talk about other educational issues.

- There were calls for increased autonomy for schools: more flexibility in choosing children's learning experiences, e.g., greater opportunities for physical movement, and flexibility in the allocation of time across the school day, including time for breaks and recreation. Some cautioned against the possibility that schools with too much autonomy could become specialist and elitist. Autonomy with guidance and examples was preferable.
- Parents who expressed concern about children's transition into and out
 of primary school felt that there is not enough continuity and cohesion
 across the preschool, primary, and post-primary sectors in terms of
 what and how children learn.
- A significant thread of discussion concerned the role of homework.
 While some parents felt it was a valuable part of learning, many felt
 it had a negative impact on their children's quality of life. There were
 suggestions that if homework was more meaningful, it might be more
 helpful.
- Parents posited that reducing the pupil–teacher ratio would contribute to a more positive school experience, *particularly in the infant classes*.
- Assessment should be more varied, and children need to be aware of all types of assessment and to appreciate their own skills and abilities.

Some parents felt that assessment is benchmarked too rigidly in terms of expected learning and standards in different subjects.

Parents spoke about their own role in supporting their children and
the school. They felt that they should be encouraged to help in more
practical ways; examples included helping with reading or sports – to
relieve some of the burden on teachers. They also felt that as the
curriculum is developed for teachers, there should be accompanying
materials for parents too, explaining the journey that their child will
travel.

Conclusion

While key themes emerged, there was also some contradictory messaging. For example, parents called for a focus on soft skills, while expressing a desire for continued focus on literacy and numeracy. Some parents felt that while the current curriculum was too crowded, they did not wish to lose any of the richness from their children's current learning experience. They wanted more time for children to learn in a multidisciplinary way but also to see more focus on health and well-being and digital literacy. Many

parents were unfamiliar with the structure and content of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and were surprised by the number of subjects and their suggested time allocations.

A significant thread of discussion concerned the role of homework.

The NCCA wishes to thank the parents for their participation, and for sharing their time and perspectives so generously. See www.ncca.ie for the full report on the findings from parents as part of the review of the primary curriculum. The NCCA will publish the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* in late 2019 for an extensive public consultation in the first half of 2020.

APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS' FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

- 1. What would you like to see children learning in primary school?
- 2. How would you like to see children learning? (How do you think children learn best?)
- 3. What skills would you like children to develop which would be of benefit to them now and into the future?
- 4. Are there particular curriculum areas/subjects that are especially important for children in the primary school years?
- 5. Are there particular curriculum areas/subjects that are no longer as important for children as they may have been?
- 6. Is there anything that you would like to see introduced into the curriculum that is not already included?
- 7. Is there anything else that you would like to say about what and how children learn in primary school?

APPENDIX 2: PARENTS' FOCUS GROUP VENUES

Court National School, Wexford

Creeslough National School, Donegal

Greystones Community National School, Wicklow

Heath National School, Laois

Inch National School, Clare

Naas Community National School, Kildare

Newtown Junior School, Waterford

Rathfarnham Parish National School, Dublin

Rochestown Educate Together National School, Cork

Scoil Bhríde JNS, Dublin

Scoil Bhríde, Cork

Scoil Fhursa, Galway

Scoil Mhuire agus Eoin, Cork

Scoil Mhuire Senior, Dublin

Scoil Ursula Naofa, Waterford

St. Mary's National School, Westmeath

St. Maries of the Isle National School, Cork

St. Michael's Special School, Roscommon St. Etchen's National School, Westmeath

St. Joseph's Primary School, Tipperary

St. Comán's Wood Primary School, Roscommon





Integrating Special Needs facilities in Mainstream Schools

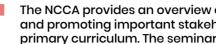
Scoil Chríost Rí in Co Limerick is winner of the RIAI Public Choice Award 2019. The building was designed by Drake Hourigan Architects in close collaboration with the principal and teachers of the school on Limerick city's north side.

The school provides for a two-classroom Autism Spectrum Disorder suite with a central activities space and a sensory garden. It also has an entrance courtyard and atrium space for whole school circulation.

"This project is about inclusion and integration so that all children get the opportunity to be educated together with their siblings, cousins and friends," Drake Hourigan said.

PRIMARY CURRICULUM REVIEW (PHASE 2)

Curriculum consultation seminars



The NCCA provides an overview of its five curriculum seminars supporting and promoting important stakeholder engagement in the review of the primary curriculum. The seminars drew on commissioned research, and this article presents the main themes arising from the discussions.



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former Director. NCCA

Claire Reidy

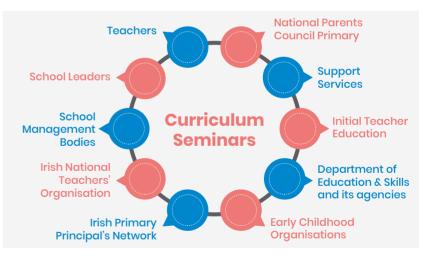
Education Officer, NCCA

Dr Derek Grant

Director, NCCA

Introduction

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is currently reviewing and redeveloping the curriculum for primary schools. In support of this work, five seminars were held between March 2018 and January 2019. The curriculum seminars were linked thematically to a commissioned series of research papers, which stimulated rich discussions and drew on the experiences and views of participants in a spirit of plurality. They brought together teachers, school leaders, and a wide range of stakeholders, giving them opportunities to consider key points emerging from the research commissioned to support the curriculum review (see list at end of article).



The curriculum seminars promoted dialogue and engagement on curriculum change in the primary school system, focusing on areas such as purpose and values, curriculum structure, knowledge and pedagogy, integration and alignment, assessment, learning, and teaching. A report of discussions at each seminar, and accompanying videos of the keynote presentations, are published on the Primary Developments section of the NCCA website at www.ncca.ie/primary.

This article identifies themes of a general nature that participants considered germane to the process and outcomes of the redevelopment.

Moral purpose

The moral purpose of curriculum and the values enshrined in it was a theme revisited across the seminars. Largely it was felt that the social dimension of curriculum should be foregrounded and its values should be stated in clear, unambiguous language. Regarding outcomes for children, some participants identified inquiry-based learning as being important to promote the development of critical skills needed so that children acquire knowledge and develop understanding.

Children's well-being was seen as a key dimension of the curriculum, giving children an awareness of their social responsibility as citizens of an increasingly fragile world. These sentiments lend support to the inclusion of broad learning outcomes that will help to shift the curriculum focus from content objectives more firmly in the direction of process and understanding.

Teacher agency

A concern that surfaced in various ways across all of the seminars was the somewhat perplexing question of teacher agency, especially the challenge of finding just the right degree of agency. For example, teachers felt that changing the curriculum from detailed, prescriptive content objectives to broad learning outcomes would be attractive because of the autonomy it would offer, but they were wary of the added responsibility for content and pedagogy implied by such a change.

A concern that surfaced in various ways across all of the seminars was the somewhat perplexing question of teacher agency.

The desire for recognition of the professionalism and independence of teachers and schools was often tempered by concern that teachers need their choices to be supported by guidelines and exemplification. This concern has relevance for initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD) during the implementation phase.

The learning context and environment

The seminars saw discussion of the context in which a redeveloped primary curriculum would be implemented. Participants argued that the physical spaces of classrooms were an expression of the values enshrined in the curriculum; for example, whether they were active spaces providing freedom for children and facilitating inquiry-based learning.

Consultation and dialogue during development and implementation

Participants welcomed opportunities to learn from the perspectives offered by research and the views of other stakeholders. They stressed the need to keep the consultation active and widespread throughout the development and implementation phases. In this regard they recognised

the importance of NCCA's ongoing engagement with primary, post-primary, and preschools through its established Schools Forum.

Participants at seminar 5 were much taken with the phased introduction of the new curriculum in Wales – available to schools in 2020, but without a requirement for implementation until 2022, giving schools time and space to develop their understanding of the curriculum style, content, and intent.

Curriculum alignment

Regarding curriculum alignment and continuity, some participants argued that the system needed to do more to promote dialogue between the sectors, and to ensure greater alignment of qualifications and working conditions between early childhood practitioners and their counterparts in primary school. Dialogue of this kind was seen to be especially important in the context of high-quality transitions from early childhood settings to primary school.

A playful pedagogy

Across the seminars the discussion on pedagogy was of particular relevance. It centred frequently on the link between pedagogy and children's skills development, especially the kinds of critical skills needed to enable children to grow up safely in a complex, information-laden environment. Many participants argued that this is best done through a playful pedagogy that fosters inquiry-based learning.

The prevalence of concerns about pedagogy suggests that the NCCA needs to provide significant leadership in this area, perhaps in collaboration with the providers of teacher CPD.

Pedagogy was central to discussions about values and teacher agency in seminar 1. Seminar 3 raised the question of pedagogical continuity from preschool to primary and from junior to senior classes in primary school. The call in seminar 4 for examples of learning theory in practice underlined the need for shared understanding of pedagogy, especially of playful pedagogy. Seminar 5, with its focus on assessment, learning, and teaching, highlighted the importance of assessment as a key aspect of pedagogy, not an afterthought or add-on.

Some seminar participants felt there is a need to combat misunderstandings about the nature and value of play-based pedagogy, arguing that too often it is referred to in terms of unstructured playing sessions – as a kind of timeout from 'real learning'. They felt that too often it is seen as appropriate only for younger children, to be left behind when the 'real learning' happens later on.

The prevalence of concerns about pedagogy in these consultation seminars suggests that the NCCA needs to provide significant leadership in this area, perhaps in collaboration with the providers of teacher CPD.

Joined-up thinking

With particular relevance to the curriculum implementation phase, many participants stressed the importance of a system-wide response to change management. They were especially concerned with 'readiness for implementation', incorporating joined-up thinking in respect of:

- CPD and ITE
- inspections by the Department of Education and Skills that support the redeveloped curriculum, teachers, and schools
- · a clear articulation of values and outcomes
- provision of supportive and appropriate resources
- support for transitions and for professional dialogue across the sectors
- widespread consultation and engagement with all stakeholders, including children.

Conclusion

Participants in the seminars were supportive of the direction being taken by the NCCA in its review and redevelopment of the primary curriculum. They stressed the importance of careful and collaborative management of the changes to come. The five seminars were seen as an important beginning in this regard, involving a wide cross-section of key stakeholders in a consultation that is set to continue.

The NCCA would like to thank everyone who attended the curriculum seminars and who contributed so richly to this phase of the work. The Council will publish the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* in late 2019 for an extensive public consultation in the first half of 2020.

Detailed reports from the curriculum seminars are published on the NCCA website at: www.ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/curriculum-review-and-redevelopment

Seminar 1 (21 March 2018):

- · towards an overview of a redeveloped primary curriculum
- · towards a values-led curriculum

Seminar 2 (17 May 2018):

- effective pedagogies
- · curriculum integration
- competencies in the curriculum
- · knowledge in the curriculum

Seminar 3 (3 October 2018):

- early years: context, policy, and learning experiences
- transitions: primary to post-primary, and early years to primary
- curriculum alignment and progression: early years education and care to primary school

Seminar 4 (29 November 2018):

- theoretical perspectives on children's learning
- parents' perspectives on a redeveloped primary curriculum

Seminar 5 (31 January 2019):

- international perspectives on early years and primary curricula
- aligning assessment, learning, and teaching in curricular reform and implementation.

Research papers supporting the curriculum seminars:

'A melange or a mosaic of theories? How theoretical perspectives on children's learning and development can inform a responsive pedagogy in a redeveloped primary curriculum' (Prof. Emer Ring, Dr Lisha O'Sullivan, Marie Ryan, and Patrick Burke, Mary Immaculate College)

'Aligning assessment, learning and teaching in curricular reform and implementation' (Dr Zita Lysaght, Dr Darina Scully, and Prof. Michael O'Leary, CARPE, Dublin City University; Dr Damian Murchan, Trinity College Dublin; and Dr Gerry Shiel, Educational Research Centre)

'Audit of the content of early years and primary curricula in eight jurisdictions' (Sharon O'Donnell, Information and Education Specialist)

'Curriculum integration' (Dr Karin Bacon, Marino Institute of Education)

'Effective pedagogies for a redeveloped primary curriculum' (Prof. Louis Volante, Brock University)

'Literature review of the Introduction to the Primary School Curriculum (1999)' (Dr Thomas Walsh, Maynooth University)

OECD Education Working Paper No. 193: 'Curriculum alignment and progression between early childhood education and care and primary school'

'Parents' perspectives on review and redevelopment' (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment)

'Preschool to primary school transition initiative: Final report' (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment)

'Priorities and values of society in a redeveloped primary curriculum' (Dr Jones Irwin, Dublin City University)

'Research-informed analysis of 21st-century competencies in a redeveloped primary curriculum' (Emeritus Prof. Carol McGuinness)

'The place of knowledge in curricula: A research-informed analysis' (Prof. Dominic Wyse and Dr Yana Manyukhina, UCL Institute of Education)

'The transition to primary education: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland study' (Economic and Social Research Institute)

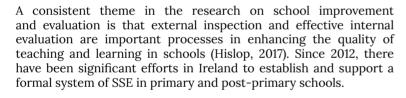
SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

The evolution of the process in the Irish school context

This article examines the evolution of school self-evaluation (SSE) in Ireland. It charts the earlier policy developments and publications that were precursors to the formal SSE process, which was introduced in 2012 and which leads to improvement-focused planning and changes in teaching and learning. It also examines how the process is now supported as a way of working in schools.

Introduction

School self-evaluation (SSE) is a collaborative, whole-school process of internal review and reflection. It is an important quality-assurance mechanism in educational systems (OECD, 2013) that can sit alongside external evaluation, with each complementing the other in contributing to school improvement. Through self-evaluation, schools can shape their own improvement agenda by identifying priority areas for development and by planning for improvement in a way that takes account of their particular school context. SSE requires school leaders and teachers to develop their own internal processes of critical self-reflection (Nelson et al., 2015).



The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) has sought to develop internal self-evaluation in schools as part of a larger reform of the approach to quality-assuring schools, early-years settings, and centres for education. The Inspectorate reviewed its approaches to inspection to ensure that inspection models were responsive to school and system need. Underpinning that reformed approach was a recognition of the complementary nature of external inspection and school self-evaluation.

Between 2000 and 2010 school inspection in Ireland developed significantly to become a collaborative, co-professional process that seeks to balance the need for public accountability and external quality assurance, with a clear emphasis on encouraging ongoing school improvement (Hislop, 2017). Establishing self-evaluation in Irish schools was identified as a key action in the Department of Education and Skills' 2011–2014 Strategic Plan, and in Our Purpose, Our Plan, 2011–13, the Inspectorate's strategic plan. This resulted in the formal introduction of school self-evaluation in 2012.



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First steps

Self-evaluation was not an entirely new concept in Irish schools in 2012. There had been a trajectory towards this way of working over the previous decade or more. The Education Act 1998 and the partnership agreements of the early 2000s required schools in Ireland to take responsibility for internal review and improvement through School Development Planning (SDP) (Mathews, 2010). Section 21 of the Education Act 1998 placed a duty on schools to create, implement, and regularly review a whole-school plan in consultation with stakeholders. The DES issued guidelines to schools (DES, 1999) to support SDP, and support services dedicated to SDP were established.

SDP was designed to have a clear action-planning cycle, and over time it became a customary way of working in most Irish schools. An analysis of whole-school planning (DES, 2006) concluded that schools had become familiar with the whole-school planning process and recognised its benefits. However, its impact on classroom practice and on continuous whole-school improvement was a matter that required further development.

A key aspect was the requirement for participating schools to engage in selfreflective, evidencebased planning that resulted in an improvement plan for each school. In 2003, the DES published 'Looking at Our School: An aid to self-evaluation in primary/second-level schools'. These documents were designed to complement SDP and to support schools to engage in self-review. They were developed as a result of Ireland's participation in an international project called Effective School Self-Evaluation (ESSE) by the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI, 2003). The documents clearly set out a vision for SSE as an essential component of school improvement. Five evaluation themes, reflected in the Inspectorate's emerging Whole-School Evaluation (WSE) model of external inspection, were identified, and a four-point quality continuum was provided to support

schools to rate their practice. However, uptake of this approach to SSE by primary and post-primary schools was limited.

A related and important step in the SSE journey occurred in the context of a DES initiative to support learners in schools located in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage. 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS): An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion' was launched in May 2005. A key aspect of the plan was the requirement for participating schools to engage in self-reflective, evidence-based planning that resulted in an improvement plan for each school. Planning was required under specific themes, including pupil attendance, retention of learners and their progression to the next level of education, literacy and numeracy standards, and the school's work with parents and others. An Inspectorate evaluation of the implementation of DEIS action planning in a sample of the participating schools (DES, 2011c) pointed to how such planning could most effectively impact on learning and teaching.

In preparation for the formal introduction of SSE in 2012, the Inspectorate established a research project with a number of pilot schools, informed by Inspectorate and international research. The project and feedback from the participant schools shaped the development of a six-step SSE process, the expectations at system level, and the development of supporting materials. During this development phase, there was significant consultation and

discussion with stakeholders, including management bodies, principal representative organisations, teacher unions, and parent bodies.

Supporting the establishment of SSE in schools

The establishment of SSE as a way of working was underpinned by key commitments in the strategy statements of the Inspectorate (Inspectorate of the DES, 2011) and the DES (DES, 2011a). A suite of supports was published by the DES to help schools engage with SSE, and to build self-evaluation capacity and skills among school leaders and teachers. Efforts were made to ensure that SSE did not become overly focused on school compliance with regulations and circulars. All supports focused on developing capacity by empowering school leaders and teachers to engage with the process.

Circulars 0039/2012 (primary) and 0040/2012 (post-primary) were published by the Department in 2012 as SSE was being introduced into the system. The circulars set expectations for all schools to engage in self-evaluation in three areas between 2012 and 2016. In light of the publication of 'Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life' (DES, 2011b) and the national drive to raise literacy and numeracy standards, all schools

were asked to carry out SSE in literacy and numeracy at a whole-school level over the four-year period, as well as in one other subject or aspect of teaching and learning which schools themselves could select based on their own needs. Two further circulars, 0039/2016 (primary) and 0040/2016 (post-primary), were issued to guide schools for the second SSE cycle from 2016 to 2020. These provided greater flexibility for schools to identify areas of focus and to shape their own improvement agenda.

A significant support for SSE was the publication of 'Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Primary/Post-Primary Schools'.

To complement each set of circulars, School Self-Evaluation Guidelines for primary and post-primary schools were published and provided to all schools (DES, 2012a, 2012b, 2016e, 2016f). Designed to help schools navigate the six-step SSE, they suggested methods of evidence-gathering and provided templates for SSE reports and school improvement plans. The 2016 Guidelines benefited from the experiences of schools and teachers in the first SSE cycle and from feedback from a National School Self-Evaluation Advisory Group that comprised representatives of the educational partners, including management bodies, teacher unions, and principal and parent representative groups.

The 2012 Guidelines presented a quality framework for teaching and learning and provided the first published set of standards for this dimension of the work of Irish schools. It drew on research on school effectiveness, quality, and improvement, and provided quality statements at the level of significant strengths. The Guidelines suggested that schools might use the framework to make judgements about their evidence and to help identify strengths and areas for improvement. By 2015, high percentages of schools reported their engagement with self-evaluation (Hislop, 2017).

A significant support for SSE was introduced at the start of the second SSE cycle. This was the publication of 'Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Primary/Post-Primary Schools' (LAOS). This quality framework provides standards on two key dimensions of a school's

work: teaching and learning, and leadership and management. It gives a clear picture of what good or very good practices in a school look like, as each standard is exemplified at two levels through statements of *effective* practice and highly *effective* practice. It is designed to provide a common language for the system to discuss quality. As well as supporting school self-evaluation, LAOS is used by inspectors in all models of inspection to consider quality and make evaluation judgements.

Advisory supports for schools

Another important dimension in the evolution of SSE in the school system was the advisory supports provided for schools and school leaders. The Inspectorate established a dedicated website, www.schoolself-evaluation. ie, and a social media presence for SSE. Resources including videos and webinars, together with examples of good practice, were developed in response to the emerging needs of schools.

SSE has a dedicated website, a social media presence, and resources including videos and webinars, along with examples of good practice.

One resource, an e-zine called SSE *Updates*, has been published twice a year since 2012. The Inspectorate held a national conference on SSE in 2015, and facilitated a successful annual programme of regional seminars in education centres for school leaders. The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) also provided valuable support for implementing SSE through its seminars for school principals and its support to individual schools.

Another important support was, and continues to be, the SSE advisory visits by the Inspectorate. These involve an inspector visiting the school at a pre-arranged time to work with the

principal and other staff members to discuss the school's progress with SSE. An advisory, problem-solving approach is applied to help schools get the most from their six-step process. Between 2012 and early 2014, all primary and post-primary schools were visited. Since that initial programme, it is open to schools to request a visit, and many do so each year. Common areas that schools focus on during these visits include: using LAOS to support SSE, gathering of evidence, target-setting, and monitoring and reviewing school improvement targets and actions.

SSE as a way of working

Towards the end of the introductory cycle in 2016, there was evidence that the six-step SSE was beginning to be a feature of life in Irish schools. Its implementation in primary schools in 2016/17 was impeded by industrial action, which was not connected to any objection to SSE but was taken in pursuit of restoring middle-management posts in primary schools (Hislop, 2017).

The six-step SSE has started to become the recognised improvement and change-management process in the Irish school system. DEIS schools were supported to use SSE to engage in their improvement planning. The potential of SSE to support change at school level was also highlighted in curriculum implementation circulars such as those concerning the Primary Language Curriculum and Junior Cycle. The application of SSE to curriculum change has also been exemplified in resources in the SSE

Updates and the SSE website and has been a focus at regional Inspectorate SSE seminars and at CPD events provided by the support services.

Consistent support and messaging have been provided to the system on how to use SSE to address areas that schools have identified as priorities. For example, improving digital learning is a priority for many schools as a result of the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015–2020. The resources provided to schools, including the Digital Learning Framework (DES, 2017a, 2017b) and the planning materials for digital learning, have been closely aligned with LAOS and the six-step SSE. Resources are also being developed to help schools undertake SSE in the STEM areas and in a range of subject and curriculum areas at both primary and post-primary levels.

A small number of schools are also engaged in other improvement initiatives that involve SSE, such as the School Excellence Fund and the Step-Up Project. Schools participating in the School Excellence Fund work in clusters with other local schools and early-years settings to identify innovative solutions to issues that are specific to their contexts. The focus of participating clusters includes DEIS, STEM, digital learning, and creativity. The Step-Up Project supports post-primary schools to use SSE to improve aspects of the implementation of the framework for Junior Cycle in the subject areas of English, Business Studies, and Science. Participating schools in both initiatives have

SSE in Irish schools is entering its eighth school year and evidence from inspection and advisory work suggests that good progress is being made.

received tailored advisory visits from inspectors and intensive CPD support.

Conclusion

At the time of writing, SSE in Irish schools is entering its eighth school year. Evidence from inspection and advisory work suggests that good progress is being made towards achieving the goal of a robust, system-wide process of school self-evaluation. Many schools have cultivated positive cultures and highly reflective processes, although there is still much work to be done to fully embed SSE in the work of schools (Hislop, 2017).

The education partners have supported the introduction of school self-evaluation and have provided valuable suggestions at each step of the journey. The work of school leaders has also been important; the more skilled the leadership of a school, the more likely it is that its SSE practices will be effective in bringing about school improvement.

From the outset, it was recognised that establishing a rich culture of selfevaluation in all Irish schools was a long-term goal. There is a positive energy and momentum behind SSE across the system. The next few years hold the potential to further develop and embed the process and to ensure a strong reflective culture in all of our schools.

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COSÁN – A PATHWAY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Cosán, the national framework for teachers' learning, supports teachers in shaping their learning journey, reflecting on their learning, renewing themselves as professionals, innovating, and collaborating. It also provides a flexible framework within which the rich variety of teachers' learning can be recognised, in the most inclusive and sustainable way possible.

The late John Coolahan often remarked that the landscape of teacher education had been transformed in the last six or seven years of his life, particularly in initial teacher education (ITE). He lamented the fact that the scale of this transformation was not fully recognised in a wider context. These changes included the new national programme of induction for all newly qualified teachers (NQTs), Droichead, and the reconceptualised programmes of ITE, which were introduced in 2012.



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Council

At the time of writing, we have had four cohorts of graduates from the new ITE programmes since 2016. In the school year 2018/2019, over 2,700 NQTs completed the Droichead process in almost 1,200 schools. Arguably, Droichead marks the first recorded systemic change in teachers' professional practice in both primary and post-primary teaching since the foundation of the State.

When a student teacher qualifies, they receive a parchment from the university or college recognising the degree to which their professional learning has transformed them from the person they were on entering first year. When an NQT completes Droichead, they co-sign with their more experienced peers a declaration as to the quality professional induction in which they have participated. This marks a different way of recognising how they have transformed themselves as newly emerging professionals over a particular period of time.

And what then? What about those experienced peers who have worked closely with their newly qualified colleagues during Droichead? Where is the recognition of the transformations they experience as a result of their own professional learning, in Droichead and many other processes, throughout their careers?

In the inaugural Teaching Council lecture to mark World Teachers' Day in 2012, Anne Looney, then CEO of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, talked about how, in contrast to some of the public stereotypes about the teaching profession, teachers must renew themselves and innovate every day for the students in their care.

Droichead may be the first recorded systemic change in teachers' professional practice. But we in the Teaching Council know – from Droichead, from FÉILTE, from the Centre for School Leadership's work with principals, from Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), and from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) – that the landscape of teachers' learning is also transforming. With echoes of John Coolahan's observation, it seems to us that this transformation needs to be recognised beyond Droichead and beyond FÉILTE.

Recognition implies looking at something with a particular focus – in a mindful, attentive way. Yes, we see something, but we see it with new eyes. Even with the naked eye, any process of seeing requires a lens through which to recognise.

Cosán - the framework for teachers' learning

Cosán is the lens that the Teaching Council has formed, informed by the voices of teachers, and through which all of teachers' learning can be viewed. It is the first national framework for the teaching profession's learning. It is a lens which is sufficiently wide and flexible so that all of the ways in which teachers tell us that they learn, formal and

informal, can be recognised.

Cosán allows teachers to navigate their own learning journey.

Approved by the Teaching Council in March 2016, this framework for teachers' learning was called Cosán to reflect the idea that teachers' learning, like that of their students, has no single fixed destination. The teaching profession is not a homogeneous group. Each of us has a unique perspective on life, a unique experiencing of life. Each of us follows our own pathway of learning. One size does not fit all. Yet Cosán is designed on the inclusive premise that one framework can

accommodate all. It allows teachers to navigate their own learning journey, and to alter its course over time, based on their professional judgements and reflections.

As a nation state with one of the longest unbroken periods of democracy in Europe, we understand that neither extreme of top-down or bottom-up approaches to policy can work on their own. And we understand that not only do we need both, we need, as Michael Fullan states, a glue in the middle to connect policy design, implementation, and feedback.

We have a deeply rooted cultural regard for the power and importance of education for our social and economic progress. Our education system is highly regarded internationally. It is understandable therefore, as policy moves to rely more on trusting professionals at the site of practice to lead teaching and learning, that maximum reassurance is needed as to the quality and consistency of that professional leadership in the form of national policy frameworks.

Cosán is the Teaching Council's response to this in the area of teachers' learning.

It forms the third and potentially the most significant block in the edifice of teacher education policy which the Council has been working on since its establishment in 2006. The other two, Droichead and the standards of ITE, impact on 3,500 graduates each year, on average. We estimate that 15% of the register, at most, have experienced the new programmes of ITE or Droichead.

Cosán has the potential to affect all 100,000 teachers. It is crucial therefore that we take our time to embed the framework in a sustainable way that recognises, first and foremost, the rich variety of teachers' learning and also the reality of their daily working lives.

What will Cosán look like in reality?

In the early stages of Cosán's development (2016 to now), our response to this question tended to be that the profession would shape how the framework works in reality. In both its drafting and its development, Cosán is designed to work on the premise that the conversation on professional learning should start with teachers.

Professional learning versus CDP

In the consultations on the drafting of the framework, we asked teachers a number of questions. Two have proven to be particularly instructive. When asked what they understood by the term CPD, the majority of teachers tended to talk only about formal programmes of study, such as a master's or PhD. When asked how they learn, teachers described a world of professional learning that includes

How often do we stop and think deeply about our professional practice?

the formal programmes but also goes wider and deeper to cover a whole variety of learning pathways.

And this is why, in the Teaching Council, we talk of teachers' learning, not CPD. Teachers told us that learning, for them, navigates a wide space of interconnecting dynamics: personal and professional, formal and informal, school-based and external, individual and collaborative. For the Council, teachers' learning is a much more inclusive term than CPD – it includes the full breadth and depth of teachers' learning pathways.

So in some respects, Cosán should not look much different from the ways in which teachers tell us they already learn and continue to learn. Its elliptical shape was deliberately chosen to convey the sense that it seeks to 'wrap around' the ways that teachers already learn – and to be flexible enough to include new ways that will emerge over time.

In other words, the Cosán development process will encourage and support teachers in their ongoing professional learning.

Reflecting on Professional Practice

What will probably look or feel different is how teachers reflect on their learning – its impact on them as people and as professionals. As I said in an article for the JCT in December 2018, one way of looking at reflection is to see it as the process that unfolds when we stop and think. Common sense and research tell us there is more to it than that – but it is a good start.

How often do we stop and think deeply about our professional practice? How often do we discuss those reflections in a critical and courageous way with our peers? How often do we write them down? How often do we take even one new idea from our thinking and try it out in our professional practice? How often do we articulate the values and beliefs that underpin our learning and our practice?

This wider understanding of reflective practice underpins all aspects of teachers' learning – and by extension, Cosán.

The many ways of learning

Since Cosán's launch in March 2016, we have learned so much about the many ways that teachers learn and reflect on that learning and on the connections between their learning and their practice. Through school self-evaluation (SSE), underpinned by the Looking at Our School framework, teachers are already collaborating in looking at students' learning, and considering what else they can do to enhance it. They are participating in learning opportunities provided by the NIPT, PDST, JCT, and other DES Support Services. They are learning through master's programmes and PhDs. They are learning through courses and programmes they source themselves and in Education Centres. And they are learning every day in their classrooms, and with their peers at school.

It was Margaret Wheatley who said: 'Everyone in a complex system has a slightly different interpretation. The more interpretations we gather, the easier it becomes to gain a sense of the whole.' And Daniel Siegel, the author of *Mindsight*, says that complexity theory in mathematics tells us that systems which move towards complexity are paradoxically the most stable and adaptive.

Cosán: the framework for inclusive conversations

These are exciting times in Irish education. Many teachers are coming forward with new ideas and innovations rooted in their own sense of self and sense of place – their love of learning. It is high time that we came together as a system, with all our various perspectives, to recognise and support their professional learning in the most inclusive and sustainable way possible. Cosán offers a framework for these inclusive conversations.

We look forward to hearing from you!



- Oscar Wilde

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INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTIONS, REVOLUTIONS AND DEVELOPING EMPLOYEE SKILLSET TO COMPETE IN INDUSTRY 4.0

Industry and economies will always be disrupted by technological evolution and innovation. From the late 18th century, which witnessed the onset of what is described as the 1st industrial revolution, bringing the mechanisation of production facilities with the help of water and steam. From steam to electricity, the next revolution brought the era of mass production, with the first assembly line operating in 1870, aided with the help of electrical energy. Fast forward to the 1970's and the integration and application of electronics and IT led to computers, automated production lines and PLCs which transformed not only the manufacturing landscape but also educational systems and labour markets. The arrival of the fourth paradigm, Industry 4.0 is somewhat the perfect storm with convergence of the digital, physical and virtual worlds, which has the capacity to transform manufacturing systems into digital ecosystems, through the horizontal integration of the global value chain and the advanced networking of production systems.

This future of digitally enabled production will significantly change how we do things, utilising emerging disruptive technologies to enable the 'Smart Factories' of the future, creating the potential for fully integrated and networked Smart Factories, with machines operating in an intelligent way resulting in minimal need for manual intervention. As the face of manufacturing transforms, the Internet of Things (IoT) and 'Big Data' play a significant role, as organisations will adopt data driven strategies. As more devices are equipped with sensors, for example tools, vehicles, manufacturing equipment, more and more data will be generated, while in a 2018 survey, 60% of (Bio) Pharma CEOs globally are concerned about a digital talent shortage and one of the key challenges of 'Big Data' analytics is the visualization of the results and the organisational ability to utilise context-aware visualization to support operational decision-making.

The combination of globalisation, demographic changes and new-age technologies will change industries, jobs and work force requirements of the future. Industry 4.0 will lead to a substantial increase in the automation of routine tasks as digitalized production networks act autonomously, in turn resulting in many employee roles no longer existing. At an employee level, workers will increasingly focus on creative, innovative and complex problem-solving activities, and key to developing this knowledge and skill within graduates is the quality, relevance and responsiveness of an economy's education and research system, particularly at higher education levels. The complex technology of the future will require a curriculum designed for developing greater vocational skill and knowledge through education, fostering practical and collaborative competencies for a highly technical, automated environment. There is no doubt, that these emerging technologies, such as the Industrial Internet of Things (IoT), advanced robotics, artificial intelligence (AI) and Big Data Analytics will significantly impact on education, curriculum design and pedagogy, requiring the development of new curricula to adequately prepare graduates for complex work environments of the 21st century.

A recent UK report indicates that Science industries will require over 1000,000 new technical level staff over the next 10 years. Similar trends are visible across EU member states, America, India, South Africa and China, leading to significant global high-tech talent requirements over the next 10 years to manage transition to high tech manufacturing platforms. According to the World Economic Forum, many of the most in-demand occupations or specialities did not exist ten or even five years ago and this pace of technological change is now exponential.

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It is estimated that up to 65% of children entering primary school today may end up working in completely new roles, this equates to approximately 1 in 10 workers employed in jobs that do not even exist today, and these new roles will open up predominantly in areas such as Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning and AI in all the industry verticals.

In todays digitised work environment, agility equals competitiveness. As markets compete to capture a growing share of Industry 4.0 manufacturing investment, economies with the deeper talent pool of skilled graduates will gain early advantage. Investment in Higher Education is critical in this development of an innovative next generation of skilled workers, researchers, engineers, technicians, and teachers. Advances in technology can now allow education providers the opportunity to deliver to learners at diverse times through eLearning platforms, while optimising new learning devices incorporating virtual reality to simulate a production environment, by integrating the elements included in Industry 4.0. For both accredited programmes and industry-oriented courses and trainings, the implementation of project and problem-based learning approaches, within an experiential and cooperative learning environment is essential. In addition, industry involvement in curriculum design with increased collaborative approaches to optimise the relevance and synergy between industrial and education partners will provide greater potential to equip graduates with a skillset industry requires, and greater alignment to labour market needs.

As industry revolutionises, it presents the opportunity for Higher Education to adapt and adopt to the complex and changing environment, by providing a platform for people to upskill and train in order to keep up with the pace of change. Industries within the advanced manufacturing sector of BioPharma, MedTech, ICT and FoodTech, which are key contributors to the Irish economy, require a skilled and competent workforce to attract investment and mitigate against the loss of potential projects due to a skills deficit. By Government investing in an inclusive and lifelong learning approach to skills development, Irish businesses can plan growth strategies and in turn global organisations will identify Ireland as a hub for exceptional talent, with skilled teams leading the revolution.



Ann Ryan - Training Development Professional



Innopharma education

USING ONLINE TESTING TO ASSESS LEARNER PROGRESS AND HELP TEACHERS IMPROVE CLASS AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

This year saw €5m allocated to Teaching, Learning and Assessment which should facilitate online learning and testing. Time-critical feedback is essential to allow teachers to intervene at class or student level, targeting individuals and strands. Continuous knowledge checks will achieve this, but there are teething problems.

This article describes the information recently gleaned about areas of course difficulty in Mathematics encountered by third- to sixth-class learners, and the lessons to be learnt about applying online tests to primary school learners.

The online tests were taken by the learners as baseline tests at the start of the school year. The results, learner by learner and question by question, were presented to their teachers. The purpose was to assess their ability in various areas of mathematics (referred to here as strands) at the start of the year. Against this base level their progress was measured during the ensuing school year. It was measured weekly through online knowledge checks, testing them on the specific areas (strands) dealt with in class that week.

Atotal of 483 third- to sixth-class learners from fifteen Gaelscoileanna across Ireland completed the questionnaires. Learners in third class had the most difficulty with the strands Fractions, Place Value, Money, and Multiplication. Fifth- and sixth-class learners also had difficulty with Volume, which was not tested in third or fourth class. Money, Time, and Fractions caused problems across all classes from third to sixth. Time as a strand was measured in fourth, fifth, and sixth classes. It can be seen from the table below that it is causing significant difficulties in each.

Below are some examples of questions asked and percentage performances on average by those who attempted these questions.

Fractions

Anna ate 1/2 of her chocolate. She gave 3/8 to John. What fraction had she left?

Select one:

- a) 3/8
- b) 1/8 Correct
- c) 1/4

39% of learners who attempted this question answered it correctly.



Prof. Diarmuid HegartyPresident,
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CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

Place Value

The children were playing a game of Ring Toss. John scored 2 units and 3 tens. What was his score?

Select one:

- a) 20
- b) 32 Correct
- c) 23
- d) 30

52% of learners who attempted this question answered it correctly.

Money

Maria is going shopping. She has $3 \times 50c$ coins, $3 \times \text{€1}$ coins and $2 \times 20c$ coins in her purse. How much money has she?

Select one:

- a) €3.90
- b) €4.70
- c) €4.90 Correct

52% of learners who attempted this question answered it correctly.

Time

2 hrs 47 mins + 3 hrs 41 mins + 2 hrs 32 mins = ?

26% of learners from fifth and sixth class who attempted this question answered it correctly.

Multiplication

If Katie's kitten sleeps for eight hours every day, how many hours does she sleep in a week?

Answer: 56 - Correct

46% of learners who attempted this question answered it correctly.

The table below shows the average level of correct attainment in all questions in each of the five strands Fractions, Place Value, Money, Time, and Multiplication. The percentages cited above relate to the specific questions presented above for illustration. These five strands show the lowest performance of all strands. They are much lower than the average for all strands, as can be seen by comparing individual strand performance levels with the average of all strands shown in the rightmost column.

We have results for a smaller cohort of learners in fourth, fifth, and sixth class in the same Gaelscoileanna, and early indications are that Money, Time, and Fractions continue to be weak through to sixth class.

CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

Next year we intend to complete a more comprehensive study of Gaelscoileanna and English-speaking schools across third to sixth class to see if any differences exist between them. Longitudinal studies in the coming years, following the same learners over third, fourth, fifth, and sixth classes using weekly online questionnaires compared with learners not using them (the control group), will prove conclusively whether frequent online questioning improves learner performance.

We are seeing that frequent online testing improves learner performance. Weekly performance questionnaires are showing an average improvement of 10%. The next step in the research will be to establish how it does so. A possible reason may be the information value of the data focusing teachers' efforts on areas of difficulty as disclosed by the learner responses. Other factors may be the benefit of reinforcement of learning through repetitive questioning, or better adapting of teaching to different learning styles as teachers focus more on the weakest learners and strand weaknesses disclosed by the testing.

Resource teachers are also a key part of the process, as they can identify the weaker students and work one to one on specific areas or strands.

Problems with Online Surveys as a Measure of School Performance

We are also seeing that 21% of learners are failing to finish tests of 50 questions. Feedback from schools is that they are seeing similar issues with the new online Drumcondra tests, which have now been running for two school years, 2017/18 and 2018/19 (new format 2018). Principals are alarmed at this data and are keen to use online practice testing to highlight these learners who are struggling with online testing – a new concept for primary schools.

The practice tests allow teachers and principals to review individual learner weakness, class strand weakness, and learners who may be slow to complete the tests.

The practice tests used in our survey allow teachers and principals to review individual learner weakness, class strand weakness, and learners who may be slow to complete the tests or are unable to do so within the designated times.

Problems with Online Surveys of Learners at Primary Level

The questions then arise: Why do learners not complete the entire questionnaire, and what are the implications for assessing learners and their schools? Possible reasons for non-completion could include:

- i) bad timing when completing the questionnaire due to lack of practice
- ii) tiredness of the learner mid-completion
- iii) avoidance of difficult questions by the learner.

Failure to complete the questionnaire could lead to a misguided conclusion. For example, if the learner fails to answer the last 30% of the questions, one could conclude that these indicate the learners' weak areas. But reasons i, ii, or iii may apply instead. Teacher interpretation is important here.

As regards school comparisons, bear in mind that schools whose learners complete the test will show higher performance on a comparative scale. There could also be a false impression of general improvement in

mathematical skills of primary school learners in situations where the learners get more used to online testing from year to year. There is much to be learnt in the coming years.

Because the results are in digital form, with results by learner and by class average, this informs the teacher on the improvements attained.

This online test system is currently supplied to schools by Achieve Online Learning Ltd, and the material is available in both English and Irish. In essence, the learners complete the weekly mini-test online when the strand unit is complete, thus informing the teacher on the class's and students' understanding before moving to more complex related strands.

Because the results are in digital form, with results by learner and by class average, this informs the teacher on the improvements attained. The purpose is to enable teachers to focus their energies and teaching on the weaker learners and on the specific aspects taught in that week which the class as a whole is finding difficult.

As more schools adopt this system, much more data will be available, with a resulting increase in confidence in the conclusions reached. The system also presents a means to assess the effectiveness of different teaching styles and techniques on a real-time basis over a large sample of learners. Hopefully what follows will be a more informed development of teaching materials and a significant national improvement in mathematical skills among primary school learners.

Table: Average levels of attainment on all questions in each of the five strands

	Average levels of attainment achieved					
Numeracy test results Level 1 (third class) 363 students completed this test	Fractions	Place Value	Money	Time	Multiplication	Average performance of all strands
	31%	47%	55%	36%	47%	62.6%

Numeracy test results Level 1 (fourth class) 46 students completed this test	Fractions	Place Value	Money	Time	Multiplication	Average performance of all strands
	33%	38%	41%	45%	59%	57.1%

Numeracy test results Level 1 (fifth/sixth class) 74 students completed this test	Fractions	Volume	Money	Time	Multiplication	Average performance of all strands
	51%	36%	29%	34%	62%	61.6%

HOME WORKS: THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In Ireland, 3,778 children are living in homelessness accommodation, with many experiencing poor physical and mental well-being, low self-esteem, and social isolation that affects school attendance, engagement, and participation. In the absence of a coordinated response from the government, how can schools respond to the needs of homeless children and their families?

In Ireland in 2019, children are the largest and fastest-growing group living in emergency and temporary accommodation. The 'official' number of children experiencing homelessness has increased from 880 in December 2014 to an unprecedented 3,778 in July 2019. While almost 75% of these children are from the greater Dublin region, child homelessness beyond the capital is increasing exponentially, from 154 in December 2014 to 1,002 in July 2019 (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2015, 2019). In September 2019, Focus Ireland reported that at least 2,250 children across Ireland started or returned to school from emergency or temporary accommodation, such as bed and breakfasts, hotels, and family hubs.



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Figure 1 Children living in emergency accommodation, 2014–2019 (Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government)

Nationally, principals, teachers, public health nurses, social workers, and paediatricians continue to report the deleterious impact of homelessness on children's physical health, psychological wellbeing, and educational development. The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) states that 'school children who are homeless are seriously struggling in school while their teachers struggle to help them to cope' (Nunan, 2018, p. 10).

The Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) surveyed over 1,000 school principals in 2018 and found that 27% are currently making educational provision for children living in homeless accommodation. Schools reported that children living in homeless accommodation are suffering from poor physical and mental well-being, low self-esteem, exhaustion, and feelings of isolation that affect their school attendance, engagement, and participation (IPPN, 2019).

What are the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness?

International and national educational research on homeless children spanning the last thirty years has consistently identified homelessness as a serious risk to children's educational participation and success. Risks include academic underperformance, reduced school attendance, poor health and nutrition, difficulty in completing homework, challenges in building and maintaining relationships with teachers and peers, and poor mental health (Keogh et al., 2006; Buckner, 2008). Children experiencing homelessness share additional risk factors that affect educational access and participation, including multiple school transitions, loss of community and friendships, persistent poverty, and the social stigma of being homeless (Masten et al., 1997).

Family and child homelessness in Ireland is a relatively recent phenomenon, and there is a dearth of studies that document the risks of insecure housing and homelessness on children's educational access and participation in this context. The Home Works study (Scanlon and McKenna, 2018), commissioned by the Children's Rights Alliance, provides insights into the lives and educational experiences of thirty-six children experiencing homelessness in the Dublin region, as well as the perspectives of parents, teachers, principals, and school staff. Almost three-quarters of the children were attending primary school, with half of the group attending schools that are part of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools initiative (DEIS).

The Home Works study found that despite the best efforts of parents and teachers, children who are homeless in Ireland are experiencing a unique set of challenges and difficulties that threaten their educational access, aspirations, and enjoyment of school life. Homelessness has negatively affected the children's health and well-being, school attendance, friendships, relationships with teachers, academic achievement, and educational participation.

The study highlighted that for children living in homeless accommodation, the function of the school shifted from a place of learning to a place of safety, routine, and predictability. Overwhelmingly, despite a lack of advice, support, and resources available to schools, parents who participated in the Home Works study reported that their children valued school, because of the predictable routines and the safety, security, and positive experiences offered by the children's teachers and peers.

CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

Schools as a 'safe haven'

Despite the educational risks posed by insecure housing and homelessness, existing literature in the field indicated that schools provide children with havens of safety, stability, and care. The Home Works study offered many examples of principals, teachers, and school support staff who made every effort to protect, help, and support children and families.

Principals spoke of advocacy on behalf of parents and sourcing information and advice about homeless services and supports. School staff gave children clean clothes, uniforms, and winter coats, as well as breakfast and snacks after long journeys to school on public transport. Parents described schools that opened their doors to families and made parent rooms available throughout the day. Some principals created safe, cosy corners in classrooms, and sensory rooms where tired children could rest and in some cases sleep during the school day.

Despite the many positive actions and innovative approaches that schools undertook, principals, teachers, and school support staff consistently reported significant challenges to supporting children and families through their existing roles, responsibilities, and meagre resources. These concerns have been repeatedly echoed by educationalists, teachers, and advocacy organisations but have not yet resulted in a coordinated response from central government.

How can schools support children and families experiencing homelessness?

The Home Works study makes five recommendations for school-based practice arising from its findings and from international literature on the educational needs and evidence-based responses to children experiencing homelessness.

Recommendation 1: Schools and educational settings require support to develop policies and procedures that outline their response to children and parents experiencing homelessness. This should include advice for parents and children on how to notify the school of their circumstances, and clear guidance on how this information is shared and responded to by educational professionals in the school setting.

The Home Works study makes five recommendations for school-based practice arising from its findings and from international literature.

Recommendation 2: Schools and educational professionals can support the basic needs of children who are homeless through inclusive practices that are sensitive to the unique context of children and families. Teachers and professionals working directly with children would benefit from information, training, and resources to help identify children's needs, as well as guidance on how to promote safe and secure school environments, strategies to support pro-social relationships, and flexible learning opportunities for students who may be absent, unable to complete homework, or at risk of educational under-achievement.

Recommendation 3: Children living in homelessness accommodation feel embarrassment and shame that result in social withdrawal and isolation.

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A positive school climate can enhance children's relationships with their peers through peer-mentoring and befriending schemes. Schools should be encouraged and supported to develop pastoral care practices specific to the identified educational needs of children experiencing homelessness.

Recommendation 4: The educational experience of children extends beyond school hours and includes opportunities for extracurricular participation in the wider school community. Schools may wish to consider opportunities to offer extended services to parents and children who are experiencing homelessness, including: a family room for parents, adequate space and support to complete homework, opportunities for children to participate in extracurricular activities, and the provision of meals, including breakfast and lunch.

Recommendation 5: Despite the adversity that children are experiencing, indicators from parents and educators show a commitment to engagement and positive participation in educational experiences for children who

are experiencing homelessness. Recognition of children's efforts, positive relationships and achievements, and parental commitment to educational success should be supported and encouraged.

the Classroom:
A resource for primary schools' offers practical guidance that may help children and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The reconfurther dipublication primary is National practical

Homelessness in

The recommendations from the Home Works study have been further developed by the INTO and Focus Ireland with the publication of 'Homelessness in the Classroom: A resource for primary schools' in September 2019 (Focus Ireland and Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 2019). The resource offers practical guidance that may help children and families who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness. It includes guidance on how to respond to children's basic needs and

mental health and well-being, strategies to support school-based security, predictability, and routine, and advice on supporting children's and parents' relationships with peers and staff.

While the publication of guidelines for primary schools is welcomed as a much-needed resource, the Home Works study confirms the need for a sustained and coordinated approach from multiple government departments, statutory agencies, schools, and voluntary and community-based organisations to ensure children's access to and participation in education. Meaningful attention to the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness has not been forthcoming at government level.

Despite the efforts of individual principals and teachers, the educational needs, access, and participation of the growing number of homeless children require appropriate and dedicated measures to ensure that children can access and participate in education irrespective of their family circumstances. The response to children experiencing homelessness must be separate and distinct, with input from all relevant government ministries, agencies, organisations, and services working with and for children and families (Scanlon and McKenna, 2018).

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The Junior Entrepreneurs' all-Ireland showcase took place at the RDS Dublin on 20 May 2019 with special guest Miriam O'Callaghan from RTE.

Pupils from Gaelscoil Durlas Eile in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, showed Miriam 'Get Up and Go', a bilingual board game aimed at keeping the whole family active.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

The myths that perfectionism creates

This article looks at one of the most significant issues affecting the well-being of school leaders and suggests how unrealistic expectations of self and others might be managed, to influence positively the culture and quality of relationships in the school community.



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Sometimes there are tears. Sometimes there is anger. At other times, the sense of a person being completely overwhelmed is palpable in the first few words of the conversation. Then you try to listen and answer a list of questions, waiting until you get to the real reason they called you in the first place. Equally, you hear the panic in the voice as they catastrophise and consider the worst possible outcome to their situation.

This article originates from my own twenty years as a school leader and the past eight years interacting with other school leaders experiencing many of the difficulties that I experienced myself. My approach was to try to focus on what I consider the single most significant thread or challenge in leading a school community, while at the same time acknowledging other issues affecting leadership.

It is far easier to deal with someone else's stress than to deal with your own. I have said this at the start of many a conversation when I was lauded for my knowledge and wisdom. The expectation was that I must have been a great school leader. This was far from the truth, but that expectation often put great pressure on me to live up to the perfect image, which is the focus of this article.

I have chosen not to reference the many people who have written about leadership and the vast amounts of research which have helped me both personally and professionally to develop the skills necessary to support school leaders over the years. I do not intend in any way to trivialise this work. In fact, our debt to these people is great. I have taken this approach in order to personalise and express, as simply as possible, the story of and for school leaders reading this article.

We live in a relational world, which can sometimes be wonderful but can also be messy. In speaking with school leaders, the greatest challenge they identified is how to manage oneself in a complex and person-centred role. We all have certain expectations of ourselves and of others; equally, they have expectations of us. If these expectations are unrealistically high and are not met, then disappointment, shame, and sadness generally result. We need to be careful about the expectations we harbour about ourselves and others, as unclear expectations make life unnecessarily difficult.

From an early age, our inner dialogue can result in us becoming our own worst critic. It gives rise to what I describe as myths or unrealistic expectations about ourselves. Without critical self-examination of these myths, beliefs, or unrealistic expectations, we tend to transfer them to our dealings with others. As a school leader, I struggled constantly with the belief that I had to be perfect and solve every problem, and that failure to do so was my failure, leading to the shame, disappointment, and sadness I referred to earlier. I have seen this replicated in countless interactions with school leaders, both over the phone and in person.

Perfectionism is setting oneself up for failure. Expecting it from others sets them up for failure also. Vironika Tugaleva, the award-winning writer and poet, wrote, 'To be courageous, we must be willing to surrender our perfectionism if only for a moment. If my self-worth is attached to being flawless, why would I ever try to learn anything new?' Making mistakes is a necessary prerequisite for success. Allow for mistakes in yourself and in others. Create and influence a culture where mistakes are regarded as opportunities to learn, to re-evaluate decisions, to re-group and re-plan.

Risk-taking is a necessary element in achieving success. If the culture does

not allow for mistakes to be made, then risk-taking becomes an alien concept, stymieing creativity and development. Imagine the freedom one could experience in promoting a culture where risk-taking is encouraged and mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn. Emotional well-being requires gentleness towards oneself as we embrace the inevitable failures we experience at times.

Emotional wellbeing requires gentleness towards oneself as we embrace the inevitable failures we experience at times.

I have witnessed in the most inspirational leaders I know the humility with which they seek to learn and grow. They display that humility in their relationship with their

school community. Professor Sarah Grogan, a psychologist at Manchester Metropolitan University, said that having flexibility in our expectations and being willing to change tack without self-blame has been shown to increase well-being. Examining and reframing expectations does not mean lowering standards or not striving to be the best leaders we can be. It does mean letting go of unnecessary pressure.

In practical terms, we can apply what may seem like aspirational theory to some of the scenarios playing out on a daily basis in our school communities. Much of the stress experienced by our school leaders comes not from delivering the curriculum and managing the teaching and learning, but from interpersonal conflicts. The time, anxiety, frustration, and sometimes breakdown in physical and emotional health that result from dealing with multiple conflicts means that the main purpose of a school – teaching and learning – does not get the optimal focus.

As a society, we focus increasingly on rights – our own and those of others. This, of course, has to be the focus of a just society. However, with any right comes a corresponding responsibility.

 A parent comes to the school leader, often on Friday afternoon, to complain that their child is being bullied and the school is doing nothing about it. If the principal does not stop this, then the parents will remove the child from the school.

- A staff member approaches a newly appointed principal saying that the atmosphere in the school is toxic, and asking what the principal is going to do about it. (Underlying implication: toxic atmosphere since the principal arrived.)
- A member of the board of management calls to the office to inform the principal that parents have come to him complaining about how the fourth-class teacher speaks to the children.
- A staff member is constantly arriving late to school. Despite having addressed timekeeping with her on several occasions, it continues to happen. She is threatening to take a grievance procedure against the principal for harassment.
- Parents involved in a custody battle for their children had an altercation in the school yard at collection time yesterday, witnessed by many of the children leaving school.
- The Parents Association want to meet with the principal because they are not happy with the way Maths is being taught in some classes.

Much of the stress experienced by our school leaders comes not from delivering the curriculum and managing the teaching and learning, but from interpersonal conflicts.

These are just some of the issues replicated in schools all over the country. The outcomes and the manner in which these scenarios are addressed depend largely on how school leaders manage their own expectations and how clearly the other party understands what they can expect from the school leader. It is essential that the principal communicates this message clearly. You cannot control what others think about you, but you can choose how you talk about it.

A person has a right to have their issue addressed. But they have a responsibility to be part of the solution. If you believe you have to solve all problems coming to you, then of course

the problem is yours. You are taking all responsibility for the problem on yourself. But if you believe you will do everything to support, advise, and guide the other party in arriving at a resolution and, at the same time, not make the problem your sole responsibility, think how much more clearly you will be in a position to see the wood from the trees. Unless you make this clear from the start, the other party will assume you have now accepted the problem as your responsibility to solve. Then, if it does not work out as they expected, the conflict is bound to escalate.

Accepting oneself, flaws and all, is the first step in not allowing others' expectations of you to dictate the way you live your life. Managing others' expectations can help to build healthy relationships. Don't bite off more than you can chew in any situation in order to impress people. The most important element in managing expectations is to be realistic. Underpromise. Over-deliver. Ask yourself, having worked through difficult circumstances: Have I done everything I can do to resolve this issue? Is there anything else I can do? Once you have considered these questions, then *let it go*. It is not an easy thing to do. Possibly the focus for further self-reflection?

ever-changing educational landscape.

SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

A shared responsibility and a long-term vision

It is hard to be a successful leader. It is harder still to be a sustainable one. Sustainable leaders promote a long-term vision of improvement. They sustain themselves and others as they pursue deep learning as the central moral purpose in their schools. This article presents a brief synopsis of two pillars of sustainable leadership in education.

Introduction

This article presents a brief synopsis of two pillars of sustainable leadership in education proposed by Hargreaves and Fink (2006): instructional leadership and distributed leadership. Their fundamental principles are framed in the Irish context using the lens of sustainability. The sustainable leadership approach advocates for reconfiguring models of instructional and distributed leadership to ameliorate rather than exacerbate the role of the principal. The sustainable model also augments leadership pools by broadening the scope for leadership practice at all levels in schools.



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Leadership in context

Leadership is at the nucleus of public sector reform and the challenge of a hopeful future, because change, according to Osborn et al. (2002), cannot progress without effective leaders. Leadership capacity has become a keen concern in the pervasive climate of change and reform in the Irish education sector. The increased workloads and the constant change cycle are cited as the most prevalent challenges for leaders of learning in Ireland (IPPN, 2006; O'Hanlon, 2008).

The complex role of the school principal is well documented (Darmody and Smyth, 2011; Fullan, 2014; OECD, 2007). The perception that the demands of the role are 'untenable' does much to cultivate a poor image of the principalship and increase the likelihood 'that significant numbers of schools will not be able to recruit principals' into the future (IPPN, 2006, pp. 5, 26). It can be argued that increased teacher involvement in leadership and collaborative agency is a necessity in Irish schools. The sustainable leadership approach advances a vision of participative leadership for learning in the long term.

Leadership renewal and reform

School leadership has been elevated to a position of high status in Ireland in recent years. The IPPN Conference in 2019, titled 'Sustainable Leadership', was an endorsement of a contemporary shift towards more holistic views of primary school leadership. This shift has occurred in response to increased demands for improvement

The growing emphasis on broader models of leadership may go some way towards addressing some of the challenges of leadership succession and recruitment, as teacher leadership is a mainstay feature of this new

and reform and the relentless challenges in schools and classrooms in an

A renewed focus on leadership aligns with the drive for excellence in schools outlined in the Action Plan for Education, 2016. Positive inroads

have been made which have advanced the idea that leadership should be

promoted at all levels in schools. The Centre for School Leadership (CSL)

and the Department of Education and Skills have progressed numerous

leadership initiatives and supports to help steward school leadership teams

leadership drive. Teacher leaders are supported through aspiring leadership programmes and school partnership initiatives.

in setting priority goals for learning and improvement.

Two of the core strands of sustainable leadership, instructional leadership and distributed leadership, support this broad view of leadership at organisational level. The onus is placed on schools themselves to create cultures and climates which adopt instructional leadership and distributed leadership in sustainable ways. In pursuing improved learning as a central moral prerogative, the principal is the lead agent, buoyed and supported by partners in the organisation through co-learning and co-leadership (Fullan, 2006).

Increased teacher involvement in leadership and collaborative agency is a necessity in Irish schools.

Sustaining instructional leadership

Research confirms that school leaders face significant limitations in trying to fulfil the collaborative aspect of instructional leadership in Irish primary school settings (OECD, 2007). A recent study of sustainable leadership capacity in Irish primary schools corroborates this, reporting that 89.3% of principals say there is not enough time to engage with leading learning in their schools (McGovern, 2015). These findings are mirrored in international research, which finds that principals are increasingly described as overburdened and ill-equipped to provide positive instructional leadership to teachers in

their organisations (Copland, 2001; Goldstein, 2004).

The sustainable leadership frame applied to instructional leadership repositions the principal as the orchestrator of shared learning rather than the instigator. The principal in this role does much to establish a collegial climate, where leadership talent is acknowledged and supported. Leader, teacher, and student development are reciprocally related. Leaders who foster organisational learning are catalysts for change and can empower school communities to apply expert knowledge for collective improvement.

Sustainable leaders acknowledge the fact that the teachers in their organisations are pedagogical experts. Accessing the talents and expertise of this readily accessible pool of leaders is a critical element of the instructional approach. By involving all those directly engaged with student

learning in decision-making, it seems logical that a genuine commitment to changing education for the 'good' becomes more probable.

Sustaining distributed leadership

It is signposted in contemporary leadership discourse that leaders should no longer be orchestrating their roles in 'sole' ways, and that a move beyond the 'Superman' and 'Wonder Woman' guises of leadership is an absolute necessity if we are to sustain improvement in schools in the long term (Spillane, 2006, p. 3). With renewed focus on shared vision and shared culture in schools, it is accepted that all community members – principals, teachers, parents, and students – possess leadership capacity and therefore can positively affect the performance of their schools. In today's schoolhouses, principals need the help of every leader they can get (Spillane et al., 2001).

Various models of distributed leadership have been discussed and developed in a wide range of educational settings in recent decades (Goldstein, 2004; Helterbran, 2010; Ghamrawi, 2011). There is much divergence in the discourse on the characteristics of distributed models, and the tensions

between informal and formal leadership approaches are well documented (Fink and Brayman, 2006). The common feature of all models, however, is a mode of leadership which views all teachers as leaders, that 'everyone is born to lead in the same way as everyone is born to learn' (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p. 422).

Authentic distribution of leadership at practice level does not amount to a delegation of duties on the part of the principal leader. It proposes a participative model that employs a collective approach to learning in a school, which is supported by a culture of collegial respect and mutual trust. Sustainable leaders are resourceful, as they use the

talents of the personnel in their organisations, and, in doing so, access the most readily available resource in their schools: human capital. Sustainable leaders are also witnessed as lead learners themselves.

The common feature of all models [of distributed leadership] is a mode of leadership which views all teachers as leaders, that 'everyone is born to lead in the same way as everyone is born to learn'.

Conclusion

Sustainability in education, like environmental sustainability, is a moral imperative. The quality of educators' lives and the future of our students' learning depend on it (Fullan, 2002). Making leadership sustainable is an enormously difficult proposal and is 'built upon the necessity of taking the long view' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p. 4). It respects the past but also regards the future by seeking action that is urgent but allows time for results to ferment. It requires drive and mutual commitment. It depends on the cultivation of shared visions. It endures in cultures that support 'slow knowing' and slow growing (Fullan, 2014). It relies on resourceful principal leaders.

In education, a treadmill approach to change and improvement produces what Elkind (1993, p. 9) refers to as 'the hurried child'. Looking at the wider perspective of rapid change and reform, the hurried child is a by-product of the hurried teacher. The hurried teacher is formed in the hurried school.

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The hurried school answers to the hurried system. The system reflects the hurried society. Too much change does not mean that learning has improved: it means that learning has gotten fast. The premise that underscores every sustainability model, in all fields of practice, is that deep change takes time.

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MANAGING CHALLENGING RELATIONSHIPS

Unpacking Some of the realities and possible solutions

Managing relationships in the workplace is complex and fraught with difficulty. Leaders need to have developed their thinking and operate to a mental model before they step into the turbulent waters of aiming to resolve conflict. This article offers some insights into the complexity of these very real and often draining aspects of the life of a leader.

One of the key challenges in leadership is understanding how to navigate the rugged territory of relationship management. In particular, a leader must know how to address a relationship that has become or is becoming fractured and ultimately toxic, with the potential to spread to other parties. This is a complex field with many dimensions, as it involves the human condition. In this article I will explore some of the realities of managing such relationships and offer possible approaches for you to consider.



Joe O'Connell Independent Leadership

Consultant

First I will look at what is known as third-party involvement. This is when a leader has no direct involvement in an issue but, as is often the case, is dragged into the middle of it by the very nature of their position as leader. This is unenviable territory to have to inhabit, but it is a very real aspect of a leader's role.

Those directly involved in the dispute will expect the leader to support their stance, validate their position, and adjudge accordingly. This expectation is generally coloured by people's sense of hurt and their belief that they are totally in the right. It is fuelled by their emotions. If the leader exonerates one party and blames another, the delusion of resolution dissipates almost instantly, and further hurt accumulates. Therefore, the first rule of thumb in this situation is to be neutral.

Neutrality is achieved by fine-tuning your listening skills, developing the capacity of listening for understanding as opposed to listening to react. In practice, this involves having a repertoire of questions that elicit factual information about the issue, as opposed to questions that may lead to a response that describes the impact of the issue on either party.

I suggest that initially you meet each party individually and adhere to neutrality by asking questions such as, 'Tell me the detail of what was done/said/happened.' Follow this with probes that quantify the nature of the issue: 'When did this happen?' 'Was it repeated, and if so, how often?' 'Who else was present?' During this line of questioning, the injured party may try to get you 'onside'. They may describe an event and add their own question, such as 'How would you feel if such a thing happened to you?' This is a red-flag moment for your neutrality. Do not allow yourself to be manipulated into

taking sides by agreeing that an action was unacceptable. Instead, use a neutral response such as: 'At this point what I am trying to establish are the facts.'

Embellishment can be a feature of this type of meeting, because people are hurt through the actions of others. Remaining neutral requires that you try to remove the embellishment. You can achieve this by restating what you heard from them. Try using the phrase, 'Am I correct in saying that...?' This has a dual purpose, in that the party is hearing what they said to you, combined with an offer from you to them to correct your interpretation of it. This generally translates into the embellishment being stripped away, as they are listening as opposed to speaking.

The second rule of thumb is to orchestrate the resolution, ideally their resolution. Having aggrieved parties present with you in a meeting of this nature requires structure, planning, and careful management. The cornerstone for success here is to establish the operational and behavioural norms that will govern the meeting. These are paramount and require agreement by all parties at the outset. Outline the operational norms first, as they are most likely to be agreed instantly. For example, you can say that you will allocate thirty minutes to this meeting, allow each party to speak for five minutes, and so on. These are non-threatening and allow people to settle.

Your role is to outline where there is agreement and where disagreement remains.

The behavioural norms are critical and set the tone for the meeting. Norms such as one voice at a time, no interjections, and no raising of voices act as a reminder to people of the self-regulation that they have to apply. They also give you, the neutral party, the opportunity to refer back to them should things get heated.

Having established the norms, you can then ask the parties for their input. You are now facilitator of the norms, and you can use signals such as raising your hand to indicate to a party to

wait before they comment, without it being interpreted as bias.

Having facilitated an exchange of viewpoints, your role is to outline where there is agreement and where disagreement remains. A visual aid can help: Using a flip chart with a vertical line dividing the page can show that there is agreement, even if it is just that both parties feel hurt. With this visual at the core, you then proceed to elicit suggestions for solutions, asking what actions could restore professional relations.

This part is challenging, and as third party your role is to seek to distil people's thoughts. This 'risk assessment' approach requires you to probe their suggestions, try to establish the potential impact, and describe exactly what their suggestions would involve. You may have to offer several adjournments to people to consider these. They may be unwilling or unable to agree at this point, and you may have to reconvene. Time sometimes lessens the emotional hurt.

One final step – which most people dislike – is to ask the parties if they are willing to reconvene in two weeks, say, to see how things are going. This is

referred to as closing the circle. While the prospect of such a meeting may not be appealing, and the desire may be to let sleeping dogs lie, the reality is that most of these meetings are cancelled by the parties because they overcome the emotional spike and move on.

Secondly, and briefly, I would like to share some thoughts on what are termed the 'resistors' in the workplace. It's not necessary to describe the type of person I'm referring to here. What is important for leaders to consider is that resistors may exercise undue influence on others. Change management, difficult at any time, thus becomes even more complicated and challenging. My belief is that there is no peace in avoidance, and those in the position of resistor, whether overtly or covertly, must be managed sensitively.

As a starting point, I advocate self-questioning: How are you internalising the resistor? Consider the following: Most people with a positive attitude have a negative attitude about people with a negative attitude.

My point is that you may rush to categorise their actions or responses and thereby have routinised responses to them. Leaders need to consider resistors' driving forces. It may be hard to accept if you are currently dealing with resistance, but these driving forces may not be as malevolent as you think.

Most people with a positive attitude have a negative attitude about people with a negative attitude.

Resistors may be focused on their immediate tasks or strongly committed to 'doing things right'. Resistors to change are often conscientious people who know from experience that change brings about confusion and sometimes mistakes. They have high standards that tend

towards perfectionism, and they wince at the idea that tested systematic procedures will give way to sometimes chaotic experiments. Underneath the anger and stubbornness they may be afraid. Most people who resist change do so because they fear they will lose something they value, such as a sense of competence: knowing what to do and how to do it well; power and influence; or valued relationships and familiarity. This gives rise to the basic fear of the unknown.

By reflecting in this manner you gain a useful skill in leading people and managing relationships: the skill of anticipation. By anticipating the possible perceptions and reactions of those affected by a proposed change, you can proactively plan to communicate ways that these needs will be met in the new situation. A mental model I have often drawn on in dealing with resistors is what I term the 4Ds: always start with a discussion, then develop people's capacity (CPD), have a design for your change, and be very clear on how you will disseminate it to all who need to know.

I began this article by referring to the human condition, and it is here that I finish. Never cease to be amazed and surprised by people's actions!

A DECADE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP RESEARCH: INSIGHTS, IMPLICATIONS, APPLICATIONS

In this review charting a decade of research on school leadership in Ireland, spanning primary and post-primary sectors, six themes emerge. These are summarised, and the insights, implications, and applications are put forward. Direct citations from current school leaders are also provided from the author's ongoing research on contemporary school leadership.



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Introduction

Over the past ten years, we have witnessed significant educational reform in the school leadership policy context in Ireland, which has directly and indirectly affected school leaders at all levels: teacher, middle and senior leaders. Reforms include school self-evaluation (SSE); teacher induction and mentoring (Droichead), as well as a new approach to initial teacher education; curriculum and assessment reform, including the Primary Language Curriculum and Junior Cycle reform; technology (Digital Strategy for Schools); Special Education Teaching Allocation; and GDPR. Other reviews of curricular areas are ongoing. One thing is certain: change has happened, is happening, and will continue to happen. But how we shape and lead that change, collectively and individually, is never quite as certain.

One of the most significant reforms affecting school leaders, both appointed and aspirant, is the new structure of leadership and management in schools. Circulars 0003/2018 and 0070/2018 – and, more recently, Circular 0044/2019 – note the central role that school leadership plays in determining a school's improvement trajectory and ensuring its achievement. They have set out the framework which influences how a school's leadership needs and priorities are to be determined. They have also detailed the processes leading up to and upon appointment of school leaders. In some ways, these have contributed to somewhat demystifying and levelling the playing field for those who wish to develop their expertise and gain the relevant experience to become formal school leaders.

Importantly, the circulars mentioned are set against a primary or post-primary iteration of 'Looking at Our School 2016', which is conceptualised by the DES as the *framework* against which the SSE *process* for school improvement is implemented through the distributed leadership *model*. Modelling the collective work of leadership by embedding it in the process of SSE is evident in other countries too, such as Sweden and the Netherlands. The implementation of a distributed leadership model also reflects a global policy turn concerning the configuration of leadership in schools. As I tackle below, this comes with distinct challenges in the Irish context that cannot be overestimated for leaders on the ground and are well documented in research.

In this article, I first introduce six thematic findings from a paper to be published in the *Journal of Educational Administration*, conducted as part of my broader research on school leadership preparation and development in Ireland and in Victoria, Australia. I add to the review of research by including further insights from principals I interviewed during 2018 and 2019 in a range of school contexts in Ireland. By weaving together the insights from research findings and principals' voices, I consider some implications from each theme presented, as well as potential applications from this learning for school leadership policy and practice to inform future debate and development.

The themes in the last decade of research

1. Leadership preparation and development

'You do really need a preparation time before you pick up such an important role as this.' (Claire, post-primary school deputy principal)

'There is an element of the formal that is necessary as well to help people broaden their horizons.' (Max, post-primary school principal)

Scope to improve the preparation and development of school leaders, both formally and informally, is clear from research. Many researchers conclude that only a minority of those who become school leaders – at both middle and senior levels – have felt well prepared for the role. Those who have engaged in formal preparation and development report an easier transition into the role of school leader than those who have not, especially in managing the complexity associated with the role and assuming the identity of school leader. Pressing challenges associated with participation in formal preparation include financial and time constraints, as well as how generic or specific preparatory and developmental activities must be relative to career stage.

This reminds us that we always need to review how we educate school leaders. Research shows that there is a need to provide a greater breadth of more targeted, practice-focused, school-based, and context-specific school leadership development opportunities after appointment, particularly in (i) administrative and financial duties, (ii) conflict management and resolution, (iii) the management of challenging behaviours, and (iv) the distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities.

2. Teacher, middle, and distributed leadership

'A fantastic circular, it really has been a game-changer in how we appoint middle leaders in schools, but now we need to put in the support for them, and it can fall back to ourselves [principals] but it also needs another voice.' (Fiona, post-primary school principal)

Teacher and middle leadership reflect the continuum of leadership practice towards senior school leadership. They also underpin school improvement activities given the policy context of distributed leadership. They view that all teachers can have leadership influence; leadership is not exclusively formal and positional. Teacher leadership therefore can include student teachers on placement, newly qualified teachers, and those teachers who

do not wish to progress to formal positions of school leadership. Middle leadership includes those in positional AP2 and AP1 roles, but not the most senior school leaders like deputies and principals.

How certain challenges involved in implementing distributed leadership in Irish schools are overcome to create optimal conditions for these kinds of leadership to thrive demands further research. One barrier identified in research was a need for more professional development for senior school leaders concerning how best to implement distributed leadership. Supports are required particularly in school cultures that may, in the past, have tended to hierarchise, script, or license leadership for 'the some' rather than 'the many'. Another barrier concerns the kinds of activities that might tend to be distributed. Research has found a tendency towards the distribution of bureaucratic management activities rather than the leadership of school improvement.

3. Leading for equality, inclusivity, and care

'In this urban DEIS school we have generations of children who don't always see the value of education. We also have unaccompanied minors, and their attitude to education is different. So I'm thinking about social justice when I think about leadership.' (Anna, post-primary school deputy principal)

There are two interpretations of this title. One relates to the research conducted on being and becoming a leader. Research has shown that gendered ideas about senior school leadership persist in pockets. Research has argued that we ought to be intentional in our efforts to diversify the image of the school principal to attract more people to the role, and to more inclusively reflect our communities and their schools in contemporary Irish society. The other interpretation relates to research which has shown that striving to have equal, inclusive, and caring educational experiences for all pupils should underpin all successful school leaders' core work and values.

The emotional ups and downs experienced when leaders are driven by the desire to effect deep change have been discussed, as well as the leadership of inclusive and special education and in multi-ethnic schools. How schools are led to be safe and happy places has also been explored in research. Contending with cyberbullying, homophobic bullying, and bullying among staff has been reported as being specifically challenging. A distinct lack of research concerning the educational leadership complexities encountered as a result of child poverty, which has drastically increased since 2008, sadly needs to continue to be filled.

4. Leading with heart

'The stress is off the charts ... you don't know until you do it. You get into the job and your head spins.' (Jack, primary school principal)

'Managing people is the most challenging.' (Laura, post-primary school principal)

Unsurprisingly, research has found that there is a huge emotional dimension to the leadership of schools. The negative impact of the economic crash,

particularities of each unique school context (for example Gaelscoileanna; small rural schools; or DEIS schools, which in and of themselves have different categorisations), and quality of the relationships between professionals working in the school have been found to especially affect leaders' emotions. Research has found that school leaders have high stress levels owing to their work, extending to those in middle leadership, which raises questions about the implications and intensity of a charged reform agenda over the past decade. Even for leaders whose job satisfaction is high, researchers warn that this is not a protective factor against the negative impacts of high stress levels.

Teaching principals consistently report a lack of sustainability in their role. This is well documented in research and is an issue whose seriousness merits more discussion and action. To alleviate the negative impact of stress, some researchers have recommended that more administrative supports be given to teaching principals; that more professional development be offered to better manage conflict; that counselling psychology by adequately qualified professionals be offered regularly and confidentially to school leaders free of charge; and that boards of management support school leaders more formally and proactively, particularly in the period post-appointment.

5. Leading educational reform

'You can persuade people, you have different powers that way ... the ethos of your school and the context of your school are really important when you're interpreting these.' (Laura, post-primary school principal)

The range of educational reforms over the past decade has generated a packed implementation checklist for leaders. Some researchers suggest this situation has negatively affected school leaders' emotions. Nonetheless, research has found that school leaders play a key role in the 'real' leadership of educational reform at school level, pointing to the subtle but important difference between implementation and enactment.

Two major reforms at both levels are school evaluation and curriculum. School evaluation has focused particularly on SSE over the last decade across two iterations. Research has shown the key role that school leaders collectively play in pursuing school improvement and how they achieve this, for example, through fostering collaboration and judicious use of data. However, research exploring how school leaders pursue school improvement by consulting research and evidence beyond traditional data sources remains sparse. Given that significant curricular change is currently afoot in both primary and post-primary contexts, there is a great opportunity to explore more deeply how leadership at all levels of the school plays a role in curriculum reform and the professional supports they require to do this successfully while simultaneously ensuring their well-being.

6. Religious influence on school leadership

'I work in a voluntary secondary school; that is the school I choose to work in. So then, the Master's in Christian Leadership is useful there because it informs how we do our work.' (Lauren, post-primary school deputy principal)

'I've been brought up with a Christian ethos at home, and when things get tough, I see myself going back to that.' (Declan, primary school principal)

Several studies have focused on this theme, describing how school leaders create inclusive schools when the school's vision and values typically tend to be singularly determined or heavily influenced by particular, mostly Catholic, religious influences. While ethos and spirituality have been reported in some studies to result in inclusive practices, in other studies they have been reported as legitimising exclusion. A key issue for school leaders on the ground, given the ongoing debate on the role and extent of religious influence on publicly managed schools, is feeling left in limbo about matters such as participation in religious instruction and ceremonies.

Another matter is enrolment policy, complicated by hurried or a lack of decisive policymaking on the matter, and a complex education system architecture – particularly at post-primary level – by international standards. As governance structures expand into new horizons, it nonetheless remains necessary to consider the place of religion on broad and balanced curricula. In an increasingly diverse society, how school and system leadership remains respectful of all faiths and none, while also shouldering the responsibility to educate the next generation to have mutual respect and tolerance, will require continued deliberation and being put into perspective alongside other policy priorities.

What are the applications of what we have learnt from the past decade?

Taking stock of a decade's worth of knowledge has both benefits and disadvantages. The benefits are that we can take a bird's-eye view of a broad range of topics and identify topics that have been neglected. The downside is that it can often raise more questions than it answers. With this limitation in mind, there are still some things that can be done to put the insights from research and principals' voices into action.

Regarding leadership preparation and development, we need to continue to support leaders at all levels in creative, applied, and sustainable ways within and outside of schools. Principals say there is a need for continuous professional development for teacher leaders, but especially for formally appointed middle leaders to recognise their leadership capacities and to develop those capacities in themselves and others. Principals point out the need for principal-specific preparation, especially given the pattern of a clear priority expressed by many aspirant leaders to become deputy principal rather than principal, as evidenced in the volume of job applications for these roles. Some believe in the potential of specific principal preparation programmes to generate a pool of candidates for recruitment. Similarly to other sectors, the candidate profile and general image of school leaders, particularly as we continue to make strides to diversify the teaching profession in Ireland, needs to be modelled inclusively, with potential to introduce specific career supports for underrepresented cohorts.

School leadership is undeniably complex, and in the minutiae of the daily cut and thrust of school life, the infinite necessity for leadership at all levels can make it challenging to articulate the extent of its complexity.

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CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

CHAPTER 2 - PRIMARY

Faced with policy churn and associated, expansive new accountabilities, as well as tensions between centralised expectations and contextual realities, the professional and personal challenges this brings to those formally responsible for school leadership are huge.

There is the potential for great satisfaction in the role. But we must be conscious, as we continue to add to the expectations to which we hold school leaders, that we also have the responsibility to adequately support and check in with leaders about the sustainability of their experiences and what can be done to achieve this. Two principal cohorts voiced their need for particular support: teaching principals, and founding principals charged with a plethora of responsibilities associated with opening schools on green field sites.

Furthermore, from an educational leadership perspective, the imperative on us all – at system, network, and school levels – should be leaning towards a developmental rather than a managerial approach when our expectations may come up short. Focusing on relationships, communication, and teamwork founded in professional learning and development potentially holds more promise than a worldview heralding performance management alone, which can quickly lead to 'dark side' or toxic leadership.

This points to the fact that both expertise *and* moral purpose or values must be juggled in determining professionally responsible approaches to situations, whatever these may be. And in an era of distributed leadership, this applies to leadership at all levels. Therefore, spending time on determining core values as a leadership team and sharing these with the school community could be a useful exercise, using those values not only to interpret how evidence-informed leadership practices will be enacted optimally in a school context, but also to promote trust when change is implemented.

The final word

The dynamism required of contemporary leadership is infinite, demanding continued reconception of its configuration from solo to distributed leadership, as well as consideration of the values that underpin it and the sources that inform its expertise. Therefore, continuing to unmask school leadership is crucial so that we better understand it theoretically and practically. Although attempts have been made in the iterations of 'Looking at Our School 2016' to reflect and articulate school leadership practices, the extent to which the framework–process–model approach achieves this or has been successful at scale in an embedded and sustainable way remains to be seen.

Furthermore, while national policy priorities and circular letters are important and frequent considerations for school leaders, equally important – if not more pressing – are more local and contextually relevant priorities, given that schools do not operate in vacuums from the communities they serve. We must appreciate the policy brokerage that leaders are engaged in daily. In pursuing reform, attempts to capture these perspectives must be made, and in research, understandings of policy need to be broadened.

The review reminds us of the importance not only of taking care of how we support leaders at all levels, but also of acknowledging that leadership on the ground involves hearts as well as minds, especially in the leadership of change, whether instructional or transformational. To lead successfully is to do so collaboratively, inclusively, equitably, and democratically; what is less clear is how this can be achieved at all times and whatever the odds.

Based on the last decade's accumulation of expectations of school leaders, it is reasonable to assume the next decade will bring along more. By continuing to support a sustained research agenda on, with, and by school leaders themselves, dialogue and debate can be more reflective of their realities, and more complex, joined-up, and sustainable policy responses can be advocated for in lieu of initiative overload. To counteract the continuously expanding contours of school leaders' professional responsibilities, this is a crucial task which will require the participation and collaboration of teachers, school and system leaders, policymakers, and researchers.

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On 20 September 2019, students from all over Dublin and surrounding counties marched from the Customs House to Merrion Square where they staged a rally to demonstrate their frustration over government inaction on climate change and to demand that the government would become proactive in seeking to save the planet for future generations.

Teachers continue
to strive to fulfill
their purpose of
strengthening the
minds of their students.
But right now students
have their own urgent
priority - to save their
world from extinction.

SECOND-LEVEL REVIEW



In his review of 2019 at post-primary level, Clive Byrne looks concisely at a wide range of topics, including the pace of system change, inclusivity and participation, school leadership, the Student and Parent Charter, reduced timetables, challenges ahead, and future hopes and developments.



Clive Byrne
Director, National
Association of
Principals and
Deputy Principals
(NAPD)

Action Plan on Education

Shortly after he was appointed Minister for Education and Skills in October 2018, Minister Joe McHugh announced that he'd heard the clamour that our education system was failing to cope with the pace of system change at the heart of the Action Plan for Education, and that he knew where educationalists were coming from. The Plan, highlighting strategic reform in the education and training sector, was designed to enable the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to respond in an agile way to the demands of today's society.

For example, in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) sector, a new model of allocating teachers to schools was implemented so that each school has a baseline allocation. A key soft barrier to admission and enrolment should be no more. With advances in the Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD), school profiles can be updated to enable accurate allocations for the following school year if required.

The Action Plan has also ensured that a National Forum to engage with stakeholders on the issues of teacher supply has been held, and a new portal to maximise the number of substitute teachers available is being developed. A workgroup has been established to increase the number of girls and women participating in STEM. Irish and foreign languages will benefit from the establishment of a Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) working group to plan the development of pilot projects.

Urgent need for administrative support

The Minister has been as good as his word in trying to slow the pace of change, but other issues have emerged which have major workload implications: child-protection inspections, students wishing to opt out of religion classes, students wishing to be exempt from Irish, and most recently the Student and Parent Charter, to name a few. School leaders are in favour of review and reform. A lack of administrative support to help with the bureaucratic demands of the school leaders' role needs to be urgently addressed. If the necessary supports are in place, the job becomes doable and the education outcomes for our students are enhanced.

CHAPTER 3 - SECOND LEVEL

Welcome to our newly appointed school leaders

There have been around a thousand changes among second-level school leaders over the last seven years. Over fifty newly appointed principals attended their Misneach gathering in Hodson Bay in August, with over seventy newly appointed deputy principals as part of the Tánaiste programme in the Sheraton in Athlone on the same day.

The good offices of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) are stretched at this time of year to support the new appointees, particularly in mentoring, where newly appointed principals are engaged in one-to-one mentoring with an experienced colleague. Deputy principals engage in mentoring through cluster groups facilitated by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and some of the management bodies.

Challenges ahead

The willingness of colleagues to take on leadership roles in our schools is welcome. However, there is a disparity in the number of applications for the

position of principal as opposed to that of deputy principal. Many schools re-advertised for the position of principal, but this is rarely the case at deputy-principal level, where there is a wider field of applicants to choose from. Why have so many senior leaders moved on in the last seven years? Several principals have retired early for reasons of work pressure. Some have left the principal's role to take up a position of deputy in their own or in another school. There is no doubt that the role of principal is a lonely one. Dealing with suspensions and exclusions as a result of breaches

Why have so many senior leaders moved on in the last seven years? ...There is no doubt that the role of principal is a lonely one.

of school rules on the use of social media through the use (abuse?) of the Section 29 process is draining and time-consuming.

Among their reasons to leave early, colleagues cite the paperwork associated with Child Protection Guidelines, SEN applications, Tusla referrals, and latterly the granting of exemptions in Irish and opting out of religion. This year, the state exams ran into a fourth week, the results were issued earlier, and the appeals process happened just as schools were reopening. Several colleagues complained bitterly that they had tried to fill staff vacancies as early as possible, but appointed personnel had left the school high and dry because they had found a position nearer home or with more paid hours. In fairness, who can blame such colleagues for looking after their own interest? The reply invariably is, who is looking after the school leaders' interest! Keeping the show on the road in the absence of substitutes and teacher shortages in subject areas is a major issue.

A working group on the attractiveness – or not – of the role of principal is urgently needed. The answer isn't money, I suspect. It's the lack of ancillary staff, both secretarial and caretaking, to support the administration of the school and enable it to function more efficiently and free up the school leaders to be leaders of learning.

CSL initiatives and new staff

The Centre for School Leadership is a collaboration between the Department of Education and Skills and the professional associations for school principals, NAPD and IPPN. The CSL pays a vital role in supporting school leadership by mentoring newly appointed leaders, by enabling coaching for serving leaders, and in a pilot project looking at team coaching in a school. It has overseen the establishment of the Professional Diploma for School Leadership (PDSL), based in the University of Limerick but offered nationally.

Based in Clare Education Centre, the CSL has forged close links with counterparts in Scotland and Wales and hosted a tripartite gathering to consider how best to meet future leadership needs, particularly in the area of effective middle-leadership. Two new coordinators to the CSL team have been seconded from their schools in Cork and Kerry: Finbarr Hurley and Donal O'Reilly began their new roles in September as they seek to expand the level of service the Centre can offer.

The Centre for School
Leadership has hosted a tripartite gathering with counterparts in Scotland and Wales to consider how best to meet future leadership needs.

Delay in the Junior Cert results

The Carter judgment from the High Court last year on the timing of issuing results following appeals meant there was an in-depth review of the entire public exam process by the State Examinations Commission. Education partners were briefed on the implications of the judgment, and it became clear that that it wouldn't be possible to release the Junior Cert results in mid-September, as was the norm, because Leaving Cert appeals had to be prioritised. Students were disappointed that the results were delayed until October and issued on a Friday. School authorities had previously called for a Friday release, because media headlines of tired

and emotional students the morning after the results reflected badly on our students and on the system. On balance, though, the fact that the students will be under their parents' care is better and may encourage more age-appropriate family celebrations of the students' achievement.

Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019

Minister McHugh published the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 in early September. The draft legislation reflects the government's commitment to introduce a stronger complaints procedure and charter for parents to make sure their voices are heard. Under the legislation, every school will be required to publish and operate a Student and Parent Charter which will declare to students and parents what they can expect from the school, in accordance with national guidelines, which will be published by the Minister following consultation with the education partners.

The Bill includes a requirement for schools to follow standardised procedures in dealing with grievances of students and their parents. These procedures will be set in the national charter guidelines to provide a clear framework in establishing and implementing good practice. The Bill includes provisions that:

- require schools to have a Student and Parent Charter
- require the Minister to issue guidelines in accordance with which every school's Student and Parent Charter shall be prepared, published, and implemented
- set out the key matters that the Minister must have regard to when preparing the charter guidelines
- provide a power for the Minister to give a direction to a board where
 the Minister is of the opinion that a board has failed, or is failing, in
 whole or in part, to comply with its obligation to prepare, publish, or
 implement a charter
- require the Minister to publish any direction issued and where applicable a notice of subsequent compliance
- amend Section 9 of the Education Act 1998 to include among the functions of a school:
- a requirement that a school must promote the involvement of students and their parents in the education provided to students, and
- a requirement to ensure the implementation of its charter
- amend Section 27 of the Education Act 1998 to change the requirement on a student council from one of promoting the interest of the school to a requirement to promote the interests of the students of the school having regard to the characteristic spirit and polices of the school and the charter.
- replace the existing section 28 of the Education Act with provisions that provide for the procedures for dealing with grievances of students or their parents relating to the school to be set out in the Minister's charter guidelines.

The publication of a Student and Parent Charter in every school will allow for a clearer understanding of what students and parents can expect from their school, and also what schools can expect from parents and students. Best practice would suggest more harmonious situations when everybody sings off the same hymn sheet. This is already the case in most schools; formalising it through a charter will ensure it becomes the norm in every school. School principals are aware of the rights and responsibilities that exist between students, parents, and their school and are supportive of all initiatives that strengthen this relationship.

Student and Parent Charters are a hugely positive step forward in education.

Role of Boards of Management

Amendments to the Education Act 1998 emphasise the role of the board of management to prepare, publish, and implement a charter for students and parents. Most boards won't have the requisite expertise to do this, and many principals fear that the responsibility will be devolved to them – not ideal, but experience has shown that this is what usually happens.

The draft legislation also proposes to standardise complaints and grievances procedures across our schools. This will give greater certainty and clarity to everyone involved, in what can be a difficult and fraught process. Early intervention and clear procedures are fundamental to achieving better outcomes when issues arise.

The Minister has promised further consultation with education stakeholders in arriving at the guidelines that will inform these charters. Through these consultations, the true form of the charters will take shape. Student and Parent Charters are a hugely positive step forward in education, so it is vital that their final form meets the needs of our students and their parents in the years ahead.

Using reduced timetables responsibly

The timetable, first and foremost, is the mechanism through which each school ensures that students access the curriculum as prescribed by the DES in the most effective manner. Its primary goal is to serve the needs of the student. Effective timetabling can increase students' ability to reach their full potential and can facilitate students to access additional educational assistance in special education. It is a tool for schools to deploy resources in the most effective manner for the benefit of students.

Effective timetabling can contribute to reducing disciplinary challenges. Not all students can access the curriculum to the same extent, and in some circumstances a full timetable can be counterproductive for a student. Sometimes a student, for various reasons, may need to have a reduced timetable to help with a variety of challenges, such as:

- · medical issues
- Special Educational Needs
- · reintegration after a prolonged absence
- · behavioural issues.

Sometimes a student may need to have a reduced timetable to help with various challenges.

Where a reduced timetable is employed, in terms of either time or subjects, it should be to maximise the educational and pastoral experience for the student. In an ideal situation, reduced timetables are agreed between the school, the student, and the parents or guardians, in consultation with external agencies who represent the educational or health and well-being interests and needs of the student. The following external agencies may collaborate with a school in requesting a reduced timetable to accommodate the specific needs of a student:

- Tusla, the Child and Family Agency
- NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service)
- NCSE (National Council for Special Education)
- NBSS (National Behaviour Support Service)
- CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service).

While there are times when a reduced timetable is used to help deal with behavioural issues, the goal of such a reduction should be to support the student to move towards a full timetable. In managing challenging behaviour, a reduced timetable should be considered only after every other option has been explored and undertaken as part of a consultation with all outside agencies involved. A reduced timetable should be for a set period, as short as possible, after which all parties should meet to discuss the student's future progress.

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Sometimes a reduced timetable used in conjunction with home tuition can help a student through a difficult time in their lives. Students who are suffering from anxiety or who are potential school refusers can benefit from short-term reduction in class contact: they don't suffer the pressure of attending for a full school day. Students may also choose subjects or teachers that they are most comfortable with. This may encourage students to succeed and improves their chances of better attendance.

Where a reduced timetable is considered for students with serious medical conditions, it is part of a consultation with the parents and care team, and other provisions are put in place. For example, a student not in class is collected by a parent and taken home at the times they are not in class.

The problem in this scenario is that presently it is proving extremely difficult for parents who are approved for home tuition to source a suitably qualified Teaching Council-registered teacher to provide the home tuition for their child. This problem stems from the shortage of suitably qualified teachers available nationally.

Not every school will have students on reduced timetables, and for schools that offer this facility the numbers of students availing of it are small. Principals report that offering a reduced timetable can be hard to manage. It requires a huge commitment from the parent or guardian because, although it is explained clearly at the outset, when their child is not attending a timetabled class, the supervision becomes their responsibility, and their day may be disrupted by collection and drop-off. This is a frequent downside of reducing the

Principals report that offering a reduced timetable can be hard to manage.

Schools rarely have capacity to provide appropriate supervision for the child, and in a situation where a parent or guardian cannot collect the child, they usually end up in the principal's or deputy principal's office, which isn't ideal.

Schools recognise that they must be inclusive of all students, but since the policy of inclusion has been implemented, the experience for schools is that they must cope with diminished resources and can't operate in the best interests of students.

Hope for the future?

timetable.

The publication of recent Higher Education Authority (HEA) research has again raised the question of equity in the system. Are we really surprised at findings that the children of more affluent families take up most places on high-point courses? The relentless pursuit of points seems to be at the core of our education system, to the detriment of students' health and well-being. The artificial hierarchy of level 8 courses in universities or institutes of technology undermines the value of other forms of educational involvement or achievement.

Statistics released after the state examinations at junior or senior cycle level show that girls outperform boys in many subjects. There has been

some discussion of our teaching to the test model, which doesn't suit almost 20% of the student cohort. 'Boys don't try' was the headline on a recent newspaper article. The thesis was that boys are afraid of failure and feel better about not succeeding in school on the basis that they haven't tried.

College Awareness Week

College Awareness Week, which takes place each November, has as its *raison d'être* the promotion of conversations about educational opportunities in lesser-served communities. During the week students undertake research on possible career and study opportunities in primary schools and in the early years of secondary school, to help them narrow down areas of interest and open their eyes to the benefits of education in all its forms when formal schooling ends for them. Oftentimes young people don't consider potential opportunities because they have no experience or role models to direct them, to open their eyes to the endless possibilities in the modern word.

Changing the paradigm

We are regularly told that many of our students will work in jobs that haven't been invented yet. Let's promote independent learning, self-confidence, resilience, and flexibility among our young people. So what if the more affluent take up high-points courses! Let's work to ensure that access to these courses or careers is not based solely on class background or high points. Let's change the paradigm!

Securing the potential benefits of the JC

The reformed junior cycle is helping to do this by changing the language of instruction. Statements of learning, classroom-based assessments, and student opportunities to present to their peers give cause for hope and celebration. The recent decision to award special status to History with a 240-hour designation, when combined with the requirement to have 400 hours of Wellbeing, risks undermining the potential benefits of the junior cycle reform. Other subjects will demand special status, and the joined up thinking of the junior cycle project risks being sundered. Meaningful reform of the senior cycle will hardly take root until the junior cycle process is firmly embedded.

**

Adaptability to change is itself a hallmark of successful education."

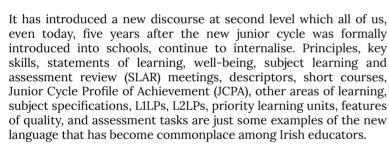
- Peter Hilton

JUNIOR CYCLE REFORM

The Reality of the Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA)

Junior cycle reform has introduced sweeping changes into lower-second-level education. One of the more significant is the new classroom-based assessment (CBA), along with its associated subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meeting. This article explores assessment at junior cycle level and reveals the reality of CBA in our classrooms.

The Framework for Junior Cycle heralded significant change in the lower-second-level education system in Ireland, the most significant change at this level since the foundation of the State. Its aim is to place the student firmly at the centre of the learning process and envisages a modernised curriculum across all subjects. In doing so the Framework has succeeded in opening up, to our own scrutiny, practically everything we've come to know and accept about teaching, assessment, learning, reporting, debate, and reflection.





Dr Pádraig KirkDirector, Junior
Cycle for Teachers
(JCT) Support
Service

CBA's

A key tenet is the classroom-based assessment, or CBA: one of the most innovative and creative of the developments at junior cycle level. The shift towards greater focus on developing key skills in the junior cycle requires a shift in how students are taught and how they learn. Assessment practices can guide or inhibit this, hence the CBAs were developed to support the assessment of skills that cannot be easily assessed in a traditional pen-and-paper examination.

As part of our ongoing provision of professional learning experiences (PLEs) – often referred to as continuing professional development or CPD – in Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), we support teachers in engaging with, making sense of, and developing a shared understanding of the Framework and the new subject specifications, including their new classroom-based assessments.

CBAs are best described as assessment moments on the student's learning journey. In general, they take place during normal class time and over a defined period, in many cases spanning three weeks, with schools having the flexibility to decide on those three weeks within

a wider timeframe. CBAs are facilitated in the classroom by the subject teacher but devised externally, at a common level, by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in consultation with the State Examinations Commission (SEC), who also define the national timetable for CBAs

CBAs support the development of a wide range of key skills. Each CBA can take on a variety of forms across subjects and short courses, including project and oral language tasks, investigations, practical or design-and-make tasks, field studies, and artistic performances.

Students are required to undertake two CBAs in each of their subjects across the three years of junior cycle. In most subjects, the learning journey in each subject involves one CBA in second year (usually after Christmas) and one in third year (usually before Christmas). In Gaeilge, both CBAs take place in third year. In the case of short courses, only one CBA is completed by students.

Effective feedback

The introduction of CBAs at junior cycle heralded the start of a dual approach to the way we formally record and report on assessment at this level. The greatest benefits for students' learning occur when teachers provide timely and effective feedback that helps them to understand how their learning can be improved.

CBAs are best described as assessment moments on the student's learning journey.

John Hattie's (2008) much-discussed and debated synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses on achievement highlighted the effectiveness of formative feedback (see Derek West's article 'Grab the Guru While You Can' in the present chapter). In an interview with Shirley Clarke last year, Hattie expanded on the notion of effective formative feedback:

The key question is, does feedback help someone understand what they don't know, what they do know, and where they go? That's when and why feedback is so powerful. (Sparks, 2018)

Conversations about formative feedback on JCT PLE days focus on just that – the importance of effective feedback, which fosters deep student learning. This includes inviting teachers to share their current practice around feedback and what works in their context with their students. Much of this discourse is framed by the work of Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 86):

Effective feedback must answer three major questions asked by a teacher and/or by a student: Where am I going? (What are the goals?), How am I going? (What progress is being made toward the goal?), and Where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?)

CBAs provide an additional opportunity for students to receive timely, effective, and relevant feedback. This ongoing assessment, now a formal part of classroom practice, is of crucial importance in supporting student learning and promoting student achievement. The importance of balance between these CBAs and the summative SEC exams is explicit in the Framework (DES, 2015, p. 35):

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CHAPTER 3 - SECOND LEVEL

A dual approach to assessment, involving classroom-based assessment across the three years and a final externally assessed, state-certified examination can enable the appropriate balance between preparing students for examinations and also facilitating creative thinking, engaged learning and better outcomes for students.

Descriptors

The NCCA has produced nationally established standards, or reference points, known as descriptors that describe performance in CBAs at four different levels. These are set out in the assessment guidelines document that accompanies each of the new subject specifications. The four descriptors used are (1) Exceptional, (2) Above Expectations, (3) In Line with Expectations, and (4) Yet to meet Expectations.

A question regularly posed about these descriptors is, Whose expectations are we talking about? The expectations implicit in the phraseology chosen are not those of the students, their teachers, or even parents, but a suite of nationally agreed expectations that describe the standard of students' work at this particular age and stage of learning. They tell us something of value. These descriptors, along with the suite now being used to indicate achievement in final exams, replace the older system of grades (A, B, C, D, E, F and NG) that have been commonplace in schools for many years.

So how does the subject teacher arrive at the descriptor for a student's CBA? When a student completes a CBA, it is assessed by their teacher. Each descriptor is informed by Features of Quality, a set of descriptive success criteria set out clearly in NCCA-published assessment guidelines for each subject. Teachers use the relevant features of quality to decide the level of achievement in each CBA.

Teachers are therefore not working in isolation in their assessment of CBAs.

SLARs

To support teacher judgement, the NCCA works with schools around the country to produce annotated samples of student work at the different descriptor levels. To enhance collaborative practice, and as a further support to the entire CBA assessment, teachers are also given dedicated time (within timetable) to attend a subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meeting with their subject department colleagues. Here, teachers 'share and discuss samples of their assessments of student work and build common understanding about the quality of student learning' (DES, 2015, p. 39) in their school.

Teachers are therefore not working in isolation in their assessment of CBAs. They apply a nationally agreed set of assessment criteria to students' work, and they do this in an open and transparent fashion, engaging in collaborative professional discussions with colleagues. Once the SLAR meeting has taken place, the descriptor, with relevant feedback, is reported to the student and their parents.

Section 4 of the Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation, signed by the Minister for Education and Skills and the post-primary teacher union leadership in May 2015, focuses on 'giving prominence and importance to Yes, the descriptor achieved by a student for their CBA will appear on their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement. But the JCPA is essentially a school-based record of a student's achievement across the three years of their junior cycle. While it has a nationally determined format, it draws upon and reports on achievement across all elements of assessment, including

classroom-based assessment'. It is fitting that CBAs would be given such prominence, as they are a key development in the reform of junior cycle. They are already seen in many schools as the catalyst for embedding an authentic culture of effective formative assessment, which research has found 'promotes the goals of lifelong learning, including higher levels of student achievement, greater equity of student outcomes, and improved learning to learn skills' (OECD/CERI, 2008, p. 1).

Time will show that the teaching practices developed, or refined, through the implementation of CBAs in classrooms will have a much wider impact than that of junior cycle. While CBAs are an important dimension of the revised junior cycle, for the many reasons outlined above, we cannot allow them to become a hostage to fortune. Already there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that CBAs are being treated as mini final State exams where, for example, students are not allowed to be absent, no matter what the reason, from any of their respective subject classes during the relevant three-week window.

CBAs are not State exams. They are classroom-based assessments, with emphasis on 'classroom'. They take place in school under normal classroom conditions, as part of students' ordinary class time. There is no superintendent, no invigilator, no exam paper, and no nationally applied

appeals mechanism. Currently, if a student misses a day of school during the period allowed for their junior cycle Visual Art or Metalwork project, what arrangement does the school normally put in place to make up for that lost time? Schools generally find their own way of dealing with such circumstances, and such circumstances will always exist.

JCT's most recent PLE workshop aimed at school leaders supported them in exploring a process to collaboratively develop an assessment calendar to ensure that CBAs are

planned for in a manner that supports student and teacher well-being and takes account of the wide range of co-curricular activities offered in our schools.

Collectively, we cannot allow CBAs to become high-stakes, highly stressful assessment moments for students. This would go against the grain of the new emphasis being placed on well-being. The junior cycle ongoing assessment approach 'should contribute to ensuring that students have a positive sense of themselves as learners and a strong sense of their own self-efficacy and capacity to improve' (NCCA, 2017, p. 35).

CBAs should be facilitated to become part of the fabric of normal classroom practice, just like the many other formative and lower-stakes assessment moments that already exist in our education system. It is up to schools, school leaders, teachers, and parents to facilitate this and ensure that CBAs are embraced in this spirit.

We cannot allow CBAs to become high-stakes, highly stressful assessment moments for students.

ongoing, formative assessment, CBAs, and SEC grades, which includes results from the State-certified exams and assessment tasks.

It is not a State exam certificate. It is a welcome fusion, a step up, even, from the old Junior Cert and traditional school-based methods of reporting. It provides a rich, comprehensive, and much more valuable picture of student achievement at junior cycle. Indeed, one of the most exciting aspects of the new JCPA is the 'Other Areas of Learning' section, which gives schools the opportunity to recognise and acknowledge student progress and achievement across a wide range of areas of school life not normally associated with the traditional system of certification.

CBAs are transforming assessment and reporting practices in our schools. They show that assessment does not always need to be left to external agencies to inform us on how well or otherwise our students are performing in their learning. They will certainly provide students with welcome opportunities to demonstrate a broader range of understanding and skills. CBAs and the CBA process are new and will take time to become an integral part of teaching, assessment, and learning. But the positive outcomes for students will make the learning journey worthwhile.

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Decades of Education research support the idea that by teaching less and providing more feedback we can produce greater learning.

- Grant Wiggins

OUR FUTURE IS AT STAKE

Why the climate strikes matter



With little over a decade in which to act, we cannot afford to continue with business as usual when it comes to climate breakdown. This article spells out the need for urgent, large-scale action and how the climate strikes give students a voice on their own future.



Ciara Fanning President, Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU)

This year, students have assumed the role of the educator, in place of the educated, leading the way in climate strikes all over the country.

Starting with a handful of students striking alone each Friday, and growing to tens of thousands at the international student strike for climate on 20 September 2019, the current climate crisis is an issue that students have been forced to take a stand for, to fight for their own future and the planet that we share. Student voice in Ireland and around the world has never been stronger or more powerful. Strike after strike, the remarkable work that young people are doing to save their futures is becoming more and more evident and respected.

With the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stating in 2018 that we have only twelve years to act to prevent a catastrophic climate breakdown, and no signs of serious action from our government, students have come together on an incredibly impressive global scale to mobilise and take to the streets.

The climate strikes have been a global phenomenon, with students striking in Ireland and around the world. Policy-makers have engaged with the student strikers: Greta Thunberg spoke at the United Nations General Assembly, strikers from across Europe were invited to the European Parliament climate debate, and politicians have met with strikers at local level. But we must question the extent of this engagement and the manner in which it comes about.

Here, at the Irish Second-Level Students' Union, we have seen exponential growth in our membership and our engagement in the past year. Students are realising the strength behind their voice, and understanding the importance of the role that students play in our society. We are eager to reach out to national decision-makers to make effective change that will affect our futures directly.

The climate movement this year has been a fantastic display of what students can achieve when they come together under a common goal. With the strikes growing to thousands of people and having a national and international impact, the voices of students have been amplified – without waiting for the microphone to be passed in our direction. Yet although there is a growing movement globally to make environmentally friendly changes, from paper straws to more

vegetarian dietary options, the real progress must be made in government chambers and legislative action.

A tokenistic photo opportunity is not what students deserve, and it is not what they are sacrificing their education for. We deserve real, solid engagement followed by real, solid actions. Declaring a climate emergency, then granting an oil-drilling licence three weeks later, pulls back the veil on empty promises and the total lack of understanding of the climate emergency.

With Saoi O'Connor, sustainability officer of the ISSU, striking outside Cork City Hall every Friday for the past thirty-six weeks, students are not merely taking to the streets for a day off school. This narrative of lazy students and 'infuriating' climate action could not be further from the truth.

We are doing it because we are genuinely terrified for our future and our planet.

If anything, the most infuriating aspect is the lack of serious action that has resulted from the mobilisations. Students are not doing this to be put on a pedestal and called 'inspiring'. We are doing it because we are genuinely terrified for our future and our planet.

Iceland has held a funeral for the first glacier lost to climate change, with Switzerland close to follow. The Amazon forest is burning. Thousands of animal species have already become extinct.

Temperatures are rising worldwide, due to greenhouse gases trapping more heat in the atmosphere. Droughts are becoming longer and more extreme around the world. Tropical storms are becoming more severe due to warmer ocean temperatures. Sea ice in the Arctic Ocean is melting at a rapid rate. Sea levels are rising, putting coastal communities and ecosystems at massive risk.

Those who have done least to cause the climate disaster are paying the highest price. The global south is experiencing increasingly severe droughts in Africa, and extreme flooding and scorching temperatures in Asia. Cyclones Idai and Kenneth tore through Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, causing displacement and devastation.

2018 was not the beginning of the student climate movement – students and young people have been shouting at the top of their lungs for years on this issue. In 1992, twelve-year-old Severn Cullis-Suzuki addressed the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, almost thirty years before Greta Thunberg sparked the movement of climate strikers. Severn spoke of her fears of a world completely polluted, with no fish left in the sea, and no clean air left to breathe.

We are sick of government inaction on this topic, and of the mentality that climate change can be solved with small individual actions.

But no real action was taken. The world listened, for five minutes, before moving on to one of the worst decades of environmental degradation and destruction in history.

The same cannot happen this time around. We are sick of government inaction on this topic, and of the mentality that climate change can be

solved with small individual actions. Banning plastic straws and encouraging people to purchase KeepCups instead of using a disposable cup every time you fancy a latte is not going to solve this crisis. Individual actions like recycling and taking shorter showers are not revolutionary measures; they've been short answers to Geography exam questions, and mantras from environmentally conscious parents, for years.

While all of these actions and habits will help and collectively make a difference, global leaders need to wake up and realise that the keys to an attempted solution lie in their hands. We need radical action and sustainable solutions. We need a government that will value our future over short-term profit.

Most relevantly, we need teachers and parents who will value the effort and power that students are putting into these strikes and their fight for climate justice. Let children strike. Encourage them to use their voice. Empower them to feel like they can make a difference.

The climate strikes are not something that will phase out or that students will lose interest in. We will only become louder and stronger as time goes on, until serious action is taken.





It is scientific strength that will finally enable the world to cope with climate change, according to the Indian science writer S. Ananthanarayanan.

In his latest book, *Eureka*, he highlights key scientific breakthroughs over two millennia which had the effect of changing forever the way we view aspects of our world. And now, he says, while behavioural and lifestyle changes will be necessary, what is most likely to preserve the human race is its scientific strength.

New directions in science in the coming decades will undoubtedly have answers that we cannot even imagine. Isn't that how it has been down the ages – what would be discovered next could not have been foreseen.

National Student Grant Awarding Authority



2012. under the Government's Transformina Public Services agenda, a centralised grant administration student function at national level for higher & further education students was created. This replaced the existing student grant process which was administered by 66 individual grant awarding bodies across VECs and local authorities.

Contact us:



0761 087 874



@susibalndas

The Student Support Act 2011 introduced reforms to the student grant process, including a single consolidated Scheme, and provided for the appointment of a single grants awarding body.

City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB) was designated by the Minster for Education and Skills as the single national awarding authority and within that the business unit known as **SUSI** (Student Universal Support Ireland) was created. The rules governing the operation of the grant Scheme are set out in:

- The annual Student Support Regulations which outline approved educational institutions and approved courses.
- The annual Student Grant Scheme which sets out details relating to the Scheme including classes of grant, classes of applicant, eligibility exclusions etc. In addition, the Scheme sets out core eligibility criteria including:
 - Nationality
 - Residency
 - o Progression (through education)
 - Means (including 'reckonable income' as set out in the Scheme).



PLC Student





Postgraduate



Student Studying Outside the State







The main objective in centralising grant administration was therefore to bring greater simplicity and efficiency to the grants administration process while ensuring a student centred application.

To this end **SUSI** operates an online application system at www.susi.ie. Applications for new and renewal grant applications for the 2019/2020 academic year opened on the 25th April 2019. The requirement for students to submit supporting documents has been significantly reduced through data sharing agreements with relevant public bodies which further streamlines the process.

A responsive Support Desk is also available to answer any queries that students may have.

SUSI by Numbers

SUSI processed over 95,000 applications with approx. 74,000 students awarded a grant for the 2019/2020 academic year.

www.susi.ie.

Grant types

Student grants online

Eligible students attending further education, **Post Leaving Certificate courses**, receive a maintenance grant, the value of which is determined by the level of reckonable income in the household for the previous year and the distance that the student travels from home to college (more or less than 45km).

Eligible students attending **Higher Education**, as well as receiving the maintenance grant, also have their fees/student contribution covered, whichever applies to the student. The value of the student contribution for the 2019/2020 academic year was €3,000.

Eligible students attending approved courses in approved institutions **outside of the Republic of Ireland,** at undergraduate level only, receive a maintenance grant from SUSI.

Students at **Postgraduate level** may qualify for a \leq 2,000 fee contribution grant. If they meet the eligibility criteria for the Special Rate of grant they may qualify for a Postgraduate Fee Grant, up to a maximum of \leq 6,270 and also a maintenance grant.

Key Dates

March
April
June
July
August
September
October
November

SUSI online application system opens
Renewal applications priority closing
New applications priority closing

 uly
 New applications priority closing

 ugust
 Leaving Cert results and CAO offers

First maintenance payment PLC
Online application system closes

SENIOR CYCLE REVIEW

The NCCA is currently undertaking a review of senior cycle in post-primary education. The review offers an opportunity to explore the learning experiences of senior-cycle students and to generate a shared vision for senior cycle and a strong base from which to shape a curriculum that meets the needs of all learners for years to come. Kieran Golden outlines the findings to date.

To date, the senior-cycle review involved two phases: scoping, and school review followed by national seminars.

Phase 1, scoping (2016–17), identified key themes for exploration and established the process for conducting the review.

Phase 2, school-based review and national seminars (2018-19), provided the opportunity to work with forty-one schools nationwide to gather, analyse, and discuss teacher, student, and parent perspectives on senior-cycle education.

The school review took place over two cycles:

- Cycle one focused on the purpose of senior cycle education.
- Cycle two focused on pathways, programmes, and flexibility.

The feedback from schools in each cycle was analysed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and presented at national seminars for further discussion with a broader range of stakeholders.

Teachers, students, and parents highlight many positive aspects of senior cycle, including:

- opportunities for students to mature, develop personally, and strengthen relationships with each other and with their teachers (this was frequently linked to experiences during transition year)
- the high quality of teaching staff, mature relationships with teachers, and motivational teachers
- · varied methods of assessment, such as project work, portfoliobased work, opportunities for oral communication of learning, and assessments which are less time-pressurised and spaced out across senior cycle
- the objective, fair, and highly regarded nature of the current examination system
- · varied teaching methods, including class discussions, peer learning, and pair and group work
- · career guidance
- work experience opportunities and links with the local community and businesses



Kieran Golden Recent President, National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)

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- emphasis on pastoral care
- · supports such as learning support, and a focus on inclusion and mentoring
- positive school climate
- extracurricular activities.

Teachers, students, and parents also highlighted challenges in the current system, including:

- less value placed upon vocational, practical, and creative skills, subjects, and programmes
- concern about students' wellbeing: parents raised the difficulty of trying to maintain personal interests, leisure activities, sports participation, and part-time work; students mentioned lack of free time for extracurricular activities, social interactions, and in some cases sleep; teachers highlighted the pressure across seven subjects and the impact on student well-being
- challenges of transition year (TY), including financial and location barriers to participation (some schools don't offer TY), and difficulty regaining an academic focus after TY
- excessive workload and content-heavy curricula, leading to time pressures
- excessive exam focus, leading to stress, anxiety, and in some cases lower motivation; excessive media focus on examinations, and a lack of re-sits when a student is sick during exams
- stress from the 'points race' leading to poor subject, level, and programme choices, not reflecting students' interests, abilities, or aptitudes; grinds culture giving an unfair advantage to families who can afford it and placing additional demands on students' already limited free time
- different value placed on higher and ordinary levels in school culture and in the points system; bonus points for Mathematics leading to a range of challenges for teachers and students
- Career guidance viewed both as a positive and as a challenge in the system: more support may be needed, routes other than higher education should be emphasised, and students may be too young to make lifelong decisions
- focus on memorisation and under-emphasis on higher-order criticalthinking skills; the backwash effect of final exams on teaching and learning; concerns that exams come to be seen as a test of memory rather than intelligence
- parental and familial expectations and their impact on students, whether positive or negative, in terms of motivation and stress
- challenges with soft skills like motivation, responsibility, attendance, and independent learning
- currently there is no senior cycle programme following on from Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes for students with significant educational needs
- · lack of access to higher education from the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme, and stigma associated with the programme.

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On the purpose of senior cycle education, teachers, students, and parents affirmed that now and into the future it should provide opportunities and experiences which:

Ask students to apply knowledge and develop skills

Teachers and parents emphasised higher-order questioning, critical thinking, problem-solving, information-processing, independent and collaborative learning, and the importance of opportunities to apply their knowledge. Research, analytical, writing, communication, presentation, and digital skills were all deemed significant. Creativity and innovation also featured, though less frequently.

Contribute to their personal development

Teachers, parents, and students all emphasised the importance of developing soft skills such as resilience, self-respect, personal responsibility, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, self-acceptance and confidence, compassion, empathy, self-management, and a love of learning. They emphasised the importance of relationships and sexuality education. Developing the skills needed for life beyond school is deemed important in areas such as money management, cooking, DIY, driving, first aid, and job interviews.

Build towards diverse futures

Teachers, students, and parents recognise there are many pathways that students may take after school, including higher and further education, apprenticeships, traineeships, employment, or a combination of these. It was suggested there is too much emphasis on transition to higher education and not enough emphasis and value placed on other pathways and on lifelong learning.

Teachers, and students, and Teachers, parents would like to see more value placed on non-academic achievements.

Contribute to full citizenship and participation in society and the economy

Teachers, students, and parents would like to see more value placed on non-academic achievements such as effort and commitment, participation in school activities, and community and volunteer work. Students would like to see a more holistic report of their achievements at the end of senior cycle.

Teachers agreed up to a point but had queries about how this might best be achieved. Teachers, students, and parents all suggested that the ultimate purpose of senior cycle education is to help every young adult to reach their full potential.

Broad Consultation

The NAPD was one of many groups and organisations invited to bilateral meetings with the NCCA as part of the review of senior cycle. Earlier in the year, the NCCA commissioned 'Senior Cycle Reform: What do you want?', a research report on the need for senior cycle reform designed to promote dialogue while the NCCA was engaging in national consultations. This study was an attempt to explore possible solutions to make our senior cycle better.

While the current Leaving Cert enjoys the support of parents and students, the status quo doesn't suit the needs of up to 25% of the cohort and would benefit from a review and a programme of reform to make senior cycle more reflective of the vision we have for society and the values we wish to promote among our young people.

Areas explored during the NAPD bilateral meeting included the use of the Leaving Cert as a filter for college entry; the possibility of extending the range of assessment to include presentations, project work, and extended essays; the possibility of including credits gained in fifth year in the final assessment portfolio; not having so much depend on performance in terminal exams in June; re-energising the Leaving Cert Applied and Leaving Cert Vocational; and reviewing different pathways to further education and apprenticeships.

The NCCA has reviewed the syllabi and content of a number of subjects and is engaging in further reviews as we speak.

New Subjects on the Curriculum

Responding to a specific request from the Minister, Computer Studies is now on the subject lines in fifth year. Google and Microsoft see this as a

major commitment by the State to tackle a skills shortage. The availability of a second assessment component is welcome as part of the final exam. It is vital that necessary resources are made available in all schools to embed

Students would like to see a more holistic report of their Computer Studies. achievements at the end of senior cycle. Lack of equipment or broadband must not be an issue if

> schools wish to introduce the subject. Equity in the system demands that such a relevant subject as Computer Science must not be offered in schools where parents cannot afford to provide the necessary equipment.

> Politics and Society was introduced as a pilot subject in a small number of schools and has already been examined at Leaving Cert level. It has proved extremely popular, so it was no surprise that all schools who wished to offer it this year were permitted to do so. Uptake of the subject (which, unusually for Ireland, has an emphasis on philosophy), is higher than expected in schools that offer it. In some quarters there is concern that it may put pressure on numbers taking History for Leaving Cert, despite the controversy around History as a compulsory subject at junior cycle.

> Colleagues have remarked that the reflective aspect of Politics and Society has enabled students to develop skills that contribute to the development of a rational student voice. Students develop an awareness of how to bring about change in the school and in society. An articulate student voice is so effective in a school!

> The third subject to be offered is Physical Education. There was a broad welcome for Phys Ed as an exam subject, which is on offer in a small

number of pilot schools. The infrastructure to enable full delivery of the programme is several years away because of a shortage of PE halls and essential equipment in schools at primary and post-primary, but the quality of the programme gives great hope for the future. The arrival of non-exam Phys Ed is also a good thing. The use of technology by way of an app is to be welcomed and should increase participation levels, particularly in sixth year when many students give up the subject.

NCCA's broad consultation process is worth it. Taking time to reach consensus is the best way forward so that informed decisions can be made in the national interest.



The Irish Science Teachers' Association, *Eol Oidí na hÉireann*, is the professional association for teachers of science in the Republic of Ireland. As such it is represented on the relevant subject development groups of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Since its foundation in 1961 it has been providing continuous professional development and support for its members at both national and branch levels.

The Association has close affiliations with the Association for Science Education in the UK and is a founding member of ICASE, the International Council of Associations for Science Education. It is also represented on SCIENTIX which promotes and supports a Europe-wide collaboration among STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) teachers, education researchers, policymakers and other STEM education professionals.

Members are also supported and informed of developments through the Association's website (www.ista.ie) and through its Journal, SCIENCE, which is posted to members three times per annum.

The major national ISTA events are the Senior Science Quiz - held during Science Week since 1990 and the Annual Conference which provides members with the opportunity to hear and meet national and international experts in areas relevant to science education. The next conference will be held in the Explorium - National Sport & Science Centre, Blackglen Rd, Sandyford, Dublin, D18 N1F2 on 7th & 8th February 2020 - The theme this year is From Junior Cycle Science to Leaving Certificate Biology, Chemistry and Physics: Issues and Challenges.



For up-to-date information visit:
Website: www.ista.ie
Twitter: @IrishSciTeach

Facebook: www.facebook.com/IrishScienceTeachersAssociation

HOW SHOULD SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOLS RESPOND IN AN ERA OF DIGITAL LEARNING?

Second-level schools in Ireland take a wide variety of approaches to the use of ICT in their classrooms. So what role should digital technologies and digital learning have in schools and classrooms? This article summarises recent discourse and research on the topic, highlighting the key challenges for schools and possible steps forward.



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A recently published article in the Economic and Social Review¹ assesses the state of play in relation to the potential role for digital technologies and digital learning in Irish second-level schools and classrooms. Recent times have seen a prominent focus in public discourse on digital technologies and their impact on children and young people's education and broader development.

The debate has often been preoccupied with whether to ban mobile phones and other personal digital devices in schools, but commentators have argued that this misses the point, and that the merits or otherwise of digital technologies in schools and classrooms are far more complex than the debate suggests. The paper, summarised here, looks at the role that technology can play in second-level schools, the digital divide, and the key challenges for schools.

Technology in education

Schools appear to take a wide variety of approaches to the place of ICT (information and communications technology) in their classrooms. As yet, there are no formal data or requirement on schools to report the main approaches they take. Schools with little technology integration, schools using blended learning, and schools that describe themselves as 'tech-driven' – however that is defined – are free to operate without having to provide feedback to the Department of Education and Skills.

While schools are moving towards a culture of self-evaluation, we still have an unclear understanding of the extent and nature of technology integration in schools and the role that technology plays in school improvement. Despite this, whole school and subject inspection places a strong emphasis on the integration of technology in teaching and learning, and features regularly in published school inspection reports.

Research has found that the existing school environment may not be conducive to integrating technological approaches into present classroom practice. International research has found that incorporating a school or classroom design that facilitates better exploitation of available ICT enables teachers to effectively meet the CHAPTER 3 - SECOND LEVEL

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needs of a diverse student population, including special-needs students. There can also be a high level of difficulty associated with doing anything perceived as outside the norm, and schools and teachers vary widely in their readiness for innovation.

Policy in Ireland to date has not taken into account how the use of ICT has been both intensified and destabilised by the societal impact of technology on our everyday recreational activities. There is an unavoidable tension between these two spheres. On the one hand there is the chaotic, amorphous world of social media, and on the other we see the planned, differentiated, and considered world of educational technology. That is not to say that the two spheres cannot co-exist. Case studies report on the successful use of social media, particularly blogs and Twitter, in a classroom environment. However, while there is some limited reporting of this type of activity taking place in schools, it is difficult to estimate the number of teachers engaging in this work.

Screen time

While technology and personal devices have many benefits, we need to consider if the amount of time that children are spending in front of screens harms their understanding of the real world and their own physical mechanisms. Have digital natives morphed into digital hostages? There

is an aspect of dramatic irony to this new context of use – comparable to the 'boiling frog', whereby technology ownership and use have become so embedded in every facet of our daily lives that it is impossible to think of life without it.

Such over-reliance on and use of technology have led to less focused use, which has happened incrementally. It was never envisaged that when a parent or guardian gave a smart device to their adolescent, they would be spending graph substantial amounts of time with it. The lines between

such substantial amounts of time with it. The lines between educational and recreational use have been blurred; a distinction is needed.

Technology has enabled greater educational opportunity for many second-level students, particularly for those with additional needs. The last decade has seen a surge in the uptake of technology in interventions and teaching strategies for students with autism spectrum disorder and those with learning difficulties. The availability of digital devices has also allowed learners with accessibility issues such as visual impairment to achieve academic success.

Protection and Support for Students

However, the potential benefits of technology in learning can be realised only if students are protected and supported in using it safely and effectively. Technology should be used as a tool for learning rather than a requirement. Students themselves recognise that active engagement is most beneficial for learning, and technology *can* provide a means for achieving this, provided teachers have the desire and resources to do so.

Schools are free to operate [in relation to their use of technology] without having to provide feedback to the Department of Education and Skills.

Screen time has long been present in our conversations on child and adolescent health and well-being, with recent years seeing a replacement of television viewing with computer and technology use. Engagement with screen media and interactive technology can be classified as dominant childhood activities for many children around the world.

Need for unified approach

However, across Europe there is no unified approach to how such technology should be embedded at second level. In September 2018, France issued a ban on mobile phones in all schools. Other countries have followed suit, and individual schools in Ireland and elsewhere have issued similar directives. These actions are reactionary at best and draconian at worst. Before decisions of this nature are made, a more developed, evidence-based approach is needed, with more consultation with all stakeholders, including students.

Globally, screen time has been a contentious issue in the media. Stakeholders have expressed concerns about children's overexposure to screens, and researchers have called for more studies examining the impact on visual and ocular health. In April 2018, the World Health Organisation (WHO) issued guidelines on screen time for very young children (up to five years of age). With many more studies published in the last year on the effect of excessive screen time on ocular health, we can expect the WHO will issue guidelines for the rest of the population. Excessive screen time has been linked to detrimental effects on psychosocial health, decreased levels of physical activity, and an increase in sedentary behaviour in teenagers. There is also huge growth in the number of studies on phone and technology addiction, with younger teenagers at higher risk.

Content

Considerable focus in the Irish media recently has been on devices: whether to ban or not. This diverts attention away from the core issue: the content. There are two aspects to consider when it comes to content: the

The lines between educational and recreational use have been blurred; a distinction is needed.

actual text or graphic material, and how it is presented (e.g., colour, typographic choices, navigation, access). One of the recommendations of the Stavanger Declaration (2019), the culmination of a four-year action by 200 scientists across Europe, is that when introducing digital technology into teaching and learning, teachers should be made aware that a rapid and indiscriminate move away from paper is not without negative consequences. Digital materials can

offer excellent opportunities to cater to individual preferences and needs, but such benefits for comprehension and motivation are demonstrated only when the digital reading environment was carefully designed with the reader in mind.

Where do we go from here?

Policy and practice at national and school levels need to be evidence-informed to ascertain a fuller picture of what works, in what circumstances, and for which students. There is no typical example. Looking at ICT culture

from the perspectives of ICT coordinators, students, and teachers, how might technology support teaching and learning from what we know so far?

Technology may be integrated across a school in many ways. Students themselves may use books (traditional or e-books) as their main content sources for classroom tasks and homework. However, with permission from their teacher they could use their phones or personal devices for specific research tasks in supervised contexts. Students are often familiar with popular educational apps such as Kahoot, Quizlet, and Seesaw, which are commonly used by second-level students to complement their learning. Digital literacy skills are often formally taught to students in Transition Year, as part of a year-round certification module on developing MS Office skills.

The need for evidence extends to the development of teaching resources. There is an emerging expectation that teachers will not only incorporate more digital resources into their practice but that they also become producers of such digital content. Many teachers, however, do not have training in the design and development of digital resources. As a result, many design features can be overlooked, and classroom resources may not be as effective as anticipated.

Many of today's learners have prior exposure to a wealth of mediarich educational resources and social media experiences, and this can have a profound impact on their interaction and engagement with digital material. These experiences can prejudice their use of teacher-created digital resources. We need to support the development of evidence-based resources, and provide guidance for practitioners, policymakers, publishers, and designers, as well as for other researchers developing materials for investigating changes in visual presentation.

Since 2018, there has been some flexibility on the moratorium on posts of responsibility that was a direct result of the recession. Schools now have the opportunity to appoint and potentially build on the role of the ICT coordinator. This could be achieved in tandem with School Self-Evaluation. Now is the time for clear leadership by schools on how they can provide an enriched learning experience, be that through exclusive or targeted use of technology across the whole school, tailored to suit the needs of their students and teachers.

Bottom-up combined with top-down

This does not need to be a top-down process coming from the Department of Education and Skills but instead can develop in tandem with, and organically from, the bottom up, bringing together the various levels of expertise in an autonomous school community. This bi-directional process could have a significant impact on both the opportunity and challenges that technology poses to education.

ENDNOTES

1. Marcus-Quinn, A., Hourigan, T., and McCoy, S. (2019) 'The digital learning movement: How should schools respond?', *Economic and Social Review*, Winter 2019.

There is an emerging expectation that teachers will not only incorporate digital resources into their practice but that they also become producers of such digital

TEACHERS' HEALTH NOT AN OPTION BUT AN IMPERATIVE:

Developing an integrated occupational health system



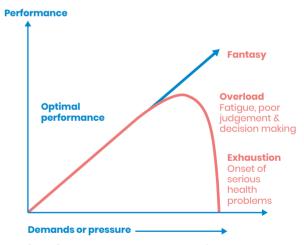
Mental health is perhaps the most important public health issue of our time. This article looks at why mental health is so important in teaching, what affects it, and how we might protect and promote it in education. It makes a morally sound and strong business case for developing and maintaining a fruitful and flourishing working environment for teachers.



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Through whichever prism you view the issue of teachers' health – that of morality, economics, education, or sustainability – it is clearly imperative that it be addressed in a systematic manner. Health and safety is a fundamental human right (ILO, 2008) and should not be viewed as an optional extra or a privilege.

Mental health is an important, perhaps the most important, public health issue of our time. Why is it so important in teaching? What affects it? How do we protect and promote it? These are questions for all workplaces, but are especially pertinent for schools as places now spending much time and energy on *well-being*.



Relationship between pressure and performance

The idea that additional professional demands can incessantly be made on teachers while continually improving performance is a complete fantasy. What actually happens is that the individual suffers a deterioration in mental and physical health, and the school displays organisational symptoms such as high staff turnover, increased sick leave, poor morale, and lost opportunities, capacity, and efficacy (see image, from MacDonald, 2017).

Research by Mental Health Ireland (2001) identified these primary stressors in the workplace: too much work, work intensification,

CHAPTER 3 - SECOND LEVEL

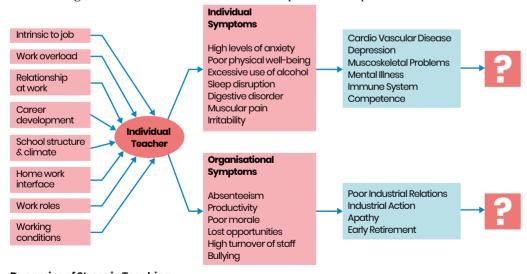
responsibility for others in the workplace, not having control over your work, and poor communications. These issues manifest in schools in the multiplicity of teachers' roles, contradictions in roles, attitudinal change in society (often directly opposed to the culture and values of the school). uncertain and possibly contradictory objectives of the education system, and the devaluing of the teaching profession, in particular the classroom teacher (ETUCE and EFEE, 2011; TUC, 2013).

Positive mental health enables us to flourish and fulfil our potential, including the opportunity to thrive in our professional lives. The National Economic and Social Forum (2007) gives cognisance to its importance and potential. Mental health is an enormous resource in any workplace but none more so than in the education sector. Teachers' life experiences are a huge additional resource. They bring energy, wisdom, experience, knowledge, and skill to school life and relationships, greatly enhancing the educational experience and mental health of the whole school community.

Health and safety Health when is a fundamental human right and should not be viewed as an optional extra or a privilege.

The fact that teachers are not merely subject experts but whole people, with many facets to their lives, enhances their ability to understand and approach the many personal problems they encounter in their work with students. This work is often voluntary but takes up an increasing proportion of their ever-diminishing personal time. But while this element of professional life may bring a sense of fulfilment to the teacher and benefit to others, it often increases stress levels and puts significant pressure on teachers' mental health (see diagram, from Wynne, 1999).

The non-acceptance by school management of these facts exacerbates the situation for the individual and for the organisation as a whole. Research found that negative attitudes by management result in risks for employees in disclosing mental health difficulties. This is of particular importance in



IRELAND'S YEARBOOK OF EDUCATION 2019-2020

Dynamics of Stress in Teaching

light of the continued casualisation of the labour market (NESF, 2007) and applies to the teaching profession with the growth of the hours culture.

Unsustainable situation

The last comprehensive research into teacher stress in Ireland across primary and post-primary education was done in 1990 – thirty years ago. The world is a very different place, Ireland is a very different country, and these changes are reflected in the schools across the country. Classrooms and staffrooms are almost unrecognisable from thirty years ago because of the integration of students with special education needs and students from seriously disadvantaged backgrounds, the increase in family situations that impact negatively on classroom management, the use of social media, and the time and energy given over to bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, Ireland remains in last place - thirty-fifth of the OECD countries - in terms of investment in education as a percentage of GDP (OECD, 2018). Despite this, Ireland continues to perform very well in the PISA assessments (OECD, 2015). This situation comes at a cost, and it is being paid by those working in the education sector. The situation is unsustainable.

The last comprehensive research into teacher stress in Ireland across primary and postprimary Education was done in 1990 - thirty years ago.

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice continually refers to 'whole school approach', 'wellbeing of school personnel, 'commitment to collaborative actions', and 'extensive consultation with stakeholders and international research and practice' (DES, 2018). In developing this document, the Department of Education and Skills did not consult with any organisation representing the teaching profession, and it accords only the most cursory attention to the well-being of teachers and other school personnel:

Recognition for the demanding and extensive nature of teachers' work as holistic educators is necessary so that teachers can do this critical and transformative work without too high a cost to themselves. (O'Brien, 2008, p. 179)

A Vision for Change (Government of Ireland, 2006), the document which sets out a policy framework for mental health, identifies the population perspective model of mental health promotion as a viable and productive template, because it can put in place programmes and interventions tailored to specific groups and settings. The school as a workplace is one such setting. This model of health promotion is important, as it is seen internationally as a capacity-building measure in that it empowers individuals, groups, and organisations to fulfil their potential.

Primary Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) comprises legal protection: the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005. Employers have a statutory obligation and a duty of care (i) to protect employees from hazards which could lead to mental or physical ill-health, (ii) to draw up a written assessment of all known hazards, including psychosocial hazards, and (iii) to put in place procedures or implement control measures to eliminate or reduce workplace hazards (Wynne et al., 2014).

By far the greatest workplace hazard for teachers is stress. The figures on teacher retirements due to mental ill-health from the Civil Service Occupational Health Department (46%) and the insurance industry/salary protection (43%) are evidence of this. It is worth remembering that these figures represent only those who are unable to continue their professional life. What of the teachers who are struggling in the workplace? Ireland has experienced one of the sharpest increases in workplace stress between 2010 and 2015, from 8% to 17% (ESRI and HSA, 2018).

Work-related stress is not an individual weakness, but instead is an individual reaction to organisational and/or interpersonal problems at work. Therefore it has to be tackled at an organisational level. Furthermore it is a multi-causal problem that requires multi-dimensional solutions. (ETUCE and EFEE, 2011, p. 7)

Work-related stress: an occupational hazard

In 2004, European Social Partners recognised work-related stress as an occupational hazard and committed to preventing and tackling this problem in the workplace. The Health and Safety Authority's Work Positive tool for auditing the psychosocial environment in workplaces, if adapted specifically for the education sector, offers a significant resource to schools and the opportunity to collate national data which can be analysed and trends established.

European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) projects on work-related stress have shown that psychosocial hazards can severely damage the working environment in schools. They found the main stressors and the organisational impact to be very much in line with those outlined above (ETUCE and EFEE, 2011). For the individual it can mean a negative impact on mental and physical health, and possibly a breakdown.

By far the greatest workplace hazard for teachers is stress.

With the changes in retirement age and pension provision for newer entrants to teaching, it is more necessary than ever to give serious attention to teachers' health. It is a matter of system sustainability.

In Finland there is an integrated occupational health model, Maintaining Workability. It is a statutory obligation across public and private sectors. The Nordic countries of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland all scored in the top ten in the 2016 Global Workforce Happiness Index, and there is a lot we can learn from them: planned interventions to solve specific problems, a consensual approach to workplace issues, an emphasis on the psychosocial environment, strong trade union involvement, and a regulated workplace. Stevenson and Farmer (2017, p. 29) summarise the business case for a progressive, integrated approach to occupational health: 'organisations managing their most important asset – people'.

Employment Assistant Service

Prevention measures are sometimes insufficient, necessitating a secondary intervention. Stress management is about how the individual copes with stress, be its source in or outside the workplace. The Employee Assistance Service provides such a service. It does not concern itself with the organisational aspect of preventing or reducing stress through structural

changes. Rather, it works at an individual level, such as offering coping strategies and financial advice.

This service requires external evaluation to inform development of an integrated approach to employees' health, in line with international standards in this area. Wynne et al. (2014, p. 32) write: 'Good policy is not sufficient to ensure good practice – a proper infrastructure is also needed.'

A policy document does not fulfil the DES's role in teachers' health, nor is a mere statement of intent sufficient to fulfil management's statutory obligation. Human resources are 'core' because they are essential to society and the economy. There is no concrete recognition of the value that teachers' work generates for society. At present, when everything is evaluated in monetary terms, no cost-benefit analysis even attempts to capture what is really done in schools.

True collaboration and engagement with the partners in education is required to move towards a comprehensive, integrated model of occupational health. Promoting teachers' health is not merely an option: it is an imperative.

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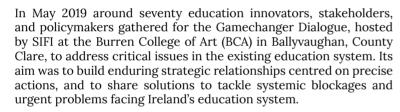
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TACKLING EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE THROUGH GREATER CREATIVITY

Two events this year saw educators and policymakers meet at the Burren College of Art to address critical issues in Ireland's education system. The Gamechanger Dialogue focused on educational disadvantage, while Towards a More Creative Education System was a series of symposia designed to nudge the education system in a more creative direction.

Gamechanaer Dialoque

Social Innovation Fund Ireland (SIFI) was established by the Irish government in 2015 with the express intention of funding tailored, innovative programmes emerging in the non-profit sector. The SIFI Education Fund has been in operation since 2016 and has funded several pioneering projects in the sector, focusing on educational inequality and disadvantage in Irish society.



Recognising the need for collaborative efforts to tackle educational disadvantage, SIFI worked with partners to further dialogue and focus action. The result was the Gamechanger Dialogue, conceived and created in the SIFI Education Fund, in partnership with the Teaching Council of Ireland, the National Association for Principals and Deputy Principals, and Trinity College Dublin. These symposia were hosted by the Centre for Universal Creativity at the BCA in September 2018 and 2019 under the banner 'Towards a More Creative Education System' (see below).

Participants from State institutions included representatives from the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Tusla, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Education and Training Boards Ireland, and the National Council for Special Education. A wide range of key stakeholders also participated, including from universities, trade unions, and education, children, parent, and youth bodies.

Throughout the three-day programme, participants were facilitated in creating a safe, respectful, and creative dialogue to explore issues of social exclusion in Ireland's education system. Each day of the Gamechanger Dialogue was scheduled so that delegates had opportunities to listen, learn, and participate in plenary group sessions and three cluster group discussions. Delegates spent most



Martin Hawkes Trustee. Burren College of Art

of their time together working in three thematic cluster groups, which engaged in targeted areas of work to foster a more inclusive education system:

Participants were facilitated in creating a safe, respectful, and creative dialogue to explore issues of social exclusion.

Cluster 1: Pathways and Inclusion: establishing and supporting viable pathways to and through basic, further, and higher education for people from marginalised communities.

Cluster 2: Getting to College: improving educational progression rates in under-served communities, junior and senior cycle reforms, integrated working across departments, and new partnerships.

Cluster 3: Alternative Education: giving appropriate priority to young people not in mainstream schools, building on models that work, and exploring the potential for funding to follow the young person.

Throughout the three days, participants worked creatively in these groups to deeply consider issues that are 'stuck' in our education system. Several cross-cutting themes emerged:

- Parity of Esteem: the need for greater equality of regard and esteem across the education system, including between teachers, students, parents, and communities, and between mainstream and alternative education.
- Education as a Human Right: The legally binding obligations found in international treaties that Ireland is party to, and Article 42 of the Irish Constitution, enshrine the right to education and the responsibility of the State to provide for it. Participants spoke about how approaching education as a right for all learners empowers all those working in the system to overcome seemingly entrenched barriers.
- Care and Wellness: Issues of care and health, particularly mental health, were repeated throughout the conference. The various and intersecting pressures of operating in the education system were seen to contribute to ill health. Framing these issues as causing negative effects for both adults and children was seen as key to improving health for all.
- Changing Understandings of the Education System: Much discussion took place on the issue of mainstreaming innovative approaches instead of seeing it, for example, as the duty of the providers who work on the margins to incorporate with mainstream provision.
- Collaboration: as a vehicle for organising for sustainable change in the system. This includes the use of existing networks and developing new ones. It was widely agreed that work to change the system needs to be approached in partnership with the relevant stakeholders.
- Overhauling Assessment of Learning: including reform of senior cycle and increasing opportunities for alternative and life-long learning. Participants said the present focus on the CAO points system is not working for too many learners (for example, only 13% of Travellers completed the Leaving Cert in 2018). An overhaul of assessment of learning across the system would also include revitalised pathways to further education, and a consideration of how teachers' training is assessed.

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Towards a More Creative Education System

The Gamechanger Dialogue complemented the symposia hosted by the Burren College of Art in September 2018 and 2019 under the banner 'Towards a More Creative Education System'. The ambition of these creatively facilitated gatherings over three days was to nudge the education system in the direction of greater creativity which the twenty-first century VUCA context (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) demands. This ambition echoes the OECD's current focus on greater student agency.

A notable feature of these events was the processes employed. A scoping exercise with over fifty interviews was conducted in advance, revealing a latent desire for a system-wide conversation hosted in a manner that ensured safety. There were no formal speakers – the process relied on the creative engagement of the participants themselves. In this it modelled the change being sought in the wider system. Participation reflected a cross section of the education system, from policymakers to students, the latter having a particularly powerful impact overall.

Issues of care and health, particularly mental health, were repeated throughout the conference.

The process was remarkably effective in catalysing initiatives, with leaders stepping forward to take responsibility for projects with the support of other participants (their 'tribes'). Among the notable initiatives were:

- BEACONS: The BEACONS (Bringing Education Alive for Communities on a National Scale) project is being driven by the director of the Teaching Council and aims to bring together the parents, teachers, and students in the schools serving particular communities for creative engagement on their hopes and aspirations for the kind of education they seek for their communities. Following a successful prototype event with five schools in Ennistymon in May, a series of conversations involving thirteen schools is scheduled for Dublin before the end of 2019, with a number of review and evaluation events also planned. BEACONS has the capacity to shine a light on the ambitions of communities across the country for the future shape of education.
- CAFE: CAFE (Citizens' Assembly for Education) is a project driven by the former deputy general secretary of the INTO, Catherine Byrne, which is seeking to have the political system commit to a Citizens' Assembly as part of the programme for the next government. A high-leverage question which focused on the philosophy and purpose of education at this time would provide a mandate for the direction and speed of change that is required. This initiative has garnered huge support, and it remains to be seen whether the political parties will recognise what those in the field of education do: that conditions are ripe for a fundamental shift in a system which on the basis of surface criteria may appear to be performing satisfactorily but in reality is no longer fit for purpose. That the disconnect between the traditional system and the demands of the modern world has reached critical proportions is evident from the crisis of mental health affecting students and the extent to which teachers feel overwhelmed.
- Other Impacts: Evaluative feedback indicates that the symposia are affecting the work of many practitioners and innovators in the field of education. Such latent effects cannot be measured with any precision but are likely to be considerable. The decision of the Inspectorate

to devote its 2019 Conference to the theme of creativity is a case in point, with the involvement of students from the Burren marking the connection. The showcasing of the SIFI Gamechanger projects at the Burren College of Art acknowledges the power of the creative processes involved with the symposia. The role of place-based learning, pioneered by the Burrenbeo Trust, is getting wider recognition through the symposia for the vital role it has to play at a time of climate and environmental challenge.

An important takeaway from these symposia is the potential of creative process combined with skilful facilitation and an environment such as the Burren College of Art to catalyse transformative initiatives in education at a time when conditions are ripe for change. A second lesson is the potential for a bottom-up process, as exemplified by BEACONS, to inform and complement a national-level dialogue such as a Citizens' Assembly for Education.



Brainstorming with Martin Hayes, fiddler from Co Clare, one of the creative experts at a symposium for teachers and school leaders held in the Burren College of Art.

LEADING COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONALISM

An abridged version of a paper by Andy Hargreaves and Michael T. O'Connor which formed the basis for discussion at an education symposium in the Killeshin Hotel Portlaoise.

Collaborative professionalism is about how to collaborate more deeply in ways that achieve greater impact. It involves deep and sometimes demanding dialogue, candid but constructive feedback, and continuous collaborative inquiry. For context, see following article by Derek West, 'The Key role of Collaborative Professionalism'.



In education, professional collaboration and building social capital among teachers and other educators improves student learning as these educators circulate their knowledge and take more risks. It improves teacher recruitment and retention as teachers in collaborative cultures realise there are others who can help and support them. It also improves the ability to initiate and implement change, as ideas spread and last beyond a few individual brainwaves. Our schools are increasingly making collaboration a priority among their students, as part of the global competencies needed for fast-changing economies. Children in classrooms cannot collaborate unless their teachers do.

What kinds of collaboration are more effective than others?

Collaborative professionalism is about how to collaborate more deeply, in ways that achieve greater impact. It is about how teachers and other educators transform teaching and learning together to work with all students to develop fulfilling lives of meaning, purpose, and success. It is evidence-informed, but not data-driven. It involves deep and sometimes demanding dialogue, candid but constructive feedback, and continuous collaborative inquiry. Collaborative inquiry is embedded in the culture and life of the school, where educators actively care for and have solidarity with each other as fellow-professionals as they pursue their challenging work together in response to the cultures of their students, the society, and themselves.

Theory X and Theory Y

Theory X leaders believe that people need to be monitored and motivated by external rewards and punishments. They could not be trusted to motivate themselves internally. External incentives would be needed instead. Theory Y is more people-centred; its proponents believe in developing people who are assumed to be honest, capable, and industrious. The priority is to build relationships, develop trust, and increase intrinsic satisfactions in the workplace. Theory X is about pay for performance. It is about structures, precision, and extrinsic rewards. Theory Y is about paying it forward – investing



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in the intrinsic motivation and idealism of human beings. These different approaches are both alive and well in education today and, while educational reform pendulums will swing back and forth between them, neither of them will ever disappear completely.

One way to think about all this is in terms of high and low emphases on trust in working relationships:

No collaboration (low trust, low precision)

No collaboration is a culture of teaching that has to be left behind wherever it can. It insulates teachers from ideas and makes them anxious about themselves and envious or suspicious of others. There are no clear frameworks for meeting, planning, or decision-making, or ways of sharing and giving feedback on practice. Improvement stalls, teachers get overwhelmed and lose heart, quality deteriorates, and many teachers leave.

Contrived collegiality (low trust, high precision)

Contrived collegiality is top-down and enforces teamwork to implement requirements set by others. Contrived collegiality fails to maintain motivation or anything more than superficial compliance. It is high-threat, low-yield, and also leads to teachers being lost to the school or the profession.

Collaborative professionalism is about how to collaborate more deeply, in ways that achieve greater impact.

Informal collaboration (high trust, low precision)

Informal collaboration builds strong and enduring relationships, supports professional conversation, and maintains teacher motivation. However, it tends to persist only where teachers have a strong affinity for each other and their values and styles, and it has difficulty translating promising conversations into positive action.

Collaborative professionalism (high trust, high precision)

Collaborative professionalism is the golden cell of professional collaboration, where teachers have strong relationships, trust each other, and feel free to take risks and make mistakes. There are also tools, structures, and protocols of meeting, coaching, feedback, planning, and review that support practical action and continuous improvement of the work undertaken together.

From professional collaboration to collaborative professionalism

The movement from professional collaboration to collaborative professionalism is a choice for some and a progression over time for many. Apart from the inclusion of debating, the definition of professional learning communities was one that involved nurturing, celebrating, supporting, sharing, and learning. This kind of *professional collaboration* provides comfort and reassurance, while avoiding unpleasant or difficult subjects. It places a premium on the idea that all teachers are equal, which makes it hard for colleagues to acknowledge that expertise is hard-won, unevenly

distributed, and warrants the respect that should be accorded to anyone with an impressive professional knowledge base.

More in tune with the principles of collaborative professionalism, and providing an important foundation for continued progress in the field, was the commitment to collective responsibility for all students' success. This was most evident in the sustained interaction between special education resource and classroom teachers and between special education and curriculum staff in the school board offices. Teachers used tools and protocols like anchor charts of key curriculum ideas in a classroom, menus of strategies of differentiated instruction, and data walls that enabled better monitoring of student progress. 'Coaching at the elbow' enabled teachers to have the assistance of instructional coaches as they practised new strategies in literacy, though on one or two occasions there were concerns that the coaches were there more to ensure compliance with prescribed methods than to improve learning. Overall, though, professional collaboration tended to concentrate on discussing and reviewing new strategies, especially in relation to the foregrounded priority of literacy, and reviewing student progress on assessments posted on data walls.

The movement towards stronger collaborative professionalism is evident in the case examples described in this paper, along five lines.

- 1. From focusing on narrow learning and achievement goals to embracing wider purposes of learning and human development
- 2. From being confined to episodic meetings in specific times and places to becoming embedded into teachers' and administrators' everyday work practices
- 3. From being imposed and managed by administrators and their purposes to being run by teachers in relation to issues identified by themselves
- 4. From comfortable or contrived conversations to challenging yet respectful dialogue about improvement
- 5. From collaborating for students to collaborating with students.

How can leaders help?

Here are seven ways to be a leader of collaborative professionalism.

1. Build slowly; act fast

When you have built slowly, new things can happen more quickly. Sprints are not successful without warming up, and data teams or learning walks have few prospects of success without prior attention to trust and relationships. Lead slowly before you lead quickly, and understand that sometimes you will need to have a bad meeting where everyone can commiserate and get things off their chest before you have a good meeting that gets the job done.

2. Increasingly integrate formal and informal collaboration

Leaders often ask where they should start when they are trying to build better collaboration. Should they begin with meetings, ice-breaking activities, or social events? The answer is to start somewhere, but not anywhere. Avoid highly threatening forms of collaboration like peer

When you have built slowly, new things can happen more quickly.

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evaluation, critical feedback, or team teaching until some level of trust has been established. Otherwise, however, you can begin with something structured, like a shared inquiry, something more informal like a staff lunch, or something in between like a book club. What matters is that over time, the formal and informal aspects of collaboration are woven more closely together, so that the trust is so high and the solidarity is so strong that teachers can engage in challenging dialogue about difficult issues together.

3. Use protocols to separate criticisms from critics

Separate the criticism from the critic and we are less likely to take criticism personally. One of the tasks of leaders is to invite criticism without it destroying the dynamics of the group and its capacity to improve. Protocols can be as old-fashioned as simple suggestion boxes or they can extend to the modern-day methods of lesson study. It is because people matter that we sometimes need protocols to structure the interaction among them so it will be open, inclusive, and productive.

4. Allow people to collaborate in their own way

Sometimes you will need to have a bad meeting before you have a good meeting.

People are not all alike. They work differently, think differently, and collaborate differently, too. These sorts of differences can occur within buildings as well as between countries. Not everyone enjoys ice-breaking activities. For some colleagues, book clubs can be a cerebral bore. Understand that people will not always work together in the way you want them to. Do not make the mistake of thinking that they do not want to collaborate at all. Figure out the way they like to collaborate best, and capitalise on it.

5. Do not let bad collaborative experiences poison the possibility for having good ones

One swallow does not make a summer; and one snow goose does not make a winter either. The same goes for collaboration. Every so often you will have a bad one – a committee member you cannot stand, a colleague who does not pull their weight, or a writing partner who thinks their work is beyond reproach. We should persevere with collaboration just like we do with other things, and encourage our teachers to do the same.

6. Use technology to expand interaction

The pros and cons of technology in the classroom, or as a way to provide professional learning and development, are hotly debated. The strongest case for digital technology in education or life, however, is when it uniquely provides something of value that cannot be offered in any other way. Technology platforms enable teachers and students in small, remote schools in the Pacific Northwest and Northern Ontario to collaborate regularly when there is no other cost-effective way to do so. Some aspects of collaborative professionalism, especially across schools, definitely benefit from creative uses of digital technology.

7. Learn to let go

How can leaders empower others to work together? Sometimes this can occur through invitation and encouragement. Sometimes it can be afforded by coaching and mentoring processes, or by provisions of scheduled time; but sometimes, one of the best ways to encourage the growth of leadership behind and beside us is simply to step out of the way. In the words of Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh, 'Fear is an element that prevents us from letting go. We're fearful that if we let go, we'll have nothing else to cling to. Letting go is a practice; it's an art.'

Collaborative professionalism is a necessity rather than an option in the schools of today

Our problems are so great and our goals are so complex in today's rapidly changing and uncertain world that we can no longer drive change from the top through stronger assessments, more specific standards, or the establishment of teams and clusters to implement the relatively simple wishes of others. No profession, nor the people served by it, can progress without the ability and willingness of professionals to share their knowledge and expertise and to figure out complex problems of practice together. Learning for all requires teachers who can and will work together in relationships of trust and solidarity, using methods that have impact. It is the job of leaders of all kinds to help them do that.





The JP McManus Scholarships Programme supports gifted young students from across Ireland by financing their university education. Each year, 125 All Ireland Scholarships are awarded to students from 32 counties.

Pictured at the 2019 JP McManus Scholarship Awards ceremony held in the University of Limerick (L-r): JP McManus, Racehorse Owner and Philanthropist; Des Fitzgerald, President of University of Limerick; Joe Schmidt, Rugby Coach; Brian Mooney, Editor of Ireland's Yearbook of Education.

THE KEY ROLE OF COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONALISM

Notes on a talk by Andy Hargreaves



Derek West went to hear Andy Hargreaves at the Killeshin Hotel in Portlaoise and spent a day happily out of his depth. Here he offers his reflections on the day and its themes of communication, collaboration, reflection, well-being, leadership, and the undervalued middle ground. For context, see previous article - the abridged version of the paper by Andy Hargreaves and Michael T. O'Connor, 'Leading Collaborative Professionalism'.



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quarterly Leader

A slight, dapper man with a walking stick moves to the rostrum, his face illuminated by the colourful collage of slides projected onto the screen behind him. He has been given a warm introduction by IPPN director Páiric Clerkin, and his mighty reputation has preceded him, so the room is packed with the elite of the primary and post-primary education sectors. The Department of Education and Skills is represented in the person of its chief inspector, Harold Hislop. All gathered have felt it worthwhile to give up a Saturday morning (17 November 2018) to travel to Portlaoise.

The morning is a lot about communication. With a nonchalance that conceals his mastery, Andy Hargreaves – part-showman, part-guru, and part-philosopher – makes eye contact with those gathered. He is relaxed while he copes with an errant microphone, telling us why he has a stick (he broke an ankle in the Appalachians earlier in the year). He has been in a wheelchair and on crutches; now he's on a walking stick. This is his first gig since June.



'I call this my Gandalf stick'

He shares all this in an intimate, conversational way and incorporates the stick ('I call this my Gandalf stick') into his act. When he raises it, the audience are to resume their seats and be silent. It works. We are entertained and at ease – but what are we going to learn?

Andy Hargreaves is in his late sixties but is as lively

as a much younger person, and twice as compelling. He is absolutely present, in the moment, and totally with his audience. His accent bears traces of his north of England origins but has been somewhat flattened by global travel to educational fora in the four corners of the earth.

His primary purpose is to persuade us about the key role of 'collaborative professionalism'. That's his new buzz phrase – and the title of a book he has just co-authored with Michael O'Connor. Here he offers some descriptions:

Collaborative professionalism is about how teachers and other educators transform teaching and learning together to work with all students to develop fulfilling lives of meaning, purpose, and success.

Collaborative professionalism is organised in an evidence-informed, but not data-driven, way through rigorous planning, deep and sometimes demanding dialogue, candid but constructive feedback, and continuous collaborative enquiry.

Collaborative professionalism is embedded in the culture and life of the school, where educators actively care for and have solidarity with each other as fellow-professionals as they pursue their challenging work together in response to the cultures of their students, the society, and themselves.

In the first hour, Hargreaves encourages his audience to collaborate. He suspends his address at intervals to allow brief dialogue between neighbours, and the bulk of the day is spent in a break-out 'café' session (you don't go for lunch: they bring it around in a box!) with a round-table group. This invests the day with a lot of participative energy, and models the effect that he presumably would like to see replicated in staffrooms across continents. In the concluding plenary, he pulls much of it together.

So collaboration is the name of the game – along with communication, reflection, and well-being. Hargreaves proposes ten tenets of collaborative professionalism (see diagram).

He talks for a while about ICSEI (International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement), of which he is currently president. Their 2019 conference is being held in Stavanger in Norway, and they're setting out to rock the boat by breaking with traditional formats and increasing the diversity of presenters: more women, fewer suits, switching the emphasis from male-oriented systems to the more female emphasis on *pedagogy*.

Collaboration is the name of the game – along with communication, reflection, and wellbeing.

There won't be a panel in sight ('kiss of death'), but there will be interactive sessions along the lines of Later... with Jools Holland: eight speakers for eight minutes each, pitching one after another, from heterogeneous backgrounds, speaking on unrelated topics; for example, a speaker from Morocco, where homosexuality is illegal, speaking after someone from the LGBT community. Will Andy be master of ceremonies with his Gandalf stick? It's a heady mix aimed at Generation X, which is ready and up for change.

Questions:

- 1. Why are we so eager to sit at the feet of Master Hargreaves?
- 2. Haven't we enough ideas swilling round in our heads already?
- 3. Haven't we embarked on all kinds of reform already, pursuing the holy

grail of being the best education system by 2026? 4. Aren't we suffering already from innovation overload?

Yes, yes, yes to the last three questions, but perhaps the answer to Question 1 is that we are afraid of missing something out; we're fearful of our complacency, so someone like Andy Hargreaves, who will question our assumptions, is welcome at our table – not for the facts he'll feed us (all of which are to be found online) but for the oxygen of new ideas and outlooks that he spreads with a swish of his Gandalf stick.



The ten tenets of collaborative professionalism (Andy Hargreaves and Michael T. O'Connor, Collaborative Professionalism)

Hargreaves wants us to engage with process, a fine balance between reflection and action. He shows us the Elton John–John Lewis ad, which unfurls layer after layer of the singer's constant self-reinventions and suggests, towards the end, that the Christmas gift of a piano was what set it all a-ticking. He invites us to reflect on this little story, and it evokes a fascinating series of diverse responses.

We are seduced into contemplative mode (remember Milton's *Il Penseroso*?). It's about alertness to change, in all its fluid phases and complexity. It touches on mindfulness, living in the moment, being present, yet sensing the bigger picture. It's only 10:50 a.m. and we can no longer touch bottom – he's drawing us away from the familiar and the commonplace.

He asks us to brainstorm the word 'middle', and we collectively arrive at some indications of mediocrity, in-betweenness, neither one thing nor the other. He draws us towards more positive thinking - the middle connecting other things, middle leadership as an engine room that drives the vision and draws strength from the support of the top tier, underpinning the notion of collaboration.

It's just too complicated now to lead, alone, from the top. Left at the top, it's too easy for leaders to become either narcissistic or manipulative - no prizes for providing examples! In that middle tier there is the space to achieve, through collaboration, excellence, equity, well-being, and public confidence. It may not be the only way, but, for Hargreaves, it is a viable and positive way.

The role of those at the top is not to do everything - leadership is hardest when you do it alone – but to support the middle tier through a philosophy, a structure, and a culture.

After Andy Hargreaves opened the minds of his audience, we were filleted into our groups and put through a series of rapid discussions on themes such as well-being, reflection, and communication. The value was simply in the interaction between participants drawn from different sectors and

strata. I found myself in the company of a primary principal, a post-primary principal, and a classroom teacher. Due to defections (no names, no pack drill), we had no women at our table.

The role of those at the top is not to do everything but to support the middle tier.

The great benefit of the exercise was that we set to the allotted tasks promptly and seriously and assumed rapid candour, so we covered a lot of valuable ground in good time. The frustration lay in not having time to draw our thoughts together or to take them to another level. There is promise of an e-book, as a follow-up to the day, and perhaps that will achieve a coherent account.

One of Andy's slides sums up the value of the group experience:

I've been so isolated as a teacher. I just have gotten used to being my own boss and doing what I want and making my decisions. And then I have to come here and hear ideas that don't necessarily go with mine and learn to be flexible and see others' perspectives. It's also been nice just to work with other people who have the same frustrations. It really has changed my life to come here and work and be around everyone.

It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."

- Harry Truman

GRAB THE GURU WHILE YOU CAN

Lessons on Learning from John Hattie



In March 2019, the distinguished educationalist John Hattie flew into Dublin and gave an energetic presentation at the NAPD's annual symposium. tackling teacher efficacy, raising standards, using the evidence in critical evaluation, and making learning visible. Derek West reports from the event.



Derek West Former principal of Newpark Comprehensive School, Dublin; past president of NAPD: and publications editor of NAPD quarterly Leader

The energetic John Hattie roadshow swept into the Radisson Blue Hotel at Dublin Airport in March 2019. Hattie presented an upright, austere figure in front of the packed audience. He was hard-edged, with high expectations both of us and for us. He cut to the chase from the get-go, wanting to 'focus on the core attributes, the processing attributes that make learning visible and that make schools successful'.

For Hattie it was all about the clear identification of these attributes. He showed hearty contempt for 'peripheral attributes' such as class size, resources, finance, and buildings. He was intent on making learning visible to the students, 'such that they learn to become their own



John Hattie, Professor of **Education and Director of** the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

teachers'. The persistent theme was to keep learning at the forefront of thought and to consider teaching primarily in terms of its impact on student learning.

Know thy impact! And what works best is the impact of leaders.

From time to time, we were invited to join in the conversation, but only in short bursts. Hattie and his colleagues had too much to tell us and not enough time. This was literally a flying visit, hence the location. Hattie had hit the ground running, meeting with Harold Hislop, chief inspector at the Department of Education and Skills, and some senior DES officials for breakfast, going straight on to the symposium, with a packed hall, and then - with barely time to say goodbye - on to a plane and off to the next gig. Every moment had to count, and the task was to consider the core business of schools.

Change the debate

Building teachers' collective efficacy is Hattie's aim: not only how to capture the expertise but how to identify what it constitutes, and to ruthlessly discard any definitions or ideas that are not germane to the core concept. He spent the day raising the bar, with no time for soft thinking or selfcongratulation.

Hattie was, however, complimentary at the outset. His whistle-stop research on the Irish education system (this was his first visit, so how much can you

learn over breakfast?) left him impressed by standards of achievement and our 92% retention rate. But he was not going to let the assembled leaders bathe in complacency. Like the art critic John Berger, who was mentioned, Hattie favours fresh ways of seeing and the high-end standards we should be aiming at.

He put it to us that schools had to be 'inviting places': more attractive, more accessible; places where children wanted to come to learn.

He exuded some of the pugnaciousness of the 'Aussie', such that we felt obliged to listen to him. He was there not to charm but to challenge, and to change the debate from

'what works' to 'what works best' and even then the best was not to be regarded as good enough.

Hattie grappled with the word 'achievement' but wanted to dig deeper than a cosmetic notion of success. He put it to us that schools had to be 'inviting places': more attractive, more accessible; places where children wanted to come to learn. It's not about school being a comfort zone, where familiar learning is rehearsed. Rather, children want to be challenged; they need it. Why come to school to learn what you already know?

Hattie rattled off ideas like bullets, confronting cosy notions about:

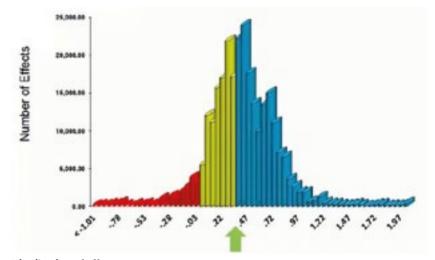
- Teachers' aides (not unlike our SNAs): Are they taking over the learning? Are they enhancing it? Be careful what you wish for.
- Homework: effect in primary schools: zero; in second-level schools: small. Don't get rid of it: parents want it.
- Class size: it does enhance achievement, but only by 0.2. He's strongly opposed to regarding it as major factor. It's more of a political football than anything.
- Projects: He has seen some 'stunning projects' that parents have done.
- Keeping pupils back a year: invidious; we keep doing negative things.
- Number of years in school: only a viable predictor of a child's future if they are positive.
- · Problem-based learning: not working.

His put-downs were acerbic. And all the time there was analysis based on research, and the frame was a representation of effectiveness of all the sacred cows of education in hard, cold percentages. What makes for effectiveness? What doesn't? Here we had to accept unpalatable facts about the things that we thought were actually working.

Change the debate from 'what works' to 'what works best' and even then the best was not to be regarded as good enough.

'Almost any intervention can stake a claim to making a difference to student learning, Hattie says. But he demands that we look closely at the evidence about the extent to which it enhances learning. Most effects are minuscule, and he wants to focus on what really works. Setting the bar at zero is 'so low as to be dangerous'. Improvement needs to be at least 0.40 (the average) to be considered worthwhile - that's the 'hinge point'. By Hattie's calculation, about half of classes achieve 0.40 or above; half are below. The bar is too often set at zero, which means we're in grave danger of thinking we don't need any changes in our system.

Poet Charles Causley has his anarchic schoolboy Timothy Winters 'shoot down dead the Arithmetic bird'; Hattie, armed with research outcomes, meta-analyses, and studies was able to shoot down dead a lot of the things we take for granted. He questions our concept of achievement and criteria he finds irrelevant.



Distribution of effects

Among the most important purposes of education, he says, 'is the development of critical evaluation skills, such that we develop citizens with challenging minds and dispositions.' Critical evaluation – for students, teachers, and leaders - is a core notion in Hattie's thinking. He describes it as the complete opposite of assuming things. It's about 'the importance of evidence to counter stereotypes and closed thinking, to promote accountability of the person as responsible agent, and to vigorously promote critical thinking and the importance of dissenting voices.

At the start of his presentation, Hattie left us to ponder a slide titled 'Distribution of 'Effects' (see image), with shades that ranged from excellence to incompetence. The red line is below zero; the orange zone requires some change; the blue zone is good.

Effect size (d) is the core term used by Hattie; d = 0.40, the average effect size, is the critical measure. So when he looks at homework and finds that the average d over five meta-analyses of homework is 0.29, he concludes that the effect of homework overall is below an acceptable average. While it varied with school level, the overall average is below the mega-average. This figure should prompt us to look at ways of doing homework more effectively. Don't abandon it, but try different approaches.

'When teachers and schools evaluate the effect of what they do on student learning,' he observes, 'we have visible learning inside' – learning that is the explicit and transparent goal. It is teachers seeing learning through the eyes of the students, and students seeing teaching as the key to their ongoing learning.

The teachers in the blue zone need to keep doing what they're doing, but they also need to be part of a coalition to work across the school. Hattie

asked us if we had the courage to identify the teachers in each zone. Had we the courage to identify where we are on that spectrum? Throughout the morning, he hounded us to think straight and deep. The only consolation he offered was to suggest that, based on his whirlwind appraisal of our system, we are 60–70% in the blue zone. Phew!

He is particularly virulent in his attack on the creeping amateurism – teaching aides and parents who muscle in and end up doing most of the work for the kids.

He digressed to talk about his involvement in what he calls 'the dark side': the political side of education in Australia. In 2014 he was appointed chair of the Australian Institute for

Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). Through this role, he can provide national leadership in promoting excellence, so teachers and school leaders have maximum impact on learning. His mission is to persuade education ministers in Australia's eight states that the key target for resources should be teaching standards. He rejects out of hand the term 'proficient' as applied to teachers; he sees it as a negative term and demands that we go much, much further.

Teachers are not comfortable with this, lest it place too much credit – and potentially blame – on them. Hattie feels that too much of the resourcing of education is misplaced. He is particularly virulent in his attack on the creeping amateurism – teaching aides and parents who muscle in and end up doing most of the work for the kids. This does not bring us into the blue zone.

What are common features of the blue zone?

Teachers' mind frame is critical – their view of their role as teacher and as an evaluator of the effects of their actions. Hattie continually stresses the importance of evidence-based methods but says it is also important to accept that there is no one hard and fast method. Variation is a huge factor, and learning is a very personal journey. 'Almost everything works. All that is needed to enhance achievement is a pulse,' he says. He argues that we should attain, at a minimum, gains of at least or above the average for all students.

We have to develop an ability to recognise learning, to understand how it works, and to recognise multiple ways of learning and accept that there are diverse ways of doing this. How does one learn? We struggle with the language of learning in our attempts to make it visible. But there is

Hattie is big on the value of trust and the maximum benefits of effective feedback.

a sequence – engagement, processing information, and using errors (the 'Goldilocks principle') as opportunities to learn. Hattie is big on the value of trust and the maximum benefits of effective feedback.

John Hattie gave us a mesmerising morning. If he set out to make our brains hurt, he succeeded. His philosophy of learning is based on a vast amount of research, involving thousands and thousands of student responses. He left us wanting more – and of course, the more is available in his new book, which was central to the other, more promotional presentations by his colleagues Julie Pitt and Stephen Cox.



Pleased with the outcomes of the day at the Radisson Hotel, Dublin Airport: Harold Hislop, DES Chief Inspector at the Department of Education and Skills; John Hattie, Professor of Education and Director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, Australia; Kieran Golden, President of the NAPD

TEACHERS INSPIRE

RTÉ broadcaster Miriam O'Callaghan was presenter at the inaugural 2019 *Teachers Inspire* gala ceremony held in The Helix, DCU.

Teachers Inspire was established to create a platform to highlight the work of exceptional teachers, DCU President Prof Brian MacCraith said.

The *Teachers Inspire* initiative is supported by businessman and philanthropist Dermot Desmond.

Pictured at the 2019 Teachers Inspire gala ceremony (l-r): RTE1 Nationwide presenter Zainab Boladale, who promoted the Teachers Inspire initiative and highlighted the role of a primary teacher in transforming her life; Prof Brian MacCraith, President of DCU; RTE broadcaster Miriam O'Callaghan who presented the awards.



CHAPTER 3 - SECOND LEVEL CHAPTER 3 - SECOND LEVEL

ART AND SCIENCE UNITE TO SAVE OUR WORLD

To celebrate Science Week in November 2019, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) partnered with renowned Irish poet and playwright Stephen James Smith to create *Everything*, a reflection on climate action and science.

Everything, commissioned by SFI as a cultural artefact, responds to and observes the beauty, ambition, risk, potential and boldness of science in our modern age, and the societal challenges we face. Its commission comes as part of SFI's remit to engage the public in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), incorporating the arts to reach new and diverse audiences.

"There's an increasing appreciation for the role Art and STEAM can play in helping people understand science", poet Stephen James Smith said.

"Climate change is the biggest challenge our generation faces and yet, for many people, climate action does not relate to their lives.

"Everything aims to help explain a number of the facets of science and climate change, to make it personal and relatable."

EVERYthing - by Stephen James Smith

Connection is everything, In this age of division and populism Anything that shows the world through a new prism Is worth exploring.

We've had the golden age of exploration, Now the adage is we don't value knowledge, We want all the information At our fingertips.

So we swipe right, touch screens, Forget caress and what it means, We dope up on benzodiazepines. Existing in an existential state, Trying hard to relate to the world around.

Some say it's flat, Some say we never got to the moon, Some say tomorrow won't come too soon, But timing, it's all relative...

So don't give into... Ignorance is bliss When the more we know, The more we fear less!

So don't be afraid of seeking the truth.
Is the universe just;
A higher state of consciousness?
A big bang?
A random game of chess?
So our intelligence makes us observe, classify,
Take the time to ask why
Is that a bird or a plane in the sky?

So we stand at a peculiar angle to the universe Looking for a way in,
Forgetting we're in it, we are it.
Science is the language of stardust,
If understanding is an art form,
Science is the true guide.
Asking us all the questions,
Saying to never again hide.
It's how we find meaning,
And can foolishly feel smart,
Science humbled us,
Looking back at the Pale Blue Dot,
It measures things up, to see what we've got...

Science brings out the best and the worst, Mass machines quenching a killing thirst. So we steal fire from Prometheus, To proclaim our own genius, Perhaps we should be a bit more elemental in our thesis.

We are made up of; Fire, and rain, and air, and live loam, So we must be true wherever we roam... Science sees sea levels rising, Sees every connection as a ripple effect. As intricate, as integral, As a butterfly's wings that are perfect.

Science is a spectrum of light and sound, How we interpret frequencies can be profound, With song and dance life is worth living, It gives us the resistance to not give in!

Science knows extinction and how we must rebel. Every smile on people's faces a joyful expression, A moment of peace, a sincere connection.

It cuts through fake news and devises plastic parts,
That come from oil deep down made from dead dinosaur parts.
In time, what endeavours will our cadavers enable?

Science is big budgets and the internet, Giving us worldwide communication and tweets we'll regret!

Science is an algorithm to help a poet rhyme, Science can be hard to fathom or to define.

Science presents evidence, And knows nothing is future proof. Science recognises bees' importance, While the climate goes through the roof.

Science seeks important answers, To the questions I ask, Like why do they have cancer? Are they up to the task?

So we stand on the shoulders of giants, Looking at the event horizon, Not knowing what's to come, Knowing we can't know anything, Without everything connecting as one.

More than the sum of its parts, together.
Unity,
Binary,
Perfection,
From, zero to one...

Nothing, Something, Anything, Everything, Everything, EVERY thing



Stephen James Smith's poem can be viewed on video at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWIjinDEnDc

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Government of Ireland

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Jack O'Donnell, student at Athlone Institute of Technology, represented Ireland in plumbing at the 45th WorldSkills competition in Kazan, Russia in August 2019. WorldSkills is held every two years and is the world's largest professional education event, with an estimated 1,600 competitors from 60 countries participating.

The Further Education & Training (FET) sector is on the move. There is a growing recognition that FET can change people's lives, allowing them to develop themselves personally, engage with their communities, reengage with education, and take the first steps in returning to work.

OVERVIEW OF FET IN 2019

This is an auspicious time for FET. The progress made during the current strategy has put a strong foundation in place for SOLAS to lead the system into an exciting new era, working closely with ETBs and other providers to deliver real integration, reform, and performance improvement. This article looks at areas of current focus, challenges, and aspirations in the sector.



Andrew Brownlee Chief Executive Officer, SOLAS

This is a pivotal time for further education and training (FET). Since SOLAS and the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) were established in 2013 and the concept of an integrated FET system was born, we have been in a phase of establishment and development. The immediate priority was to set up the organisations, get their structures right, match capabilities to roles and responsibilities, and embed the systems and processes to support planning, funding, and gathering of learner data.

While there was a sense of what an integrated FET system might cover in terms of learning, services, and activities, there was no real focus on the most critical areas of priority and development. This led to a first, all-encompassing Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019, with many complex and multiple stakeholder arrangements, five goals, and fifty-two detailed actions.

Working towards a clearer policy and strategy

Over the lifetime of the current strategy, a clearer policy and strategic agenda have emerged. The launch of the action plan for apprenticeships and traineeships, agreement of national FET system targets with the Minister for Education and Skills, and establishment of strategic performance agreements between SOLAS and the ETBs have contributed to a more coherent sense of the future direction in which the FET system needs to evolve.

The significant progress which has been made over the lifetime

of the strategy has put a very strong foundation in place for SOLAS to lead the system into an exciting new era, working closely in partnership with ETBs and other FET providers to deliver real integration, reform, and performance improvement. It is part of our legislative responsibility to propose a FET strategy to the Minister every five



years, and our work to prepare the second strategy, for 2020–2024, has produced an exciting and transformational vision for the next critical phase of FET development.

The new strategy is based on a structure that gets to the absolute core of FET. Fundamentally, FET revolves around skills development, learning pathways, and inclusion. We have framed the system's future strategic priorities around these pillars, with a parallel focus on key enabling factors like staffing and structures, digital transformation. a performance- and learner-centric approach, and capital infrastructure. This will mean that, over the next five years, FET will be focused on:

Fundamentally, FET revolves around skills development, learning pathways, and inclusion.

- The development of an integrated FET college of the future, which will break down the existing divide between FE colleges and training centres and ensure that communities can more clearly identify with their local FET facility and its diverse array of learning opportunities.
- The establishment of much clearer learning pathways, including developing potential links with second level and a more consistent transition approach to higher education, alongside a more modular and technology-driven approach to learning delivery which will facilitate continual engagement with FET throughout lifetimes and careers.
- A simplified programme structure, addressing the current confusing portfolio of twenty-six different FET programmes, with consistent branding linked to level, discipline or skill, and outcomes, and a new level 5/level 6 proposition that will lead directly to a specific vocation or facilitate transition to a higher-education degree programme.
- Building the *influence* of *employers* on the types of skills developed by FET, through cutting-edge and accessible labour market and skills research, co-construction and co-development models, and by working with our partners to ensure that the growing interest in and demand for apprenticeship as a route to exciting careers is built upon with significant employer buy-in to ensuring its future sustainability and success
- A comprehensive approach to learner support, meaning you can access the same level and quality of support (including financial support) regardless of where and what you learn, linked to a more strategic and consistent approach to community education, which ensures that FET continues to offer exciting opportunities in every corner of the country.

To deliver this vision, key challenges must be tackled, including:

• On capital infrastructure, dealing with legacy issues of old buildings not fit for purpose for modern learning and deficits in capital stock. Now that FET has been allocated some sustained capital funding in the National Development Plan, we can start investing more strategically, with consolidation of provision, inroads made to dealing with the infrastructure deficits, and also some space for selected new 'flagship' capital developments which can help to change hearts and minds about FET's role and potential.

What is truly unique about **Further Education** & Trainina: the opportunity to engage in learning in every community in Ireland, regardless of previous levels of education.

• On staffing and structures, breaking down the programme-based

rigidity around HR, learner support, and operational regulations to facilitate integrated cross-FET service delivery.

• On systems and technology, acknowledging that the way we work, learn, do business, and interact with each other is fundamentally changing, with an overall digital transformation framework to set out how technology will enhance learning access, change the way learning is delivered and how data will drive service delivery, and develop shared financial and other systems to support more robust and efficient management approaches.

Despite these challenges, the tools are there to fundamentally change the way FET is viewed and valued, so that more and more people recognise that FET can:

- change people's lives, allowing them to develop themselves personally, engage with their communities, and go as far they want to go
- help people re-engage with education and take the first steps in returning to work
- give people a vibrant college experience without a four-year commitment
- offer direct routes into many varied careers
- let you upskill at minimal cost if you're already in work and seeking to ensure that your skills remain relevant
- prepare you to succeed, whether you want to go on to higher education or straight into the workplace.

Because that's what is truly unique about further education and training: the opportunity to engage in learning in every community in Ireland, regardless of previous levels of education, and to offer a pathway to progress as far as any person wants to go. The impact of FET is already transformative, but I believe that, with the strong direction set out in the new strategy, it can grow its profile and contribution to the next critical phase of Ireland's social and economic development.





Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death.

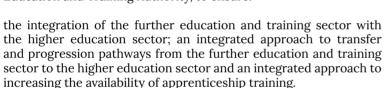
- Albert Einstein

QQI was established in 2012 as a body straddling the further and higher education sectors. This article describes QQI's integrated policy approach to quality assurance guidelines, provider re-engagement, and institutional quality review, and describes how QQI have been the first movers in an integrated tertiary education system.

Introduction

One of the strategic actions in the government's Action Plan for Education 2019¹ is to 'increase the alignment of higher education and further education and training to achieve a more integrated tertiary education system'.

In 2019, the government announced it was undertaking a public consultation² on reform of the 1971 Higher Education Authority Act. The outlined legislative proposals envisage that a newly established Higher Education Commission (to replace the Higher Education Authority (HEA)) will make an agreement with SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, to ensure:



Establishment of OOI

The above developments follow on from the 2008 government decision to establish a single body responsible for quality assurance and qualifications, by amalgamating the bodies established by the 1999 Qualifications Act: the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), and also incorporating the functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB).

In 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established as the single body straddling the further and higher education sectors. It was significant that, prior to QQI's establishment, a unified National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) was already in place since 2003 that covered general, further, and higher education qualifications.

The 2012 Act establishing QQI, unlike its 1999 predecessor, made no distinction between further education and training (FET) and higher education (HE). Since its establishment, QQI has therefore



Dr Padraig Walsh Chief Executive, Quality and Qualifications Ireland

CHAPTER 4 - FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING

taken a holistic approach to working with all providers, public and private, in the FET and HE sectors. In our organisational structure, QQI has chosen not to establish separate FET and HE units. As far as possible, our policy development and evaluation processes have sought to reflect an integrated approach to education and training, in keeping with the concept of lifelong learning across the education continuum.

In this article, I wish to provide examples of this approach to quality and qualifications and how QQI were, to some extent, the first movers in an integrated tertiary education and training landscape.

Quality assurance guidelines for education and training

Under the 2012 Act, QQI was required to develop and issue quality assurance (QA) guidelines which a provider is expected to use when developing its own QA procedures. When issuing these guidelines in 2016, QQI decided to develop 'core' QA guidelines that apply to all education and training providers,³ rather than developing separate guidelines for further and higher education, because many of the core principles of QA permeate all education and training.

These guidelines are supplemented with sector-specific guidelines for independent and private providers, education and training boards (ETBs), universities, and institutes of technology, to respect the legislative differences that remain and reflect the relative levels of autonomy of these bodies.

Re-engagement and institutional quality review for public tertiary-education providers

Following the issuing of Quality Assurance Guidelines in 2016, the next stage for all providers with a prior relationship with QQI's antecedent bodies was to agree QA procedures with QQI, taking the above guidelines into account. This was completed for the universities and institutes of technology in 2017 and for the ETBs in 2018. Starting in 2018, this re-engagement⁴ is also being progressed for private-sector providers, using an identical process for HE and FET providers.

In 2017 QQI introduced a cycle of institutional quality reviews for the publicly regulated higher education institutions (HEIs), known as CINNTE.⁵ This is the third cycle of institutional quality review for the HEIs, dating back to the inaugural omnibus quality review of the Irish universities by the European University Association (EUA-IEP)⁶ in 2004–2005.

As no such institutional quality reviews had taken place in the FET sector, QQI decided in 2017 to undertake a similar process with the sixteen ETBs. In September 2019, the board of QQI approved the policy approach for the inaugural review of quality assurance in the ETBs. In 2020–2021, all ETBs will be visited by teams of national and international experts, who will evaluate the effectiveness of the QA procedures that the ETBs have put in place to assure the quality of their education and training provision. The individual reports will be complemented by a sectoral report drawing together common themes that the teams find in relation to quality assurance in the sector.

In preparation for these reviews, QQI visited all sixteen ETBs in May and June 2019 and met with ETB management to discuss progress with the quality improvement plans (QIPs) submitted to QQI earlier in the year. In September 2019, QQI published a report⁷ in our QQI Insights series on quality assurance in FET arising from an analysis of the QIPs and the experience of the dialogue meetings. A similar QQI Insights report⁸ is prepared annually for the Irish HE sector.

Apprenticeship training

Apprenticeship is an area that is open to a tertiary-education perspective. Traditionally, all apprenticeships were craft-based, with SOLAS acting as the sole coordinating provider, and all apprenticeships resulted in QQI Advanced Certificate qualifications at level 6 in the NFQ.

Since the review of apprenticeship training in Ireland in 2014, new apprenticeships have been developed, with ETBs, public HEIs, and private providers acting as coordinating providers; the qualifications now range from levels 5 to 9 in the NFQ, transcending the traditional boundaries between further and higher education. This task was made simpler by the fact that QQI had already developed, in 2015, new Professional Award Type Descriptors (PATD)⁹ for NFQ levels 5–9, against which a programme can be submitted for validation.

Transitions reform

Following a national conference in 2011 to explore how best to improve the quality of the transition from second level to higher education, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) established a Transitions Reform Steering Group¹0 to look at some of the issues that arise when students are transitioning between the two systems. The group is chaired by the secretary general of the DES, and the establishment members were drawn from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the State Examinations Commission (SEC), the Irish Universities Association (IUA), the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), the HEA, and QQI.

The group oversaw the development of the new Leaving Certificate grading scale, the revised common CAO points scale, and the broadening of entry routes into higher education. Its remit and membership have recently been broadened to include SOLAS, and it is now focusing on the important transition between FET and HE.

Increased opportunity to access higher education with FET awards

Of the 21,347 major award level 5 NFQ certificates issued by QQI in 2018,¹¹ over three-quarters (16,269) were made in the ETB sector. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of learners accessing higher education on the basis of their QQI FET award, usually a level 5 Post-Leaving Certificate programme from a further education college.

To ensure transparency for access from FET to higher education, QQI recently decided to commission research to review the two major award

types at NFQ level 6 – the Advanced Certificate (AC) and the Higher Certificate (HC) – and their effectiveness in differentiating FET from HE, as was their original purpose. The first phase of the project aims to provide objective, empirical evidence on the comparability, as implemented, of the AC and HC award types, by analysing samples of qualifications and programmes or routes that lead to them.

QQI is aware that there is considerable interest in this project among stakeholders. Much has changed since the NFQ was established in 2003, and it is timely to revisit the suitability of the major award types at NFQ level 6. HEIs will welcome the prospect of greater clarity on these awards. FET providers will welcome the prospect of addressing perceived parity-of-esteem issues between AC and HC qualifications, and the project may provide a basis for developing better progression opportunities for learners in the region of NFQ levels 5–7.

Quality enhancement in tertiary education

In addition to its regulatory role, QQI also has a role in supporting providers in enhancing quality. In February 2020, QQI will hold a conference in the Croke Park Conference Centre entitled Exploring Models of Success: Professional Development of Staff in Further Education and Training (FET), Higher Education (HE) and English Language Education (ELE). This event will give staff in the FET, HE, and ELE sectors an opportunity to share and exchange experiences of professional development and to learn from international colleagues.

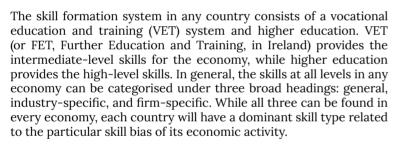
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TOWARDS A COMPETENCE APPROACH TO SKILL FORMATION IN IRELAND

This article argues for moving away from the narrow, instrumentalist employability approach to skill formation. It presents a competence model based on the three venues of learning: the classroom, the workplace, and online. The skill formation system, and its associated institutions and organisations, are crucial to ensuring that the skills of new and existing workers keep pace with the evolving needs of the economy.

Since the beginning of industrialisation, ensuring the availability of sufficiently skilled workers has been a concern in all political economies. The skill formation system, and the associated institutions and organisations in any political economy, are crucial to ensuring that the skills of new and existing workers keep pace with the evolving needs of the economy. Consequently, the skill formation system of the state is of key importance to the political economy of any advanced economies.



The first FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) presented 'a roadmap and implementation plan to realise the vision of a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland' (p. 3). Yet little time has been spent discussing the best approach to skill formation for the Irish labour market and economy. Different approaches can be identified in advanced economies around the world, but no two are the same – each country has developed an approach that best suits its own circumstances.

Historically, the approach in Ireland evolved in line with developments in the UK, but recent years have seen some divergence. In 1979, when Ireland joined the European Monetary Union, the historical link between the Irish and British currency was severed. This was soon followed by the emergence of the social partnership process in the 1980s, which was based on the European model. While continuing to maintain many similarities with the UK, Ireland has increasingly been moving away from its nearest neighbour towards the EU.

The reforms of the apprenticeship system in the 1990s, resulting in the standard-based apprenticeship, emerged from the social partnership process. Much of the certification in use at this time



Dr Rory O'Sullivan
Chair of the FET
Committee of the
National Association
of Principals and
Deputy Principals

continued to be of UK origin (e.g., City & Guilds), which was the subject of criticism. The Culliton Report (1992) states that 'the British approach has not served us well in this area' (p. 54). More recently, a review of apprenticeship in Ireland (DES, 2013) has led to a new approach, a further signal of our convergence with European approaches.

Ireland is often compared to Germany with regard to the number of apprenticeships available, but there has been little discussion of why this is the case. Ireland's predominant skill type has been general skills while in Germany it has been industry-specific, so the validity of the comparison between the two countries is questionable.

Vossiek (2018) states that 'it is a central question for policymakers how to get employers involved in skill formation' (p. 17). Indeed, employers in Ireland do not have a good track record in their engagement with skill formation. However, the development of the State's labour market intelligence apparatus, including the National Skills Council, the nine Regional Skills Fora, and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, has led to a significant increase in employer engagement with skill formation in Ireland. The emergence of the new approach to apprenticeship has also involved greater collaboration with employers. But it is too early to determine if these developments have led to a more definite cultural shift regarding employers' active participation in skill formation.

In FET, the most successful programme in Ireland has been the Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) course.

Despite these developments with apprenticeships, the dominant form of post-secondary skill formation in Ireland remains the single- and multi-year programmes based on the academic year. In FET, the most successful programme in Ireland has been the Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) course. Based on a one- or two-year programme of study, it is primarily classroom-based, with a mandatory work experience placement.

Engagement with employers on this element of PLC courses has been the subject of some criticism. The recent Evaluation Report of the Post Leaving Certificate Programme (McGuiness et al., 2018) recommended that work experience placement should be relevant and structured. The criticism is primarily about the structure of the placement. However, there has been consistent failure over the years to state clearly the ultimate purpose of work experience as part of an educational programme.

The three venues of learning – a competence approach

The dominant public discourse in skill formation in Ireland today is what could be called transactional learning: where there is a skill gap, put on a course to fill it – a transaction. The ESRI research on FET in Ireland (McGuinness et al., 2014) quotes a contributor who describes the approach to skill development in Ireland as follows:

We are going to bestow these [skills] on you like a coat of paint. (p. 77)

This line, while glib, reflects the approach that views skills as something to be acquired rather than developed. This approach is narrow, short-term,

and fundamentally unsound, focusing on employability rather than career or vocational development.

A more holistic skills-development or competence-development approach is based on the active learner participating in constructing knowledge. Here, the learner or employee is seen as bringing all the resources at their disposal to deal with complex situations in the workplace. This holistic view includes all aspects of the person: personal, professional, and social. In other words, the learning is context-dependent and situated in the context of the relevant occupation.

Adler (2004) argues that a skill consists of two key components:

Mastery of the complexity of the tasks required of workers by their jobs, and mastery of the relations that coordinate activity across these tasks. (p. 246)

These components can be viewed as the technical dimension of the skill and the social dimension necessary for it to be effective in a given context. From an occupational perspective, the totality of skills required for a particular employment will consist of technical and social components. Deissinger (2004), referring to the German VET system, writes that 'social and personal behaviour patterns are taught along with the relevant technical and practical job skills' (p. 29).

A discussion about skills in isolation from their corresponding occupation or field of employment would be incomplete. Indeed, some commentators consider skill formation to be inseparable from identity formation for the individual (Streeck, 1989). Rauner (2007) goes further:

It has been commonly accepted in pedagogical science that competence development is inseparably linked to the formation of vocational identity. (p. 117)

FET students bring with them a wealth of experience from previous education, employment, unemployment, personal interests, and circumstances.

When a young person leaves school, or an older person is considering a change of career, they seek to acquire the skills for a particular occupation or area of employment. For example, the young person becomes an apprentice and trains to be a carpenter. Equally, they could go to medical school to train to be a doctor.

An FET student brings with them a wealth of experience, both positive and negative, from previous education, employment, unemployment, personal interests, and circumstances. This experience has contributed to their course choice and subsequent career path or progression path to further study. Work is a central part of life for most people. As well as the tangible benefits of an income to pay for life's necessities, for many it also brings a sense of purpose and meaning. Equally, people who are unemployed can feel alienated and a loss of self-esteem and occupational identity. Work has a significant influence on people's identity, both as individuals and as members of social groups.

Education and training are widely seen as providing the key to work. Consequently, in preparing people to enter or re-enter the world of work, any discussion of skill formation must consider both development of technical skills and socialisation into the occupational community. This has been the traditional approach to apprenticeship for hundreds of years. Work-based learning is a central part of skill formation.

Mulder (2015) writes that 'the meaning of competence is situation- or context-specific' (p. 4). As has been the case with apprenticeships for generations, learning to be part of an occupational 'community of practice' requires not only technical knowledge and skills but also the social skills and the development of situational or contextual knowledge of how to apply the knowledge and skills in the workplace. The learner constructs meaning for themselves by placing their learning in the appropriate occupational context. Mulder continues, 'there are certain relationships between personality and ability factors, and competence and on-the-job performance ratings' (ibid.).

Mulder refers to the most recent approach to conceptualising competence as 'situated professionalism':

A major constituent of this approach is the appreciation that a certain competence representation can mean something totally different for one job holder or job situation to another. Furthermore, important notions are that the agency of a person and the affordances of a job context enable the development of competence [...], the idea that the work context takes shape as a community of practice in which players interact and share and negotiate meaning, and that personal epistemologies have a stronger influence on

professional development than mere skills training. Finally, it also acknowledges that desired competence is defined by what key stakeholders in a professional context expect in terms of

The increasing acceptance of the professional action. (2015, p. 1) value of work-based learning... will need to be It is worth emphasising, as Mulder points out, that a learner's part of the vision for the

future.

previous experience of learning, both in education and in work, has a stronger influence on their skill formation than actual skills training. Taking a more holistic, developmental,

and transformative view of FET programmes, in a competence approach to assessment of/for/as learning, would give the learner a richer learning experience that would prepare them for the job opportunities of today and also give them the capacity to respond to future occupational changes through lifelong learning opportunities.

The increased engagement with employers and the changing nature of the labour market will demand a more flexible approach to all skill formation provision, in both FET and higher education. Requiring attendance in a classroom for a course in the medium to long term as the only form of provision will not be sustainable. The increasing acceptance of the value of work-based learning, with its implications for assessment, will also need to be part of the vision for the future.

In short, education and training will occur in three principal venues: the classroom, the workplace, and online (see figure). The blend of these three will depend on a variety of factors, but their accommodation in assessment, with all of the governance implications, must be seen as an increasing part of our provision.

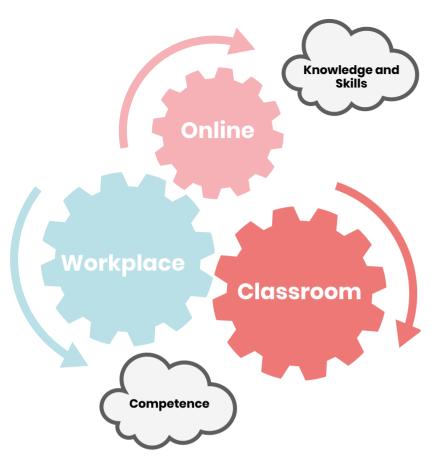


Figure 1: The three venues of learning in a competence approach

In this model, knowledge and skills will be developed primarily in the classroom and online, while the workplace is where they are given an occupational context. It is the integration of the learning in these three venues, in a situated professionalism approach to competence development, that will be key to the quality of an FET programme. This approach would be further enhanced by a holistic approach to assessment across the entire programme. Mulder and Winterton (2017) write:

A main problem of many educational programmes is that they are containerships stacked with course units or modules which are inserted by departments or faculty members under the umbrella of a programme name, but which are really incoherent sets of overloaded and overspecialised introductions into disciplinary knowledge domains. (p. 5)

In many ways this statement describes, to an ever-increasing degree, the experience of many FET programmes. Assessment is often based on each module, with little evidence of a more coherent approach. Indeed, the recent consultation on QQI's Green Paper on Assessment (QQI, 2018) highlighted the issue of over-assessment in programmes. Taking a competence approach to skill formation therefore necessarily has implications for programme assessment strategy. A holistic approach to assessment would

involve calibrating all assessments to ensure they are based on, or in, the work placement.

Conclusion

This article argues for moving away from the narrow, instrumentalist, and flawed employability approach to skill formation. It highlights the divergences with the UK and the convergences with the EU, illustrated by the emergence of the new approach to apprenticeships. It presents a competence model based on the three venues of learning. Learning and assessment in the three venues must be integrated. Indeed, the greater the quality of this integration, the greater the quality of learning. The consequences for assessment strategies were also discussed. Mulder (2015) argued that taking a competence approach to skill formation not only improves the student's preparedness for a new career, it also increases the likelihood of their future engagement with lifelong learning.

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CONSTRUCTING AN EVOLVING TEACHER IDENTITY IN FURTHER EDUCATION:

Professional voices from the field

This article shares the experiences of FET teachers who were forced, in many cases reluctantly, to engage in a process that transformed their perspectives on themselves, personally and professionally, and fundamentally changed their relationships with their teaching colleagues. It shares some understanding of the variables that influence how FET teachers perceive themselves: identities, work roles, professional learning and development, and the relation between all three.

Having a commitment to lifelong learning is essential to the professional development of teachers as adaptable, self-reliant educators (Coolahan, 2002). And it is vital for further education and training (FET) teachers, whose expertise in vocational areas must support flexible responses to evolving industry practices, standards, and expectations.

Traditionally, FET is less structured than primary, post-primary, or third-level systems, and FET teachers take pride in the fact that they do things differently. They tend to have had previous careers outside of academia and consequently are inclined to have a more practical, applied approach. This resonates with those who have felt excluded by the mainstream education system.



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Context

Often referred to as the 'Cinderella' of Irish Education, the FET sector is perceived as 'different' and 'other'. In recent years there has been significant structural and organisational change in addition to the formation of an FET strategy and the changes that QQI has brought to the sector. These have caused shifts in identity, ethos, and objectives for teachers as FET develops from a fractured history to formal recognition in the education sector.

Amendment to FE teacher registration and approved education qualification with the Teaching Council destabilised many working in the sector, creating concern about their (informal) professional status. The chief concerns identified include threats to continuity of employment, career progression, and professional membership of the Teaching Council. The move to professionalise the sector was viewed as putting further barriers into a world of work that was already perceived as unstable and unpredictable, with limited opportunities for progression. FET teachers were working in what might be termed the gig economy of post-compulsory education.

This article shares the experiences of FET teachers who were forced, in many cases reluctantly, to engage in a process that transformed their perspectives on themselves, personally and professionally, and fundamentally changed their relationships with their teaching colleagues.

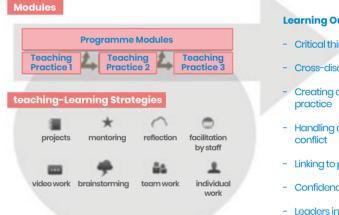
the Teaching Council - into how teacher education qualification (TEQ) programmes could best meet the emerging needs of participating teachers, who face some of the most pressing demands in Irish society today. Two subsequent studies (funded by SCoTENS) confirmed these findings.

Insights are provided from a study of two FE teacher qualification

programmes - among the first with professional accreditation from

FET teacher qualification programmes

In general, both of these TEQ programmes are designed specifically for FET teaching and learning contexts. They encourage application and facilitate critical reflection, collaborative in-class discussion, group projects, and online threaded discussions. A separate teaching practice (TP) development course usually forms an integral part of the TEQ programme, focused on pedagogical training and curriculum development and design. TP programme assessment usually comprises, per semester, a teaching portfolio, structured reflective assignments, and a TP tutor observation of students during a teaching placement or at the organisation where they are employed as teachers.



Learning Outcomes

- Critical thinking & reflection
- Cross-disciplinary working
- Creating communities of
- Handling diversity &
- Linking to practice
- Confidence in application
- Leaders in further & adult education

Figure 1: Conceptual map of the FET TEQ programme (Graham Cagney, 2019)

Participants reflect the complexity and diversity of the sector. In general, they have prior knowledge and previous teaching experience, often across several disciplines and subjects. Age profiles vary from early 30s to late 50s. Many have worked in other professions and bring that experience to their teaching role. Their employment contracts and roles include voluntary, part-time, and full-time contracts of indefinite duration, and tenured and permanent positions. On graduation, they are entitled to register as FE teachers with the Teaching Council.

Learning as transformation

Research on enhancing teaching and learning in undergraduate programmes (Entwistle, 2003) suggests that students' perceptions of their learning environment are strongly determined by a set of overlapping contexts that comprise four elements: course contexts, teaching and assessing content, staff-student relationships, and aspects of the students and student culture in a particular programme (ibid.). This conceptual map of the inner teaching-learning environment (TLE) operates like an organising framework when considering how to achieve a higher quality of learning through the creation of transformative learning spaces.

Participants' responses show that three areas had most influence on their learning experiences: staff-student relationships, teaching and assessing content, and students and student cultures. Firstly, the affective quality of the relationships between staff and participants, combined with guidance and support for learning, were critical elements in creating a transformative learning space. Providing emotional, psychological, physical, and educational assistance when needed was the foundation on which trusted

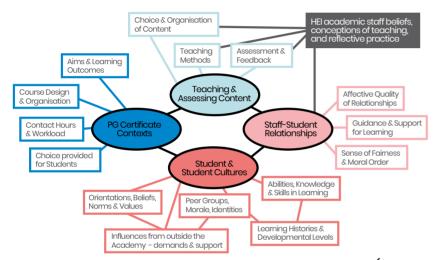


Figure 2: Conceptual map of the inner teaching–learning environment (Entwistle, 2003)

relationships were built. For one learner, who had a particularly negative experience as a university undergraduate, the quality of her relationship with faculty was significant: 'Engaging with the lecturers over the year has been really, really huge for me.'

Secondly, critical-thinking assignments, when combined with class discussion that focused on discourse and profound debate, provided the learning space to challenge changes in values and attitudes and to develop the skills of reflective judgement. Some individuals identified a reluctance to engage with critical reflection and writing their thoughts. Others experienced a profound change in their thinking: 'I spend most of my time now thinking about thinking, than I spend thinking about doing, or even just doing for that matter; this is a fundamental shift for me.'

Providing an immersive experience in a programme enabled students to network, work together, socialise, communicate, and share knowledge and experiences. Another participant said, 'There's something fantastic. We used to look forward to it. Who looks forward to going into class?' Expectations of the programme content, even for some experienced teachers, were very much related to the teaching task. One said: 'I wanted the "right" answer.

I think I was very much in the mode that I was going to be told what to do here, rather than I actually need to trust myself to know what to do.' Another described her expectations: 'I had an assumption that someone is going to show me how to be a teacher. Show me the magic book. And there is no magic book.'

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Thirdly, a highly supportive peer group, with embedded norms and values derived from similar work experiences, emerged as a key requirement for developing a transformative space of learning. In considering the impact of other students and student culture, the universal view was that it comprised not only fellow students or classmates but also in some instances work colleagues and their own students or adult learners. One participant said, 'A community of practice, you don't have to even explain what you're talking about. You just mention something and heads nod, people understand what you're talking about. There's an unconscious, a collective unconscious.'

When the above three elements occurred in the overlapping contexts of the inner TLE of the TEQ programme, they created a transformative learning space for the participating FET teachers. This may explain the high level of reported experiences of changed perspectives that led to an evolving identity for FET teachers on these programmes.

Perspective transformation

This type of learning is more than just adding to what someone already knows. It is transformative because it shapes them in ways that result in changes that both they and others around them can now recognise. Perspective transformation is about change: dramatic, fundamental change in how people perceive themselves and the world. Described as 'a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world' (O'Sullivan et al., 2002, p. xviii), it changes how we know (Kegan, 2009), and it leads to a more 'inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective' (Mezirow, 1991, p. 14).

Developing self-confidence and testing new ways of going forward as part of the learning experiences featured for many participants. One teacher reported, 'Some of the girls in work said that I've grown a backbone [laughs]. So I think that was good. I don't know which comes first, the change, but definitely, both have changed, professionally and personally.'

Very experienced FET teachers also expressed a sense of being professional in a way they had not been before: 'I suppose a more professional approach to what I'm doing and also more confidence in what I'm doing.' For others, eligibility to register with the Teaching Council represented formal recognition: 'The TEQ qualification was the big thing. ... No, it was the Teaching Council thing, because of the politics that's around that.' Some said their self-confidence and sense of self were enhanced:

I'm really enjoying it and delighted to get the opportunity to get a teaching qualification. Because, definitely for me, well, I am hoping it will validate what I do and hopefully make you a little more than – what did they used to

call it? – the 'woolly jumper brigade', to actually have a qualification to back up what we do.

Others reported awareness of changes in their values, expectations, and beliefs, particularly about teaching and being an FET teacher. Some were working in the sector part-time but not really committed to it as a career, but this changed over time: they realised it was their career of choice. Changes in thinking that lead to new perspectives on people's personal and professional lives inform current debate on evolving professional identity and teacher agency in professional learning and development.

Changing and evolving identity self-states

Identity self-states draw on a framework of 'motivational self-systems' that incorporates 'possible' and 'ideal' selves theory. Possible selves are 'ideas which an individual has regarding what they could become (hoped-for self), what they would like to become (ideal self) and what they are afraid of becoming (feared self)' (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954). These can include multiple possible selves, including more than one ideal self. Possible and ideal self-states have a simultaneous impact on how one engages and expresses oneself in task behaviours that promote connections to work, others, personal presence, and job role performance.

In an educational context, which self-state someone is motivated towards will involve a desire to reduce the discrepancy between one's actual self and the projected behavioural standards of the ideal or 'ought' self. Such a discrepancy would imply that future self-states provide incentive, direction, and impetus for action. Learners who encounter and draw on different spaces of learning are more self-determined in their learning and more willing to engage in new and multiple spaces of learning.

Very experienced FET teachers expressed a sense of being professional in a way they had not been before.

Most participants described changes in predominantly three areas: knowledge, self-concept, and social norms and cultural expectations (including roles in society). One identified shifts and changes in all three areas simultaneously:

Through learning and studying on the courses I have been able to apply new knowledge to my teaching and learning and have also been able to use my newfound language, words, discourse to open up dialogues with my work colleagues on issues within a disadvantaged community that I think needs to change. I have found that once you can speak like your oppressors [laughs], educated colleagues, they take more notice of what you have to say.

Other participants focused almost entirely on the knowledge they had gained and how this changed their self-concept, with a resulting impact on their identity self-state, moving from fear to confidence. They reported that critical reflection affected the development of their identity self-states, particularly their future selves. Some said they engaged in 'reflection for action' or future-orientated reflection on their teacher (ideal self) roles, to visualise the kind of teacher they wanted to become: 'How I describe myself is changing. My confidence in my identity is growing. I am enjoying trying out the name "teacher" and also reclaiming "student". Some shared ideas

on what they could become or would like to become, confirming that their professional identity was evolving:

I think it probably was towards the end of it, and having discussions with some friends of mine who are teachers, and realising that while I would have agreed with them in the past, that my worldview was so far removed from what their worldview was. I remember going home and saying to myself, 'Oh, why am I thinking so differently to what I would have thought in the past?' I think that's probably when I realised that my attitudes and my views had gone over to the other side [laughs].

Another participant's initial learning outcome was to increase her knowledge about how adults learn, in order to rectify mistakes she had made and to learn what she was doing wrong. Clearly she began from a feared self-state, with high concern about getting the task right, which is common when teachers begin their career. Many reported awareness of a difference in their thinking about themselves as professional teachers: 'I don't know if I've done it or how it's happened, but I've become defined by a qualification, a different person in my own right. I think differently; I think, I think differently.' Another participant said:

How I view myself has also changed greatly. I am not apologetic when putting my opinions forward during staff discussions. The experience of studying has highlighted what I do know as much as what I don't, and the balance is convincing me that I do know what I am talking about.

Conclusions and implications

TEQ programmes for FET teachers must involve the whole person and cannot be separated out as a cognitive act or reduced to the application of skills or competences. Korthagen (2001) emphasises pedagogy of realistic teacher education that combines formal academic knowledge with perceptual knowledge that is personally relevant and supportive in enabling someone to understand their own behaviours in the light of beliefs, identity, and the values that underpin them.

Teaching is an enactment of the self in a holistic mix of academic and personal perceptual knowledge, skills, experiences, understandings, beliefs, and values. The development of a teacher's identity is therefore strongly connected to a self-actualisation experience that ideally takes place in a transformative learning space where one feels safe and esteemed, and has trusted relationships and a sense of belonging socially.

This article has focused on two key areas:

- i. specific elements of the inner TLE (Figure 1) because they reveal the learning interactions that appear to be most powerful
- ii. a 'motivational self-systems' framework that incorporates 'possible' and 'ideal' selves theory because it offers some understanding of the shifts in thinking that underpin perspective transformation and evolving teacher identity.

The changes experienced by participants in their professional identity appear to have happened as a result of their learning during the TEQ

CHAPTER 4 - FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING

programme. There was a general sense that changes were happening and that they were organic and incremental in the sector but occurring in tandem with the college experience. For participants, however, the changes experienced during their educational programme were more visibly focused and directed on their personal lives and professional practice.

Teaching Council recognition of FE teacher status had implications for work, career, and progression opportunities. This obviously relates closely to professional and situational dimensions of FET teacher role and identity, as they would now be on a par with mainstream teachers in primary and second-level education.

Our understandings of FET teachers' evolving identity to date are general: they exist at some distance from the processes of people experiencing and behaving in particular work and study contexts. But none of them go to the core of what it means to be psychologically present in particular moments and situations that determine the driving force for the type of learning that underpins an evolving professional identity.

This is a critical factor in developing a different and fulfilling pathway towards professional development for FET teachers. Such probing relies on studying both people's emotional reactions to conscious and unconscious phenomena, and the objective properties of jobs, roles, work, and professional development contexts, all in an FE setting. This article has shared some understanding of the variables influencing how FET teachers perceive themselves: identities, work roles, professional learning and development, and the relation between all three.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE CAREER GUIDANCE TOOLS AND INFORMATION

An independent review of offerings in the education and training system

This article provides an insight into aspects of career guidance in the Irish education and training system, in order to improve the existing career guidance tools and information and to enhance engagement with enterprise.

Background

The National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Action Plan for Education 2016–2019 provided for a career guidance review that would include recommendations on changes to improve the existing career guidance tools and career information for students and adults in post-primary, further, and higher education that are currently in place across the education and training system in Ireland.

The objective of this review was to examine aspects of career guidance in the Irish education and training system, in order to improve the existing tools and information and to enhance engagement with enterprise. Indecon International Consultants carried out the review, which was guided by an expert steering group chaired by Professor Tom Collins, current chairperson of Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) and the Technological Higher Education Association.

The terms of reference for the report are as follows:

- Describe and review existing career guidance tools and career information for students and adults in post-primary, further, and higher education that are currently in place across the education and training system in Ireland. The review will specifically consider the existing policy framework for such tools and information, information sources (including online tools), and organisational structures.
- Assess how learners form their opinions on career choice, including when, who, and what influences these choices.
- Review the quality, quantity, and sources of career information available and assess which mechanisms and what formats have the greatest impact on students' and adults' career choices.
- Outline what measures could be designed and what framework created to enhance enterprise engagement with the education and training system in relation to providing information on career pathways for students and adults.
- Recommend changes to improve the existing career guidance tools and career information for students and adults in postprimary, further, and higher education that are currently in place across the education and training system in Ireland.
- Review to begin in Q1, 2018, and a report to be completed and published by the end of Q2, 2018.

Paul Keating

Department of Education and Skills

Summary of the Report

While the review is focused on elements of career guidance in the education and training system, there are wider requirements for career guidance outside of this sector for those wishing to return to paid work, whether from home or from unemployment. People seeking to move from one employment to another or to progress within a company also need

There is a need for a major initiative to enhance employer engagement and to extend supports for special education schools.

information and advice. This reflects the fact that career guidance, in the EU Council's definition, is 'a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings'.

The report's findings suggest that Ireland has a number of features of effective career-support systems, but some areas require urgent attention, such as the need to improve career information and advice, including on labour market opportunities and apprenticeship options. There is also a need for a major initiative to enhance employer engagement and to extend supports for special education schools. Changes to organisational structures are required. There is also a need to intensify the potential role of career guidance in reducing economic and social disadvantage.

Launch of the Report

The Report of the Independent Review of Career Guidance Tools and Information was launched on 24 April 2019 by the Minister for Education and Skills, Joe McHugh TD, together with the Minister of State for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O'Connor TD, and the Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation, Research and Development, John Halligan TD.

Launching the report, Minister McHugh said:

The world is changing rapidly, and part of our job is to respond to the constantly evolving needs of pupils in schools, students, and graduates. The role of guidance professionals and counsellors in schools is a challenge – to support young people so that they can fulfil their full potential in life and in work. I am committed to ensuring that we prioritise high-quality, relevant career guidance support and the promotion of well-being for all. It is essential that the assistance we provide is valuable, that it prepares people for work and life so that they are equipped to make the choices that are right for them. We want to put people in a position to realise their full potential.

Minister Mitchell O'Connor stated:

The choices that young people and people deciding on career changes make can have a huge impact on their future. It is essential that our students and prospective students get access to the very best advice and support to help them with these choices. As Minister of State for Higher Education, I know that both the student experience in college and life after higher education can be enhanced greatly by stakeholders including learners, parents, guidance counsellors, and professionals having access to the information they need to support people to make informed choices. Listening to the student voice is

essential to understanding the needs of our young people and those in our institutions, and I am pleased to note that as part of the review, Indecon had extensive consultation with stakeholders to gather their views on the key issues to be considered. I believe the recommendations in the review reflect the challenges that exist in the area of career quidance but also provide a framework to ensure that we can tackle these challenges head on.

Minister Halligan said:

There are many different options across the Irish education and training system that provide a pathway for individuals to pursue a career in their chosen profession. The review highlights the fact that having access to the best-quality career quidance tools and information is a must. I am confident that the recommendations in the review provide a foundation for promoting engagement amongst all stakeholders, including employers, to ensure that we have a career quidance system with the right tools and information to meet the needs of all concerned.

Recommended actions

One of the key recommendations of the report is for the Department of Education and Skills to set up an implementation task force to drive the proposed reforms. As a first task, the group will look at the options for establishing the support organisation which is to oversee technology-facilitated guidance services. In doing so the group will consult with key stakeholders. The report makes eighteen recommendations under four headings:

The review highlights the fact that having access to the best-quality career quidance tools and information is a must -Minister Halligan.

- Reforms to governance and delivery arrangements
- · Improvement in career guidance tools and career information
- Enhancement of enterprise engagement
- Promotion of inclusion.

Recommended reforms under each heading are summarised below.

Reforms to governance and delivery arrangements:

- 1. Appoint a national policy group to develop a coherent, long-term strategy for lifelong career guidance.
- 2. Place ongoing emphasis on evidence-based policy, including through organisation of a biennial stakeholder forum.
- 3. Establish a support organisation to oversee technology-facilitated guidance services, funded in part from the NTF.
- 4. Department of Education and Skills to set up an implementation task force to drive the proposed reforms.
- 5. Integrate a consistent learner guidance and support service across FET.

Improvement in career guidance tools and career information:

- 6. Provide multi-channel, blended career guidance supports, including online tools with telephone and internet access to experienced guidance practitioners.
- 7. Strengthen and promote a user-friendly centralised careers portal.

8. Allocate specialised guidance practitioners to groups of schools on a regional basis.

9. Invest in providing accessible labour market intelligence.

Enhancement of enterprise engagement:

- 10.Implement a programme with the enterprise sector to highlight the benefits to enterprise of participating in career guidance.
- 11. Initiate supports for employers to facilitate career guidance inputs and quality work experience.
- 12. Introduce measures to increase participation of students, parents, and teachers at an expanded number of regional career fairs and
- 13. Widen access to work experience programmes and apprenticeships using online matching services.
- 14. Encourage cooperation among groups of schools for joint enterprise engagements.

Promotion of inclusion:

- 15. Introduce a specific module on career guidance as part of training for teachers in special schools.
- 16. Provide access for special education and adult learners to the proposed enhanced central career support services, including information on labour market opportunities.
- 17. Provide additional specialised ongoing CPD supports for teachers in special schools.
- 18. Prioritise resource allocation, including guidance teachers for learners most in need of assistance.

Next Steps

In order to begin considering and implementing the recommendations, the Department of Education and Skills has established a task force that is chaired by the secretary general and includes senior officials from those units in the department responsible for elements of guidance. The Indecon Review of Career Guidance: Final Report can be accessed at: www. education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/indecon-review-ofcareer-guidance.pdf.



The job you seek isn't out there in some job description, it's already inside you, aching to get out."

John Tarnoff

INSIGHTS FROM THE YOUTHREACH EVALUATION

In 2018 SOLAS commissioned a comprehensive, independent evaluation of the Youthreach Programme. This article summarises and assesses the findings of the evaluation. It notes the importance of a positive, supportive learning experience and the value of providing career guidance, soft-skill education, and support for those with mental-health difficulties.

As part of a series of evaluations of key areas of Further Education and Training provision, in 2018 SOLAS commissioned an independent evaluation of the Youthreach Programme. It was published in June 2019 (Smyth et al., 2019), and this article assesses what the evaluation tells us. The study was comprehensive, taking a mixed-methods approach which included a survey of senior managers at ETB level, a survey of Youthreach coordinators and Community Training Centre (CTC) managers, detailed case studies of ten centres, and two consultative workshops with key stakeholders in the areas of education and social inclusion. A key aspect of the study was the emphasis on learner voice: over a hundred interviews were conducted with those currently or recently on the programme to elicit new information on their pathways into it and experiences within it. So what does this evidence tell us about the programme and its participants?



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Profile of Learners

As the prevalence of early school leaving has declined, the early leaver group and hence Youthreach entrants have become more marginalised over time. The programme is well targeted in terms of the educational qualifications possessed by young people on entry, with the vast majority having Junior Certificate qualifications at best. A striking finding relates to the increased prevalence of mental health and emotional problems as well as learning difficulties among young people taking part in the programme. Many learners have experienced a range of additional challenges, including trauma (adverse childhood experiences), substance abuse on their own part or that of a family member, and involvement in antisocial behaviour or crime. The findings also point to considerable variation across centres in the profile of learners, with some settings catering for more complex needs and challenges than others, though with the same level of resourcing.

The study highlights the importance of informal networks – including parents or guardians, family members, and peers – in young people who are becoming aware of, and accessing, Youthreach provision. This pattern means that some groups of young people (and those living in certain areas) may not access the programme because they do not have the social networks to mobilise, and it is likely to explain

the relative under-representation of migrant groups among learners. In contrast, school-based referrals, or referrals through other agencies, are evident for only a minority, despite the young profile of many learners. Young people themselves highlighted negative experience of mainstream education, in particular negative relationships with teachers and peers, as

well as the role of learning and mental health difficulties, as key drivers of

their transition to the programme.

Programme Aims Both senior manager

Both senior managers and centre coordinators or managers see the Youthreach programme as having multiple aims, including re-engaging young people in learning, providing a positive learning experience, and fostering the development of personal and social skills, the acquisition of qualifications, and progression to education, training, and employment. Youthreach coordinators are more likely to emphasise the provision of a general education, while CTC managers are more likely to stress the provision of more specific vocational skills and preparation for employment, though both adopt a holistic view of the programme aims. While current metrics capture the aims of the programme in terms of progression to education, training, and employment, many coordinators and managers highlight the need to better capture soft skills (such as communication and organisational skills) and personal development on the part of learners.

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

The majority of centres offer QQI levels 3 and 4 qualifications, with a fifth offering QQI level 2 courses or the Leaving Cert Applied programme, and a small minority providing the Junior Cert or Leaving Cert Established. Coordinators or managers indicate that the main driver of course provision is learner need, with CTC managers indicating some role for labour market demand in their decision-making. At the same time, they report

The learners interviewed were very positive about their learning experiences in the programme, contrasting them with teaching and learning in mainstream second-level education.

constraints in course offerings, given the skill set of existing staff. In addition to QQI- and SEC-accredited courses, the vast majority of centres offer other courses and activities tailored to learner need, including sports and fitness, courses and talks to promote emotional well-being, courses and talks on drugs awareness, and practical skills such as driver theory and SafePass.

It is interesting to note that a variety of teaching methods are used, with little use of the more didactic approaches that are evident in mainstream second-level classrooms. The

learners interviewed were very positive about their learning experiences in the programme, contrasting their experiences and progress in the centre with teaching and learning in mainstream second-level education. In particular, learners emphasised the value of the small group settings in facilitating more individualised support, a pace of learning tailored to their own capacities, and a focus on project or portfolio work rather than exams. Positive relationships with staff emerged as the cornerstone of a positive learning experience for the young people.

CHAPTER 4 - FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING

Other Supports for Learners

A range of additional supports are provided for learners, including work placement, career guidance, personal counselling, and informal support from staff. Most centres offer personal counselling for young people, though the proportion receiving such supports is higher in Youthreach centres, in smaller centres, and, not surprisingly, in centres with a higher prevalence of emotional, psychological, and mental health difficulties. In many centres. some contact with the counsellor was scheduled for all learners, an approach which appeared to facilitate greater ongoing engagement with the service. However, coordinators or managers highlighted the scarcity of current provision, especially in the context of the serious emotional and mental health problems manifest in the learner population, and an ongoing difficulty in securing referrals to specialist external services.

Career guidance also represents an important strand of centre provision, with guidance activities (such as CV preparation) offered in almost all centres and more specialist guidance supports available in 85 per cent of settings. Local contacts appear to play an important role in accessing work experience placements, which is found to be 'fairly difficult' in the majority of settings, and in facilitating progression to employment and education or training through, for example, a relationship with a local further-education college.

Some centres are part of a special educational needs initiative (SENI), which provides additional funding and support, allowing staff more scope and capacity to meet the needs of learners. These centres are more likely to provide a disability support service, learning support, and specialist career guidance for learners. Access to counselling is a key feature of SENI, and resources are also used to fund a student support officer or youth worker. The initiative also includes a mentor system which allows for individual staff members to link in with a number of young people, provide

The small size of the group meant that staff could identify problems arising among the young people and intervene to discuss them constructively at an early stage.

information, and set tasks or goals for the next meeting. The relationship between learners and mentors is close and based on a high level of trust.

More widely, the most important support for learners was the quality of relationships with staff and other young people. Learners contrasted the support, care, and respect they received from centre staff with the negative relations they had experienced with their teachers in mainstream education. The small size of the group meant that staff could identify problems arising among the young people and intervene to discuss them constructively at an early stage. Day-to-day contact and taking meals together provided an opportunity to build up a relationship of trust and openness between learners and staff. These relationships also served to enhance learners' personal and social skills.

Learner Experiences and Outcomes

The evaluation provides important evidence on how young people fare after completing the programme. Over two-thirds of young people complete the programme. Of this group, 45 per cent progress to another education or training course, and 28 per cent go straight into employment. Overall, one in six completers are unemployed after leaving the programme, a rate that

compares favourably with unemployment levels for the early school leaver population as a whole.

Perhaps more importantly, learners reported that participating in the programme boosted their self-confidence and gave them a purpose in life and hope for the future. It was clear that the process of re-engaging young people and providing them with the kinds of skills they needed for adult and working life was gradual. In this context, managers and staff were critical of the over-reliance on quantitative outcome measures. This was seen to neglect the effort involved in enabling young people to engage in learning in the first place, especially those who had been out of education for some time or were facing significant challenges in their personal lives.

It is clear that the Youthreach programme is of immense value, playing an important role in re-engaging a vulnerable group of young people with learning, providing courses and approaches tailored to their needs, and embedding education and training provision in a broader network of supports. The research highlights the need for SENI funding to be rolled out across all Youthreach settings to address the increased prevalence of mental health and learning difficulties among these young people.

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The best thing for being sad," replied Merlin, beginning to puff and blow, "is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn."

- T.H. White, The Once and Future King





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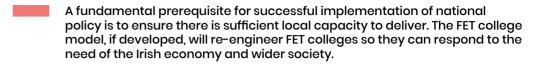
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THE FET COLLEGE OF THE FUTURE

What are the core elements of an FET college model?





Cecilia Munro
Principal, Ballyfermot
College of Further
Education

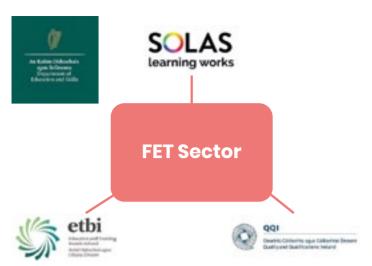
Further Education and Training (FET) reform began in 2010, when the Department of Education became the Department of Education and Skills (DES) through the transfer of skills training from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. This reform continued with the establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in 2012, the Further Education and Training Act in 2013, and the Education and Training Boards Act in 2013.

In May 2014, the first national FET Strategy was launched, which presented 'a roadmap and implementation plan to realise the vision of a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland' (SOLAS, 2014, p. 3). The five years of the Strategy could be characterised as setting the strategic direction and structure of the FET sector in Ireland.

The FET reform agenda over the last five years has also invested considerable resources in building and developing the institutional triangle of SOLAS, QQI, and the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The reform agenda has, for example:

- created 16 ETBs
- created new FET programmes, such as the new apprenticeship model
- reviewed existing programmes, for example in the PLC Programme Review 2018
- firmly linked core quality-assurance guidelines to sector-specific guidelines (see Padraig Walsh's article in this chapter).

Each reform agenda brought considerable strategic operational challenges, but when viewed holistically they strive to provide better FET outcomes in terms of quality experiences and value for money. Reform agendas have also firmly placed lifelong learning at the centre of this strategic transformation. Numerous research projects generated since 2012 have supported and confirmed that the strategic direction of FET in Ireland today is on track.



The institutional triangle that arose through the strategic legislative reform of the FET sector beginning in 2012.

It is well documented that the Irish FET landscape is broad and varied, providing a large range of programmes to a diverse student cohort, with varied terms and conditions. The SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019 outlines five goals, and in the last five years the distance travelled towards achieving them has been substantial.

Educational reform has also been central to economic agendas, including the provision of labour-market activation measures enacted during and after the 'troika years', such as Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Action Plan for Jobs 2018.

While all of these reforms and publications set out a welcome intertwining roadmap for the development of Ireland's economy and its citizens through education and training, Ireland now has an opportunity to develop and restructure its FET offering to ensure better-value outcomes for students and for the exchequer, regardless of the prevailing economic circumstances. One proposal is to develop an FET college model which seeks to:

- 1. address inclusivity of access and equal access to student supports
- 2. establish a clear roadmap of progression pathways for FET, including into, within, and after FET
- 3. develop and improve the skills areas for sustainable employment, educational progression, and lifelong learning opportunities
- 4. offer flexible models of delivery
- 5. support the standing of FET.

These core elements are elaborated upon below.



The FET college proposition.

The FET college proposition

The National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals' (NAPD) vision document 'Realising Opportunities: A Vision for Further Education and Training' (2014) described how FET colleges were ideally placed to support the ETBs in meeting their expanded remit in providing education and training. It called for

the creation of a student-centred, statutorily mandated, strategically planned, responsive and dynamic college sector as a foundational pillar of a new and successful FET landscape and envisioned within this landscape where FE Colleges become ETB hubs and deliver a range of programmes on a year-round basis.

FET colleges could be resourced properly with adequate funding, equipment, staffing, and fit-for-purpose governance models. Students should be able to approach an FET college in their geographical area and enrol seamlessly onto an FET course that fits their needs, whether it is full-time or part-time.

There is no consistent approach to student supports across the sector... There is a distinct lack of guidance and counselling supports.

Due to legacy structure and organisational systems, many ETBs keep education and training provision separate. Many FE colleges already offer a wide range of fields of learning to students across a broad range of programmes, for example PLC, traineeship, pre- and post-2016 apprenticeship, self-financing part-time, general learning, and in some cases degrees.

There is now an ideal opportunity to consolidate and build on the capacity of the existing FE colleges to provide first-class FET hubs to communities across Ireland. Rather than continuing with discrete pillars of provision, FE colleges could be used to integrate and build on the experiences of training provision, thus uniting the education and training sector and creating a better-value experience for students.

The core elements of an FET college model

The core elements of the FET college model are listed below. I acknowledge that there are many other aspects to be considered, but based on my experience to date and my interaction with students over the past twenty-seven years, the items listed below are central to developing a world-class FET system.

1. Inclusivity and equal access

Barriers to entry such as sources of funding and rules on economic status currently attached to FET programmes in Ireland should be standardised. For example, an FET course should be viewed as either full-time or part-time across daytime and night-time provision. Funding streams such as grant and labour market activation funding should be standardised for all FET students.

For example, students should be able to attend any one of the twenty-six FET programmes on offer without having to navigate different sets of confusing eligibility rules. Funding should be provided for all FET programmes under standard guidelines that allow each student to receive a level of funding that is transferable between programmes.

At present, the student support system is reactive and unsustainable. Of the twenty-six FET programmes funded by SOLAS, only students on the PLC course have access to the Fund for Students with Disabilities. There is no consistent approach to student supports across the sector. Literacy (including digital literacy), numeracy, and English language supports are in great demand. There is a distinct lack of guidance and counselling supports.

Students should be able to approach an FET college in their geographical area and enrol seamlessly onto an FET course that fits their needs.

2. Clear progression pathways

The progression pathways model from post-primary to tertiary education is not always linear (direct entry from Leaving Cert to further or higher education). It is well established that lifelong learning is a key target of government reform agendas and that active citizens would engage with multiple courses at different NFQ levels across both FET and HE at different times over their career. FET colleges are ideally placed to:

- Develop and recognise that progression pathways can be non-linear.
 Not all students progress to third level from the Leaving Cert. At least 2,000 PLC students per year are recorded as having some form of HE experience.
- Develop clear roadmaps for career and occupational progression that show how students can navigate from FET to HE with better retention outcomes.

3. Delivering on the skills agenda

In order to educate and train citizens of Ireland for sustainable employment and lifelong learning progression that meets the everchanging needs of the local, national, and international markets, FET colleges can:

- deliver a competency approach to skills formation and vocational identity through greater synergy between the three venues of learning: classroom, workplace, and online
- enhance the two-way system of ongoing labour-market intelligence between colleges, employers, and enterprises to ensure ongoing alignment of course content with labour-market needs.

4. Providing flexible delivery

The post-primary model of teaching dominates the biggest FET programme on offer today: PLCs. New models of delivery, such as blended learning, are already taking place, but there is an opportunity to mainstream these new modes of delivery, such as twelve-month delivery and evening and weekend provision, to meet the needs of students who have to work and manage family life.

A discussion about staffing resources and contracts needs to take place. Equally, it must be recognised that staff too may welcome these new arrangements, as they also have to manage work and family life in this new era

Standing of FET

The last five years have seen increased confidence in the FET sector due to the structural and reformative change. Many students choose FET as their qualification of choice; for example, at least 28,000 FET students complete a PLC course as their FET course of choice, and this cannot be ignored. As a society we need to re-programme our thinking so that students who seek an FET qualification, for whatever reason, are valued in society.

Conclusion

A fundamental prerequisite for the successful implementation of national policy is to ensure there is sufficient local capacity to deliver. There is now an opportunity to re-engineer FET colleges so they can respond to the needs of the Irish economy and wider society. Currently, the FET colleges are dispersed across the country and based firmly in their communities. They are ideally placed to be a central part of the new integrated FET system in Ireland.

Looney (2019) proposed that the FET college could be a 'beacon in, and for, the community'. I am strongly of the view that the current network of FET colleges, as part of the new FET colleges of the future, can be leveraged to become even greater beacons in their communities than they already are. This is worth considering.

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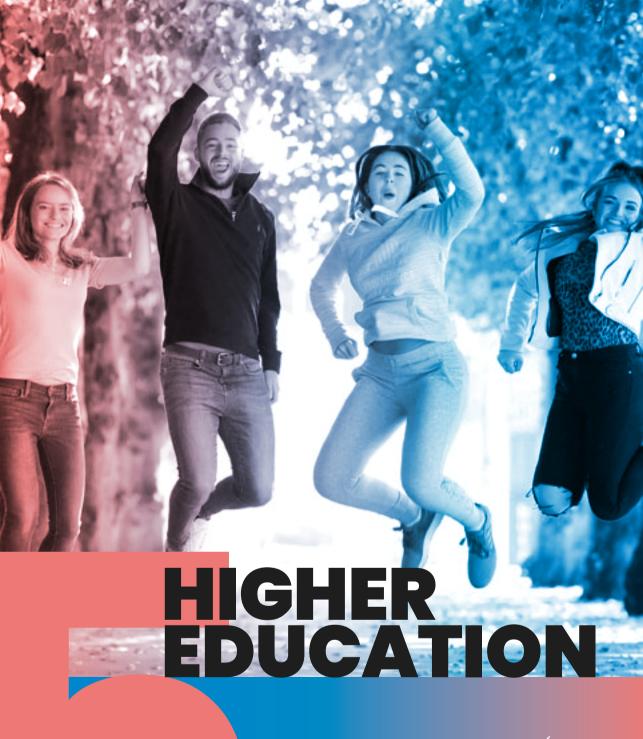
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BRIAN MOONEY CONFERRED WITH HONORARY DOCTOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE

On 26 November 2019, Brian Mooney was conferred with an honorary Doctor of Education degree by the National University of Ireland (NUI) in recognition of his outstanding contribution to education in Ireland over a number of decades. This is the highest award of the NUI.

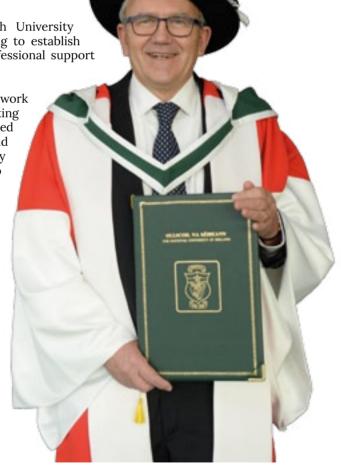
Brian is a long-time contributor to Education Matters and has been Managing Editor of *Ireland's Yearbook of Education*, a publication of Education Matters, for the last four years.

At the conferring of the honorary Doctor of Education degree, the NUI chancellor Dr Maurice Manning paid tribute to Brian for the great service he provides to students as they contemplate the options available to them on leaving school.

Dr John McGinnity of Maynooth University highlighted Brian's work in helping to establish the Qualifax.ie website and a professional support service for guidance counsellors.

Dr McGinnity also pointed to Brian's work in The Irish Times and in broadcasting and said that Brian had supported countless numbers of applicants and parents in navigating successfully the transition from second level to further and higher education and apprenticeships.

"It is not an overstatement to say Brian has a presence in thousands of homes through the multiplicity of roles he has had over many years serving the needs of school leavers, guardians and colleagues in the teaching profession," Dr McGinnity said.



RESEARCH, NEW UNIVERSITIES, AND THE BEAUSANG LETTER:

An overview of higher education in Ireland in 2019



2019 was marked by shifts in policy that will significantly alter the higher education and research landscape in Ireland in the coming years. The most obvious result is that the number of universities will virtually double. This article looks at the arrival of Technology Universities and the future of science research policy in Ireland.

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John WalsheIrish Independent

Introduction

2019 has been marked by several shifts in policy that will significantly alter the higher education and research landscape in Ireland over the next few years. The most obvious result is that the number of universities will virtually double from seven to thirteen. This is happening without much public discussion of the impact on the sector. Four new Technological Universities (TUs) will be created, in addition to TU Dublin, which opened this year. The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland will be upgraded to university status, assuming that Education Minister Joe McHugh signs the necessary order following legislative changes made this year.

The changes won't stop there. During the year the Higher Education Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor launched a consultation on legislative plans to bring about regulatory changes in higher education. These include altering the governance structures of higher education institutions (HEIs) and replacing the Higher Education Authority (HEA) with a Higher Education Commission. The HEA, since its establishment in 1971, has acted as a buffer between the HEIs and the Department of Education and Skills (DES), and some academics fear that the new body will have less autonomy.

Two other changes are worth noting. The new Commission will be given regulatory oversight of private and not-for-profit higher education (HE) providers. It will also have a pivotal role, alongside the DES, in developing national strategy for HE and HE research. That reference to a 'pivotal role' is easily glossed over, but in October an extraordinary letter spelt out in great detail the evolution of the DES's thinking on who should control science research policy in Ireland. The letter was written by William Beausang, DES assistant secretary in charge of tertiary education, who is the driving force behind many of the changes. It is worth reviewing in some detail, but first let us look at his career to date.

The new assistant secretary general

William Beausang transferred from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) to the DES in 2018. Before that he was in the Department of Finance, where he was involved in some major discussions about the banks during the financial crisis. Never

one to mince his words, he once told the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council its analysis on a particular issue 'falls short of the quality standard I would have expected', and said the Council's work on setting expenditure ceilings by the government 'lacks a basic coherence'.

Beausang unexpectedly applied for the job in the DES to take over responsibility for higher education, succeeding Mary Doyle, who retired from the post. The opportunity was used to amalgamate the sections in the DES that dealt separately with further education and higher education. Not before time, the new tertiary division was formed.

In the DPER, Beausang had held various posts, including head of the Central Expenditure Policy Division. Higher education was familiar territory to him, as he showed in 2016 in a paper to the Higher Education Colleges Association in which he outlined the challenges facing the sector. He acknowledged that while primary and secondary education were safeguarded in the financial crisis, higher education had been badly hit:

- third-level funding decreased from 20% of the DES budget in 2008 to 17% in 2017
- student numbers increased from 150,000 to 190,000
- staff numbers decreased by over 15%.

'This resulted in the student to staff ratio increasing from 16:1 to 20:1, and core funding per student decreasing from €12k to €9k,' Beausang wrote. Since then the financial challenges facing higher education are slowly being addressed amidst rising student numbers. There is increasing pressure on HEIs to align more closely with national, social, and economic needs, especially in skills. A good example is the €300m Human Capital Initiative, which places huge emphasis on creating job-ready graduates.

An extraordinary letter spelt out in great detail the evolution of the DES's thinking on who should control science research policy in Ireland.

Research and SFI

Beausang's reluctance to accept things as they are without interrogating them is confirmed in the fascinating five-page letter he sent to Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) in October 2019. It followed a meeting between the DES and SFI to discuss SFI's draft strategy for 2020–2025. That meeting, according to Beausang, highlighted the divergent views between them.

He warned SFI there was a clear risk in the development of its strategy. It was missing a wider perspective and was progressing out of step with other developments in the national and higher education research system. 'This serious concern is at the core of the reservations expressed at our meeting,' he wrote.

There is a responsibility to ensure that individual strategies are aligned to and follow national policy and strategy. Rather than just a reference, there needs to be more direct alignment and representation in SFI's strategy of what it can do to contribute to the achievement of Ireland's national policy objectives under strategies such as Project Ireland 2040, the Future Jobs Initiative, and the National Skills Strategy.

Beausang suggested that the draft SFI strategy did not adequately recognise the location of research in the higher education system and the centrality of that system for the delivery of a wide range of objectives for national policy, 'not solely restricted to research, which is in the interest of SFI'. The letter continued:

In other words, SFI must, in setting and monitoring the objectives for the work that it funds, recognise that the organisations that it works through i.e. higher education institutions, also work within a broader framework of national objectives. For instance, rather than making a proposal to develop a 'world-leading research training framework' for the sub-set of researchers that it funds it would be better for SFI to turn its attention to the National Framework for Doctoral Education, which has been created and supported by all the research funders (including SFI) and the higher education institutions and which facilitates consistent excellence across all postgraduate education and training.

The letter must have been sweet music for researchers in the universities, especially when it said that talent development is central to our higher education system. It added:

The letter must have been sweet music for researchers in the universities.

The future success of Ireland's 'knowledge economy' will rely on the skilled graduates coming through the tertiary education system. It is essential that we do not duplicate efforts or, worse, create a two-tier system, at post-graduate level. Consistency in the educational experience is also an important element of Ireland's international reputation.

Just in case the point was not sufficiently clear, it was repeated more directly: 'it is the HEIs themselves who are in a position to carry out high-quality research, not any funder or agency.'

The HEA

Meanwhile, the HEA acquired a new CEO, Dr Alan Wall, who is also known to have a keen interest in the research agenda. In his letter, Beausang talked up the role of the HEA in the strategic direction of the higher education system and stressed the need for a strong collaborative approach: 'The HEA is therefore more than just one of the many parties to be consulted with in the formulation of your strategy. In this Department's view, additional significant consultation and engagement with the HEA is essential to putting a successful strategy in place.' No solo runs for the SFI in deciding research policy, is the obvious message.

The letter also emphasises the need for balance across research, institutions, and regions:

A balanced higher education system – and, within that, higher education research system – is essential for future success, sustainability and resilience. A balanced higher education research system is also the key to our national preparedness to engage with a rapidly evolving research environment, such as EU developments relating to the design of Horizon Europe. It is critically important that, in pursuing its organisational objectives, SFI supports and enables the HEA in the achievement of a balanced system.

It added: 'Besides, research is generally performed by HEA core-funded staff within the higher education research system. Any future development of the SFI Research Centres programme needs to recognise that the HEA core funding is an essential part of their operation.' To which the only response can be 'Ouch'. Beausang argued that it may not be prudent, or indeed possible, for SFI to pursue its strategy to completion before the successor to Innovation 2020 had been determined. That separate strategy is being prepared by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

'A scenario in which the completion of the SFI strategy precedes the development of the new national research and innovation strategy clearly runs the risk of disconnect between national, sectoral and agency-level strategies,' the letter warned. It further suggested that the new SFI strategy might well be served by an exposition of SFI's statutory functions:

There are risks associated with extending the scope of the organisation's remit too broadly, as this can lead to a loss of focus, challenges in reconciling competing priorities and potentially impacting on the prioritisation of core work. This can also give rise to difficulties where funding and resources are not available to match the scale of strategic ambition. There are a number of aspects of the draft strategy that overlap with policy areas for which a lead role has already been assigned to government departments and other agencies.

It added, again pointedly:

For example, the document outlines a strategy to develop a process to scope out Ireland's future economic and societal needs. Aside from the point that has already been made about the need for joined-up approaches to these matters, the infrastructure for this work already exists in the form of a National Skills Council, Regional Skills Fora and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

The letter is illuminating and echoes the view held by many

and the Department of Enterprise is the last thing that higher education or the research community needs.

in higher education - and obviously in the DES - that SFI is overextending its reach, that it is focused too narrowly on research that leads only to jobs, and that fundamental basic research is in danger of being overlooked. This view is rejected by the formidable SFI director general, Prof. Mark Ferguson, who argues in favour of research that has impact.

Ferguson, a canny political operator who argues his case trenchantly, won't take the letter lying down. Whether or not it leads to a serious turf war between the DES and the Department of Enterprise, to which SFI is accountable, remains to be seen. That is the last thing that higher education or the research community needs.

Technological Universities

While the traditional universities will be satisfied with much of the letter, they may be surprised by the extent of the research role envisaged for the emerging Technological Universities (TUs). The first TU opened in Dublin in January, a merger of Dublin Institute of Technology and the Institutes of Technology (ITs or IoTs) in Tallaght and Blanchardstown. Four other TUs

A turf war between the DES are planned, arising from mergers between nine IoTs around the country. It's not clear yet what will happen to Dundalk IT and the Dublin Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology, which is also an IoT.

Most ITs have their origins in Regional Technical Colleges that date back mainly to the late 1960s and early '70s. Dublin and Limerick ITs have their roots in earlier colleges of the 19th century. All were renamed and upgraded to Institutes of Technology in the late 1990s after political lobbying and student protests.

While the rebranding satisfied some, Dublin and Waterford continued campaigning for full university status. Dublin had tried unsuccessfully before, and the demand for a university for the south-east began as early as the 1840s around the time that Queen's University of Ireland was founded, when politicians in Waterford made strenuous efforts to locate a university in their city. Instead, constituent colleges were set up in Belfast, Cork, and Galway. Politicians of all hues have been lobbying ever since in Waterford, with considerable public support.

The Hunt Report

The campaigns for university status took a different direction upon publication of the long-awaited report of the National Strategy Group on

Most ITs have their origins in **Regional Technical** Colleges that date back mainly to the late 1960s and early '70s.

Higher Education in 2011, which became known as the Hunt Report after its main author, Dr Colin Hunt. In a blow to Waterford IT's ambition to gain full university status in its own right, the Strategy Group recommended a 'process of evolution and consolidation' for the institute sector. After amalgamating with other institutions, IoTs could be eligible to apply for 'designation as a technological university' rather than becoming a fully fledged university in their own right.

Few at the time envisaged that virtually all the institutes would consolidate to become TUs - but that's what is happening and, as the Beausang letter to SFI made clear, with official support and high hopes for their future. It referred to the

disappointingly brief and limited reference in the draft strategy document to the emergence of Technological Universities (TUs) as a very significant new element of the higher education research landscape. The establishment of the TUs is the single most important development in the HE landscape over the next number of years and warrants a significant focus in the SFI strategy.

The letter also referenced the setting up of a high-level group comprising TU Dublin, the consortia seeking to develop TUs, the Technological Higher Education Association, the DES, and the HEA. This Technological Universities Research Network (TURN) Working Group considered and evaluated the critical success factors necessary to create, develop, and sustain high-quality TUs across the country. A key theme of its work was to develop research capacity for the new TUs.

'In this Department's view this question of TU research capacity is directly germane to the strategic plans of SFI, and therefore merits being incorporated into the Foundation's strategy and plans,' the letter added.

CHAPTER 5 - HIGHER EDUCATION

Government promises €120m for TUs

The government is also putting its money where its mouth is, as shown in Budget 2020 and in subsequent announcements of extra funding for the four other TU development consortia. The most recent is the Limerick IT tie-in with Athlone, which came as something of a surprise: earlier, it seemed to be throwing its lot in with the University of Limerick. A change of personnel at the top in both colleges led to a change in approach. It was obviously one that found political support and one that will, no doubt, feature at election time.

As Minister Mitchell O'Connor said at the launch of the TURN report on 6 November:

Our objective is to have a Technological University presence in every region of the country. This will provide increased choices for students, an enhanced student experience and greater access for potential students tackling educational disadvantage. TUs will offer a deep and broad range of teaching, from apprenticeship to doctoral degrees. They will also support an increased intensity of research activity, which will deliver benefits for students, staff, employers, and local communities, opportunities for collaboration with industry, and benefits for the economy and wider society.

She gave an update on the current state of play with the other institutes:

• The MTU (Munster) consortium, comprising Cork IT and IT Tralee, submitted an application for TU designation in February 2019. The Minister for Education and Skills postponed granting the application until no later than the end of Q1 2020, subject to compliance by the consortium with specified conditions to meet the eligibility criteria under the Technological Universities Act 2018.

The Connaught
Ulster Alliance
consortium, comprising
Galway–Mayo IT,
Letterkenny IT, and IT
Sligo, is developing
proposals with a view
to submitting an
application in 2020/21.

- The TUSEI (South-East) consortium, comprising IT Carlow and Waterford IT, is developing an application which is expected to be submitted in the coming months.
- The Connaught Ulster Alliance consortium, comprising Galway–Mayo IT, Letterkenny IT, and IT Sligo, is developing proposals with a view to submitting an application in the 2020/21 academic year.
- Athlone IT and Limerick IT recently received 2019 funding for proposals through which the two institutions jointly agreed to form a development consortium with a view to making an application for TU designation.

The TURN Report

The TURN Report makes 12 recommendations for outcomes that will provide TUs with a solid foundation for development. These centre on three thematic areas that TURN identified as the essential building blocks for success:

 investment in integrated multi-campus digital infrastructure to provide regional cohesion and facilitate new modes of learning and the prioritisation of capital investment in TUs

- investment in research capacity-building by developing researcher human capital, facilitating research activity and opportunities for existing academic staff, and implementing a researcher careerdevelopment and employment framework, addressing infrastructural deficits and prioritising research strategies in TUs, exploiting fully the mutually supporting roles of teaching and research
- realignment of the policy framework and funding for TUs, including an expansion of institutional autonomy and reform through implementation of TU-apposite career structures, reform of the grant allocation model to accommodate TUs, creation of a dedicated TU funding stream including in the post-establishment phase, and creation of a borrowing framework for TUs.

The Minister said that the existing landscape restructuring fund for TUs will now be replaced by a new TU Transformation Fund which will see TU-oriented funding increase to over €120m in total by 2023. The clear message from Ministers McHugh and Mitchell O'Connor and from the DES as confirmed in the Beausang letter is one of enthusiastic support for the technological sector.

Creating five new Technological Universities in less than a decade is a brave and noble experiment.

While TU Dublin has got off to a good start with a terrific new campus at Grangegorman, the whole concept of technological universities is still relatively new for Ireland. Creating five of them in a short time carries risks but also provides an opportunity to bring a whole new dynamic to Irish higher education.

The investment of over €120m for TUs is sizable and sends a clear signal about government priorities, which should be noted by the traditional universities. They may feel overlooked in this official rush to embrace the new. The fact that they have slipped down international rankings hasn't helped their mood. But their graduates are still very employable, and they are still making an immense contribution to Irish society and the economy.

The extent of that contribution was quantified in research by Indecon on behalf of the Irish Universities Association. The Impact Study examined a variety of areas to assess universities' impact on research, society, the economy, and individuals, including the benefits arising from international students. Predictably, the headline-grabbing finding was the $\ensuremath{\in} 8.9b$ contribution they make to the economy – but there were other interesting findings:

- There has been a significant increase in the number of students enrolling for a university education, which correlates with the demand for more highly skilled employees in the Irish economy. In 2017 over 120,000 students enrolled, up 50% from 2000.
- Indecon identified a cumulative net gain to the Exchequer of €1,606m in net present value terms based on the lifetime net earnings projections for the new entrants to the seven universities in 2017–2018. This is based on a net gain to the Exchequer from the lifetime earnings of individual undergraduate degree holders of €62,000. In other words, the Exchequer gains a net €62,000 over the lifetime of the

graduate in today's money terms when all costs to the Exchequer are taken into account.

- University graduates generate an income premium significantly beyond those with no third-level education and have consistently lower unemployment rates, even during recession.
- The average lifetime net premium for an Irish undergraduate degree holder is €106,000, compared to a UK premium of £88,000 for graduates from the prestigious Russell Group universities. Master's degree holders' net premium rises to €146,000 and PhDs to €222,000. These figures are net of tax, and factor in the costs incurred by students in obtaining their degrees and income foregone during their years at university.

The higher education system in Ireland has often been viewed as a hierarchy, with the traditional universities on top. That may change with the arrival of a much more dynamic technological sector. Creating five new Technological Universities in less than a decade is a brave and noble experiment. They will need substantial funding and support to succeed. Parents, students, employers, investors, and the public will also have to be convinced that the TUs live up to the high expectations being created for them.





Dr Simon Boucher, CEO of IMI.

The Irish Management Institute (IMI) is now one of the top 50 in executive education in the world, according to the 2019 Financial Times rankings. This is the first time an Irish executive education provider has been included on the top 50 list.

"Entering into the top 50 in Executive Education in the world is a proud day for us, and a testament to the amazing businesses and leaders we support, said Dr Simon Boucher, CEO of IMI.

Prof Patrick O'Shea, President of University College Cork (UCC), said that "since IMI joined the UCC family it has gone from strength to strength, positioning Irish business education as a leader on the global stage.

"I'm particularly excited about IMI's capacity to use these accolades as a launch pad to expanding its impact internationally, in partnership with UCC and Cork University Business School", Prof O'Shea said.

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT OFFERS NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR IRELAND



This article explores the scope of global engagement activities in Irish universities, and reflects on the need for Ireland's next international education strategy to align more closely with the global strategies pursued by institutions.



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University College
Dublin

Irish universities are increasingly global in their focus, and have broadened their horizons both geographically and thematically in their pursuit of global engagement.

As such, international offices which once focused uniquely on inbound and outbound student mobility (whether degree-seeking or short-term) now find themselves supporting and guiding their institutions on a wider range of international activities. These include partnership development and academic collaboration, diplomatic and government engagement, and fostering links with alumni and industry. In tandem, other offices across campus are increasingly internationally engaged in their work, be that in research, in careers, in human resources, or in a wide range of other areas.

To this end, Irish universities are increasingly reflecting the true internationalisation of their purpose, functions, and delivery across all aspects of their endeavours, as outlined in the definition of internationalisation in higher education put forward by De Wit et al. (2015). Interestingly, though, institutions in many countries have moved away from the term 'internationalisation' in their public statements, choosing instead to refer to 'global engagement'. They thereby focus on the outcome rather than the process and avoid a term which has been interpreted differently by different audiences (Proctor, 2016).

University College Dublin (UCD), for example, defines itself as Ireland's global university and is engaged around the world in its teaching, research, and outreach. Fully 28% of UCD's student body in Dublin is drawn from outside Ireland, and the university enrols a further 4,000 students in transnational programmes in Asia. In parallel, 30% of all staff at UCD are international, and some 60% of all UCD research publications are co-authored with researchers from other countries. In support of its outreach, UCD has established global centres in the USA, China, India, Malaysia, and Dubai, and now runs forty global alumni chapters in recognition of the fact that 30% of its alumni live overseas.

For UCD, this concentration of international activity flows from the conscious adoption of a strategic approach to global engagement, as reflected in UCD's leadership and management structures, written

What does a

say to the world

about the value and

that country places on

global engagement?

importance which

national strategy

strategy, and holistic institution-wide approach. In this way, UCD is in line with international trends and with the results of the 5th Global Survey undertaken by the International Association of Universities (IAU) which show that the majority of institutions worldwide have moved towards a strategic approach to internationalisation.

Beyond the approach of any individual institution, governments around the world have also sought to develop international strategies on education, ostensibly in support of their education sectors but perhaps more compellingly in the pursuit of national priorities. Unsurprisingly, governments and institutions tend to approach internationalisation (or global engagement) in different ways, and for different ends, leading to clear gaps between institutional and national strategies.

Ireland's national strategy 'Irish Educated, Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016–2020' is clearly framed in terms of international education, rather than around a broader approach to global engagement. Although it briefly references internationalisation, alumni engagement, outbound mobility, and the importance of collaboration, its key thrust is on inbound mobility and the competitive recruitment of international students. In this light, the four strategic priorities outlined

in the strategy are framed principally in commercial and economic terms, framing the support to be provided by government to 'succeed abroad' and to enable higher education institutions to be 'globally competitive'.

It is not surprising, of course, that a national strategy is framed in response to key national policy agendas, such as economic competitiveness and employability. In the context of declining government funding for higher education, it is also pragmatic to frame a government

strategy which encourages and supports higher education institutions to raise non-exchequer revenue through international student tuition fees. Although it is fair to say that none of the Irish universities is averse to greater coordination of government support in international student recruitment, this approach to national strategy necessarily leads to a misalignment for institutions that have adopted a broader approach to global engagement.

What is more insidious, perhaps, is the close alignment between national strategy and the funding and performance compacts concluded between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and individual institutions. In these compacts, institutions are invited to identify objectives and initiatives in support of a wide range of government targets and strategies (including the International Education Strategy) in order to secure government funding. In so doing, they are pushed towards objectives and initiatives in one area of their global engagement in their funding compacts (related to inbound fee-paying student mobility), with little or no formal opportunity for government to acknowledge their performance more broadly in relation to international engagement.

With the Irish international education strategy due for review in the coming year, it is interesting to reflect on the approaches adopted recently by other national governments. Over the course of the last year, the UK, Canada, and New Zealand have all published new strategies.

are increasingly reflecting the true internationalisation of their purpose, functions, and delivery.

Irish universities

Close to home, the UK's new International Education Strategy (launched in March 2019) has been criticised for its overtly commercial focus, with very little attention paid to partnerships, soft power, and outbound mobility. However, in counterbalance, this government strategy sits next to a UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility 2017-2020, developed and

spearheaded by Universities UK International, which represents the 136

universities in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Across the Atlantic, Canada's recently launched International Education Strategy 2019–2024 prioritises three key objectives: on outbound mobility (encouraging Canadians to gain new skills abroad in less-traditional destinations), diversification (of source countries of inbound students, and of their destinations in Canada), and increased support for Canadian education exports. Unlike its predecessor, Canada's new strategy (launched in August 2019) does not set a numerical target for inbound mobility.

New Zealand, though at the greatest distance from Ireland, is perhaps the most similar country in this sample in terms of its size, the scale of its higher education system, and its relative global standing in international higher education. Launched in mid-2018, New Zealand's International Education Strategy 2018-2030 is based around three pillars: delivering excellent

education and student experiences, achieving sustainable growth, and developing global citizens. Although economic impact is included, the strategy does not focus on economic value alone and consciously avoids numerical indicators in relation to international students.

Each of these countries provides an indication of the avenues open to Ireland in the renewal of its own international education strategy over the coming year.

Of key importance will be the narrative that Ireland is seeking to communicate with its strategy. What does a national strategy say to the world about the value and importance which that country places on global engagement? While drawing on national policy imperatives, should the national strategy not more accurately reflect the broader 'global engagement' focus of Irish institutions? In 2020, is it appropriate to frame a national strategy principally in terms of economic benefit? Should the recruitment of international students to Ireland form the central pillar of Ireland's public narrative on global engagement, and should Ireland set numerical targets here when other countries have moved away from doing so? These are key questions which Ireland must address in reformulating its current strategy.

Of particular relevance to this discussion is the commitment by the Irish Universities Association to launch a major outbound mobility campaign in the 2019/2020 academic year. While the details of this initiative are still being considered, it is a clear indication of the more holistic nature of international strategies in the university sector. As shown above, national strategies in Canada and New Zealand now give greater weight to the importance of outbound mobility for skills development and the formation of global citizens, with a similar UK commitment framed publicly by the universities, if not by government.

As Irish universities seek to reinforce their global credentials in teaching, research, and outreach, framing their strategies in relation to a broad understanding of global engagement, now is the ideal time to adopt a more holistic national strategy to support them in this crucial aspect of their work.

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FÍS Film Project 2019

Over 900 enthusiastic young film buffs from schools across the country attended the FÍS Film Finals ceremony in November 2019, hosted by RTE's Sinead Kennedy.

The FÍS Film Project is an initiative of the Department of Education and Skills managed by the Institute of Art, Design & Technology's FÍS Office (IADT) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Technology in Education Dept.

The project introduces young students to all aspects of the film-making process and helps them develop teamwork, communication and technological skills. It also assists primary school teachers in enhancing critical thinking, problem solving, investigation and analysis in the classroom. The initiative is aligned with the Government's digital strategy for schools, an action plan for integrating ICT into teaching and learning assessments in the classroom.

THE UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN EDUCATION

Think Bigger: UCD's educational commitment to the SDGs



The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent an ambitious, strategic framework which calls for concerted efforts from government, industry, and NGOs towards building an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future for people and planet. Education, research, and innovation are essential in sustainable development, making universities key contributors to achieving the goals. University College Dublin demonstrates its commitment to sustainable development by reviewing its educational offerings though an SDG lens.



Prof Cecily Kelleher Principal, UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences



Louise Griffin
Project Officer,
UCD Sustainable
Development Goals
Project

In 2015, the United Nations' resolution *Transforming Our World:* The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ('the 2030 Agenda') was adopted by all 193 member states. The 2030 Agenda, which is considered 'one of the most ambitious and important global agreements in recent history' (SDSN Australia/Pacific, 2017, p. 2), aims to deliver a more sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful future, and sets out a framework for how to achieve this by 2030. The framework builds on the Millennium Development Goals and is made up of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) covering the social, economic, and environmental requirements for a sustainable future.

In response to the UN's call for action, governments across the globe have established national frameworks for achieving the goals. Ireland's 'SDGs National Implementation Plan 2018–2020' (NIP) sets out how the nation will work to achieve them, both domestically and internationally. The role of education is addressed explicitly in the NIP, and the existing National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, developed in 2014 by the Department of Education, is being monitored for execution under the national plan.

Education is closely interlinked with all the SDGs and plays a crucial role in their implementation. This crucial role in tackling global challenges is explicitly recognised through SDG 4: Quality Education, which stresses the need to ensure 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all' (UN, 2015). Some of the targets in this goal emphasise the impact of primary education on literary and numeracy. Other targets recognise secondary education and its capacity to create pathways for female empowerment and educational specialisation. Remaining targets address third-level education and its responsibility to develop thoughtful, highly skilled graduates.

Inspired by the 2030 Agenda and the university's 2015 strategic mission to 'Tackle Global Challenges', UCD decided in 2018 to develop a project to map its actions in education, research, governance, and engagement against the SDGs. Guided by the 2017 SDSN Australia/Pacific publication 'Getting started with the SDGs in universities', the project aimed to map existing UCD actions and activities against the seventeen goals in order to show what UCD was already doing

to advance the 2030 Agenda. The SDSN Australia/Pacific guide (2017, pp. 31–32) considers this the first step to becoming an SDG-engaged university. A UCD SDGs steering committee was established to oversee the work of four subgroups, and an initial analysis was completed. This article will focus on the findings of the UCD SDGs Education Group.

It is important to stress at the outset that UCD has an extended history in education for sustainable development that has long preceded the 2030 Agenda. In the 1950s, UCD, like other Irish universities, had a visible tradition in the development of liberal adult-education programmes that focused on languages, arts, music, social sciences, and recreation. This was underpinned by strong emphasis on Catholic or social action (reflective of the context and period) aimed at involving people in their environments. By the 1980s, the then Department of Economics was an early pioneer of research and teaching in the area of sustainable development through the work of Helen O'Neill, a founding director of the UCD Centre for Development Studies.

More recently, UCD responded to the Millennium Development Goals through various teaching programmes in the School of Education, Centre for Equality Studies, and Centre for Development Studies. The UCD Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA) was established in 2012 and is an

internationally recognised platform of excellence for humanitarian research and education. This rich tradition is reflected in the diversity of modules that are currently on offer to our undergraduate and graduate students. These early initiatives in UCD demonstrate how sustainability was translated into practices in various ways in disciplines across the university.

Education is closely interlinked with all the SDGs and plays a crucial role in their implementation.

In 2015, UCD had a direct role in the development of the SDGs through the advocacy of Professor Patrick Paul Walsh, UCD School of Politics and International Relations, who represented universities as a member of the UN Major Group for Science and Technology in the intergovernmental negotiations on the SDGs. Through the work of this group the roles of academia, science, research, and innovation are firmly embedded in the SDGs.

Curriculum

With this rich history in mind, the SDGs Education Group identified two main components of UCD's educational experience: Curriculum, and Co-Curriculum or Student Experience. Three key actions to map both components were defined:

1. Review of UCD undergraduate programmes. This review was carried out at programme level, and it was agreed at the outset that as an established higher education institution (HEI), all degree programmes in UCD automatically met the criteria under SDG 4: Quality Education. The type of approach taken to map the undergraduate programmes was 'desktop assessment': an extensive review of the content of the 2019 UCD undergraduate prospectus and a manual assessment and assignment of each of the programmes to each SDG.

- 2. Review of UCD graduate programmes. A similar approach was taken in mapping the graduate programmes. The data source in this instance was the UCD Graduate Studies website. All full-time and part-time graduate taught programmes were assessed by identifying programme keywords and mapping them to the targets specified under each SDG.
- 3. Consultation of stakeholders in key units. To capture the co-curricular activity and the wider UCD student experience that corresponds to the SDGs, members of the Education Group were consulted, as they represented several of the key units in the university.

The review of UCD undergraduate and graduate programmes revealed that beyond Goal 4, the three key goals most prevalent in the undergraduate and graduate taught programmes are SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing, SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals. Substantively all seventeen goals are addressed to varying degrees in the curriculum, with all six colleges in the university contributing significantly to 'Education for the SDGs'.

Co-curriculum or Student Experience

The SDGs Education Group then carried out a university-wide consultation to map UCD's co-curricular environment to the SDGs. Unsurprisingly,

UCD has an extended history in education for sustainable development.

UCD Access and Lifelong Learning (ALL), which supports the university's work towards achieving its diversity and inclusion mission, emerged as a key unit in advancing the targets set out by Goal 4: Quality Education. ALL's work plan underscores the importance of mainstreaming access in higher education (HE). Students from low-income households, students with disabilities, first-time mature

students, and Irish Travellers are among the groups identified in the plan as under-represented in HE. $\,$

To tackle this under-representation, a widening-participation committee was established in 2012 as the formal structure to generate guidance on the policy and practice of access, widening participation and lifelong learning. The committee oversees 'University for All', a whole-institution approach to mainstreaming inclusion at every level. The committee and its initiatives are now aligned with the university's academic structures, ensuring that equality of access and participation is embedded in the fabric of UCD.

Other initiatives that support UCD's diversity and inclusion objectives include financial support to students from low-income households, a career consultant to work with access students, a campus accessibility officer dedicated to developing an accessible built and technological infrastructure that serves the needs of all students, and the development of seven alternative entry routes for under-represented students. Among these are the University Access Programme and UCD Open Learning.

In recognition of some of the diversity and inclusion initiatives, the university was designated as an Age-Friendly University and received University of Sanctuary status in 2018.

UCD Global is another unit whose work contributes significantly to achieving Goal 4 and Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals. UCD Global

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steers the global strategies of the university, providing expert leadership in everything from partnerships and mobility to the international elements of the student experience.

UCD Global works with the Irish Council for Overseas Students (ICOS) in supporting Irish Aid scholarship applications, and reserves on-campus accommodation for such scholars. The unit also works to ensure tuition fee waivers for refugee or asylum-seeker students where necessary. A global experience manager works to ensure that international students are supported with their integration into the university community, and that all students have an opportunity to consider an international study or work opportunity as part of their degree.

UCD Global is also home to UCD Volunteers Overseas (UCDVO) which runs an annual Volunteering and Development Education training programme for 120 participants. This includes workshops on ethical volunteering, intercultural education, responsible volunteering training, and a four-week placement overseas. Participants expand their knowledge of SDG issues such as access to healthcare, gender inequality, and the impact of climate change.

Campaign coordinators in UCD Students' Union have been responsible for numerous efforts which contribute to implementing the SDGs, for example reducing plastic waste in UCDSU on-campus shops, lobbying for universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and combating sexual violence and harassment through participation in the ESHTE programme (Ending Sexual Harassment and Violence in Third-Level Education). These actions are often coupled with fundraising initiatives for relevant national charities such as the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, the Peter McVerry Trust, and Pieta House.

UCD had a direct role in the development of the SDGs through the advocacy of Professor Patrick Paul Walsh.

Several cross-university groups in UCD, made up of both staff and students, contribute to the SDGs. Examples include the UCD Sustainable Energy Community, EcoUCD, UCD Smarter Travel Group, UCD Women in Politics, and UCD Green Campus. These groups allow those with specific interests to collaborate and network, as well as pooling resources for common goals.

This initial mapping of the educational aspects of UCD's activities in the context of the SDGs revealed, firstly, that UCD's mission, values, and strategic plan are compatible with Goal 4 – to produce a high-quality educational experience that supports and equips all students to contribute meaningfully to the objectives of the SDGs. Secondly, from a curriculum perspective, UCD's taught undergraduate and graduate programmes in all six colleges are addressing one or more of the SDGs. Thirdly, in terms of co-curriculum support and the student experience, many initiatives are again aligned with the goals.

Such revelations, although not entirely unexpected, are a reminder of the powerful function of HEIs and the responsibility that comes with such influence. Professor Jeffrey Sachs, special adviser to the UN Secretary General on the SDGs, described the critical role of education in advancing the SDGs upon receiving his UCD Ulysses Medal in 2017. He said that the

challenge of sustainable development requires universities to lead, as students are 'the participants and the protagonists who are needed to help shape the kind of future that we want' (Sachs, 2016).

UCD is now working towards operationalising the further integration of education for sustainable development, or education for the SDGs, into the curriculum and the student experience to strengthen and deepen the unique contribution of the university in supporting and accelerating global capacity to implement the SDGs (UNESCO, 2016).

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The overall winner of the 2019 UCD Start-up Stars Programme, with a €3,000 cash prize, is MLN (pronounced 'Melon'), an early-stage UCD student venture.

MLN is currently seeking to provide a solution to the "daily commute" by developing a secure and real-time in-house carpooling app for medium-to-large organisations to reduce the number of cars on the road, to improve the commuter's experience, and to increase employee retention levels.

The MLN app will enable users to act as both passengers and drivers on their daily commute. The app will use gamification to attract and retain users by providing incentives and rewards for carpooling participation. The MLN dashboard will provide customers with visibility of their carbon footprint reduction, productivity increases and cross-team collaborations. The MLN box uses GPS to automatically detect the user's commute and an accelerometer and gyroscope to detect collisions and perform vehicle diagnostics.

The founders of MLN are **Manal Mukhtar,** an undergraduate student in the UCD Lochlann Quinn School of Business and UCD Sutherland School of Law and **Ellen Le Bas,** who has just completed a postgraduate degree in the UCD School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering.



Pictured at NovaUCD are **Manal Mukhtar** and **Ellen Le Bas**, founders of MLN, winner of the 2019 UCD Start-Up Stars Programme.

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GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

The role of universities and student learning at NUI Galway

Éist le fuaim na habhann agus gheobhair breac (Listen to the sound of nature and you will catch a trout)

We have about twelve years left to act on climate change. That's the stark warning contained in a landmark report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a network of climate experts convened by the United Nations (UN). The world is 1°C hotter than it was in the pre-industrial era, and the IPCC determined that if greenhouse gas emissions continue at the current rate, global warming could reach 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by as early as 2030. Exceeding 1.5°C will lead to irreversible loss of the planet's most delicate ecosystems and will significantly intensify the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat, and poverty for several hundred million of the most vulnerable people by 2050 (IPCC, 2018a).

The IPCC report says that 'limiting warming to 1.5°C is possible', but doing so requires 'rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society'. Human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) would need to fall 'about 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050', it says. 'Limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared with 2°C would reduce challenging impacts on ecosystems, human health and well-being' (IPCC, 2018b) – but this requires emissions to 'decline rapidly across all society's main sectors, including buildings, industry, energy, transport and agriculture'. The IPCC (2018c) lists some actions towards this end: 'phasing out coal in the energy sector, increasing the amount of energy produced from renewable sources, electrifying transport, changing food systems and developing green building infrastructure'.

The news on biodiversity is equally grave. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) studied the global state of biodiversity and wrote in its 2019 report: 'Biodiversity is declining faster than at any time in human history. Human actions threaten more species with global extinction now than ever before. One million animal and plant species are currently threatened with extinction, many within decades.' While significant achievements have been made in reducing poverty in recent decades, over 700 million people – 10% of the global population – 'still live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$1.90 a day, and they are struggling to gain access to the most basic needs like health, education, water and sanitation' (UN, 2019a). The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (2019) says that 'over 820 million



Michelle O'Dowd Lohan



Prof Frances Fahy



Prof Pól Ó Dochartaigh

Community and University Sustainability Partnership, NUI Galway people suffer from hunger'. 'If nothing changes,' the One Planet Network (2019) tells us, then 'in 35 years, with an increasing population that could reach 9.6 billion by 2050 we will need almost three planets to sustain our ways of living.'

Ní neart go cur le chéile (There is no strength like co-operation)

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of seventeen global goals adopted by 193 member states in 2015. The SDG framework is the global community's agreed new action plan for the next fifteen years to address the urgent economic, social, and environmental problems facing the world, from climate change and biodiversity loss to extreme poverty and hunger. The SDGs are universal: a call for action by all countries, developing and developed, rich and poor, to recognise that global challenges require global solutions and that we must all work together to promote prosperity and safeguard the planet.

The SDGs are interconnected and integrate all dimensions of sustainability. They recognise that 'ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs, including

education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection' (UN, 2019a). According to the UN Foundation (2019):

The SDGs recognise that specific global issues like health, finance, conflict and the environment are deeply connected, and our understanding, appreciation, and responses should

be shaped accordingly. The interconnectedness of these issues is at the heart of the SDGs, and to make progress we need to break down silos and improve how we work together across issues and across sectors.

Gach dalta mar oiltear (Every student is as they are trained)

One million

species are currently

threatened with

extinction.

animal and plant

While we all have a role to play in building a sustainable society, universities can play a significant part in the transition. Universities have a particular responsibility to promote sustainability through education, research, knowledge exchange, and corporate social responsibility. They can shape future agendas and play a central role in achieving the SDGs. According to O'Malley (2019), 'None of the SDGs can be achieved without the contribution of higher education through research, teaching and community engagement.' He adds: 'To increase the likelihood of success for the 17 SDGs, higher education institutions worldwide must teach and train today's students – tomorrow's decision–makers – to think both critically and ethically, to learn to cope with ethical dilemmas and apply systems-thinking approaches to serious and complex societal problems.'

To become successful SDG implementers, students require knowledge and understanding of the SDG framework, complemented by competencies in systems thinking, critical thinking, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, social responsibility, and partnership (SDSN, 2017). The real challenge for universities is to identify ways to integrate sustainability into the learning experience for all students and not just those who take subjects related

directly to sustainability: 'All students need to be aware of the local, regional and global contexts in which they live and make decisions. A single course in college can only ever be a beginning' (Levi and Rothstein, 2018).

Learn-Live-Lead: The NUI Galway sustainability journey

At NUI Galway, our Learn–Live–Lead approach to sustainability recognises the important role that students play in advancing the SDG agenda. The model places students at the heart of the sustainability journey and promotes sustainability scholarship, environmental stewardship, and global citizenship as key student attributes. The aim with learn is to embed sustainability literacy into all aspects of university practice, learning, and research, so that students gain the knowledge and skills necessary to foster and demonstrate sustainable thinking and decision–making even after graduation. The aim with live is to implement the principles of sustainability through campus operations, so that graduates understand the importance of sustainable living in all aspects of their lives and value their connection to the physical environment, ecosystems, and biodiversity. The focus of lead is on graduating students who are societally aware and valued for their world–readiness. This is achieved by developing the campus as a role model for sustainability and fostering partnerships between community and

university that promote greater civic engagement among students and staff. Through the leadership of students, staff, and graduates, NUIG aims to scale sustainability successes beyond the campus walls, acting as a leader on sustainability locally, nationally, and globally.

Below are five examples of measures that can be taken across the Learn-Live-Lead model, to support students to develop the skills and competencies needed to become sustainability role models, advocates, and leaders in their service to the outside world.

At NUI Galway, our Learn–Live–Lead approach to sustainability recognises the important role that students play in advancing the SDG agenda.

1. Embed sustainability in the curriculum

Sustainability principles can be embedded in the academic curriculum in a number of ways: by developing new, sustainability-focused modules and programmes; integrating sustainability content into existing courses; increasing the extent of sustainability learning outcomes in academic programmes; and integrating sustainability values into student graduate attributes. Concepts of sustainability need to be incorporated broadly into courses so that students see it in a holistic way, from environmental, social, and economic perspectives.

By offering a sustainability curriculum that is relevant to the needs of society and responsive to the changes taking place, universities can play a pivotal role in equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to address complex sustainability challenges. A good starting point is to review undergraduate and postgraduate modules contained in the online curriculum management system, to determine baseline sustainability teaching. This can involve identifying keywords such as 'environment' and 'nature', and applying the search terms to all active and approved modules. Involving students in the process generates awareness of the scope and scale of sustainability-related teaching. Sustainability is taught across

disciplines in all colleges at NUI Galway, and the number of modules that raise awareness of the environment, nature, and sustainability rose from 196 in 2015 to 231 in 2018.

2. Use the campus as a 'living lab'

'Living lab' is a concept that 'aims to establish partnerships or programmes that connect the academic activities of the institution (i.e. teaching & learning, and academic research) with non-academic partners,' according to the EAUC (2019). 'Non-academic partners can include internal university operations, estates departments, local communities, businesses, charities and voluntary groups.'

Using the campus buildings and estate as a 'living lab' is a great way for students to apply sustainability practices learned in the classroom to real-life experience. With a living-labs approach, students can develop problem-solving, critical-thinking and systems-thinking skills and learn to collaborate, build partnerships, and work with a team. Examples of living-lab projects rolled out at NUI Galway include environmental students compiling inventories of biodiversity, engineering students investigating resource use in buildings, business students working with catering

contractors to reduce food waste, and marketing students developing sustainability awareness campaigns.

Students require guidance and mentorship when using the campus as a living lab. But while it is important to provide clear and measurable goals and to supervise the work, giving students time to work on ideas can allow creativity and innovation to flourish. Creating a central database of sustainability questions that need answering is a good way to involve all the campus community. Developing projects

that align to the university's core sustainability objectives can also progress the sustainability agenda.

3. Set up a student internship award programme

A sustainability internship programme extends sustainability beyond the classroom and enhances students' academic, career and personal development. Offering students an opportunity to create and improve campus sustainability operations, via a summer internship with an expert in the field, fosters student leaders in sustainability, develops their sustainability knowledge and skills, and enhances their employability skills. Students benefit by gaining hands-on sustainability work experience. The university benefits by securing meaningful contributions from motivated students and by gaining student sustainability advocates, role models, and leaders to empower other students.

Internship projects can include developing online platforms and social media campaigns to engage students on sustainability, working to reduce waste, analysing energy- and water-consumption data and identifying opportunities to implement efficiencies, and developing initiatives to connect students to nature on campus. Providing paid internships and opening the programme to students from a wide variety of backgrounds

helps promote equal access for all students. A student summer sustainability internship programme has been running at NUI Galway since 2016.

4. Develop the role of sustainability officer

The sustainability officer (SO) of the university can make a significant contribution to student learning on sustainability. From focused engagement during new-student orientation, to supporting the work of sustainability-themed clubs and societies, and incorporating sustainability awareness workshops as part of the formal curriculum, there are lots of opportunities to involve the SO at different stages of a student's university journey. The lead author was recently appointed community and university sustainability officer at NUI Galway; the post was created as a lead role in educating and engaging students on sustainability. Among the functions of the role are:

- engaging prospective students on the subject of sustainability as a core value of the institution at university open days
- including sustainability as part of new-student orientation programmes
- developing and delivering sustainability workshops and awareness days throughout the college year
- · supporting student organisations to promote sustainable development through activities and events
- · working with key community groups to develop outreach and volunteering opportunities in sustainability.

5. Provide students with a platform to contribute to policy development

Students are a university's greatest resource, brimming with ideas, enthusiasm, and expertise. They play a vital role in establishing a sustainable university as key developers and drivers of change. Students best understand the challenges and opportunities for sustainable activities in their everyday lives. Providing them with real and meaningful opportunities to contribute to policy development ensures that the student voice is central on the sustainability journey.

The experience at NUI Galway demonstrates that students are more likely to become role models and leaders in the transition to a more sustainable campus when they are given continuous opportunities to become involved in sustainability implementation and governance, including through thematic working groups and campaigns, rolling out a student-centred sustainability engagement

Students are a university's greatest resource. brimming with ideas, enthusiasm, and expertise.

and awareness campaign, and setting up student-led sustainability demonstrator projects. In a recent NUI Galway survey of students, staff, and stakeholders to determine values that the campus community share, students identified sustainability as one of their top-priority strategic themes to guide and structure the university's strategic plan beyond 2020.

Is maith an scéalaí an aimsir (The weather is a good story-teller - time will tell)

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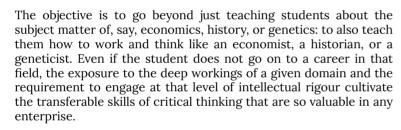
We really didn't ask for this. We didn't cause it, we're trying to solve it. One of my motivating factors is, if I ever have children I want them to see nature and beauty. I don't want them to have to do what we're doing right now."

— Elena. 15

BALANCING BREADTH AND DEPTH AT THIRD LEVEL

In the modern world, specialised but inflexible thinking will no longer do. We are no longer preparing students for lifelong careers in specific areas. A new curriculum design at Trinity College Dublin gives students a chance to see beyond the intellectual confines of their chosen disciplines.

Third-level education in Ireland has traditionally required students to specialise early in a specific subject, or sometimes two, and to focus largely on this area throughout their years in college. The goal has been to develop deep domain expertise. At Trinity College Dublin this has always involved an emphasis on research-led teaching. Students are taught by faculty who are active researchers in their fields, and they are not just exposed to the corpus of knowledge in the field but trained in the methods used to acquire and evaluate it.



This can come at a cost, however. Thinking like an economist, a historian, or a geneticist is fine – those are hugely powerful and successful approaches to their respective domains. But they are not the only ways to think about the subjects that concern each discipline. The danger in a highly specialised education is that students will develop too narrow and blinkered a perspective, that their ways of thinking will be worn into certain tracks or ruts – the same tracks and ruts that each discipline has been in for decades.

In the modern world, such specialised but inflexible thinking will no longer do. We are no longer preparing students for lifelong careers in specific areas. The average time spent in any job is now under five years, and many of our graduates will go on to jobs that currently do not exist. They will need intellectual agility and adaptability to succeed in the workplace. They will need to be able to see a problem from multiple perspectives, and to work with people with varied expertise.

Indeed, all of us, as a society, will require the talents and perspectives of people from diverse disciplines, working together to solve the many challenges now facing us, such as climate change, an ageing population, and the threats of populism.



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The challenge for educators is to balance the need for deep domain expertise with the need to expose students to thinking from other disciplines. This is actually a battle against the increasing specialisation of academia in general. A research-led education has to take students all the way down to the coalface – that's where new discoveries are dug out, where we're excavating new facts or ideas.

You'd like to think those nuggets of knowledge would be transported back to the surface, where larger theories could be created, out in the light – that we'd all come back up once in a while to show everyone else what we've discovered. But in reality most theory-building goes on down in the mines. The further down we all go, the further away we get from each other.

Indeed, many disciplines have been separated for so long that they have built up not just their specialised body of facts but their own traditions and styles for building theories, implicit premises and shared assumptions, and accepted ways of doing things and thinking about things. When we bring new students down the mine with us, we are giving them the chance to become domain experts, but we are also subtly indoctrinating them.

At Trinity College Dublin, students are not just exposed to the corpus of knowledge in the field but trained in the methods used to acquire and evaluate it.

Broadening students' horizons

The Trinity Education Project, currently in its final year, aims to renew the undergraduate experience at Trinity College Dublin, with a commitment to balancing depth and breadth. Students will still receive a research-led education in their chosen discipline, culminating in a capstone research project – an independent piece of work designed to engage students in the scholarship and research methods of their field.

But along the way, we have introduced more opportunities for students to lift their heads up and look around – to take modules from other disciplines, to follow their own interests, and, within a structured framework, to define their own curriculum. There are three ways in which students can avail of these opportunities.

First, students who enter in a single honours pathway will now have the chance to take up a new subject in second year. If they choose, this subject can be continued through years three and four, so that the students can graduate with a minor award in that new subject and a major award in their primary discipline. In their first year, students will learn more about the variety of subjects available to them, enabling them to make an informed choice, even for subject areas that might have been obscure to them as school leavers.

Second, across all our programmes in the faculties of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and of Science, Engineering, and Mathematics, students will also have space in the curriculum to take a number of Open Modules. These are modules delivered by another discipline, but considered complementary to a student's primary subject areas. For example, a student in Biosciences might take a module in Physics, Geology, or Science Communication. A student in Economics can take modules in Business, Politics, or Sociology. Students in History can take modules in English Literature, Law, Islamic

Civilisations, etc. Students in each subject area will have a wide range of Open Modules to choose from and can pursue whatever topics most appeal to them within this offering.

And finally, all students will have the opportunity to take at least one of a new set of modules called Trinity Electives. These are a flagship feature of our new undergraduate curriculum, designed to bring together students from across all disciplines to study topics that are related to the main research themes of the university or to important societal challenges. These modules will take a multidisciplinary approach to the topic, allowing students to see the question from multiple perspectives and to approach it with diverse methodologies.

The topics of the Trinity Electives are wide-ranging and diverse, such as: Cancer – the Patient Journey; The Art of the Megacity; The EthicsLab – Responsible Action in the Real World; Energy in the 21st Century; Design Thinking; Irish Landscapes – Interdisciplinary Perspectives; and many others, including introductory modules to many different languages and cultures.

For the faculty involved, Trinity Electives present a unique chance to interact with their colleagues in other disciplines, to explore the real-world impacts of various aspects of their research, and to introduce their favourite topics to students from all areas of the university. Indeed, the idea has sparked tremendous creativity from faculty members across all disciplines, with exciting new proposals being made all the time.

The danger in a highly specialised education is that students will develop too narrow and blinkered a perspective.

The pay-off

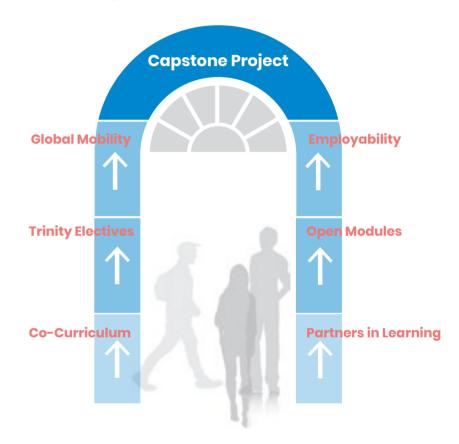
For the students, these three options for breadth will give them a chance to emerge from the mine and look around, explore new subject areas, pull together ideas in their own minds, and see connections that might otherwise go unnoticed. But beyond the specific facts and ideas that they may learn about, a deeper pay-off is exposure to a range of intellectual perspectives.

Critical thinking – that most prized transferable skill – cannot be effectively taught as a topic in its own right, divorced from specific contexts. It is gained through deep immersion in a discipline and the expectation that students will develop professional levels of rigour and analysis. But that exclusive approach can leave a gap, an intellectual blind spot: the inability to be critical of the most fundamental assumptions of the discipline as whole.

Every discipline has its own perspective and a set of shared, often implicit assumptions. These are useful, maybe even essential, in allowing progress within a shared framework. But they can also place fundamental limits on seeing solutions to certain types of problems – ones where the conceptual framing of the field is simply inappropriate or incomplete. When working paradigms become unquestioned dogma, true creativity is stifled.

By the time we have dragged students to the coalface, they'll have specialised so much that they will have assimilated these core paradigms and shared assumptions, to the point where they not only don't question them, they no longer recognise them as such. In that way, perspectives are like accents – you may not realise you have one yourself, until you hear somebody else's.

This is where a bit of intellectual travel can be such a consciousness-raiser. Our hope is that these new features of our undergraduate curriculum will foster a mindset of curiosity and confidence and help to cultivate the attributes of truly independent thinking, ethical awareness, effective communication, and continuous intellectual development that are core to a Trinity undergraduate education.





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SUPPORTING AND STIMULATING ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND ENTERPRISE

This article offers thoughts from the frontline: a reflection on activities spanning the boundary between higher education and enterprise, and some practical observations to support good practice in engagement. Not everything that is valuable can be counted, but we can certainly seek to evidence it. Not every interaction that can happen should happen – but how do we know what's happening?

The role of higher education in economies and societies continues to be the subject of both optimism and debate. As the mission of the university evolves, it is no longer considered to be a dedicated teaching and research institution but also a purposeful driver of economic development and a supporter of job creation, with a role in both the generation and application of knowledge.

In Ireland the most recent Action Plan for Education points to greater involvement of industry as a key enabler in developing relevant and current higher education provision and a strong talent pool. The National Skills Strategy refers to the need to 'forge practical alliances between industry and academia in the region'. The sustainability and growth of the Irish economy relies on our success in nurturing indigenous Irish enterprise as well as our ability to remain an attractive destination for top multinational corporations. With global economics, technology, and market globalisation changing rapidly, regional economic development and future skills needs can best be addressed through broader foundations of knowledge generation and application to facilitate the required agility, adaptability, and innovation of both workplace and workforce.

In a complex policy environment, in which reports and strategy documents repeatedly say that relationships and partnerships between higher education and enterprise are vital to regional economic and social development, graduate employability, and relevance of the curriculum, there is no real clarity in either higher education or business on the terminology or potential of such interactions. Nor are there clear funding supports or inclusive metrics for monitoring and supporting the broad range of partnership activity.

Successful interactions require considerable effort from both partners and are rarely straightforward service arrangements. They are best considered as part of a longer-term, mutually beneficial two-way partnership based on realistic expectations. Collaborations between university and business are often seen as possible sources of funding, with the potential to replace declining government funding. Some authors view university collaboration as research and development collaboration only. From the business perspective, the



Prof Irene Sheridan Head of CIT Extended Campus, Cork Institute of Technology

most significant interaction they have with a university is often through the recruitment of graduates; strong collaboration focused on graduate formation can be vital for the students, university, and enterprise.

Metrics are often concentrated on relatively easily measured parameters relating to commercialisation and translation of research and formation and the support of spin-outs. Motivation for the growing engagement agenda is driven largely by economic imperatives, through government and higher-education funding policy. While deliberate engagement with private enterprise contributes measurably to regional economic and social well-being and is the focus of national and international measures and drivers, the concept of contributing to the development of citizens and citizenship in a broader way in the university community is difficult to evidence and often neglected.

With dedicated resources to an integrated, institute-wide approach to engagement for over a decade, Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) has reflected on the opportunities for interaction with a broad range of external organisations. This reflection has provided an adaptable framework for codifying engagements, and offers insights into what happens in practice and with whom. By developing a customer relationship management (CRM) system, interactions with organisations were tracked and recorded. Analysis of the data resulted in three pillars of engagement being identified:

Graduate Formation	Workforce Development	Research and Innovation
Syllabus review	Recruitment	Consultancy
Curriculum inputs	Part-time courses and Continuing Professional Development	Use of equipment and facilities
Work placement	Recognition of prior learning	Commercialisation
Employability and entrepreneurship development	Work-based learning	Licensing and patents
Work-based projects and live cases	Customised courses	Spinouts and spin-ins – incubation
Site visits	Special purpose awards	Contract and collaborative research
Sponsorship		

This clear codification has enabled periodic analysis of the types and frequency of interactions sought and achieved, for instance the cross-referencing of types of interaction with organisation size and sector. It has also enabled detailed three-dimensional heat-mapping of interactions with individual organisations, and has provided clear evidence that the interactions between higher education and non-profit organisations, for example, are no less varied and valuable than those with multinational corporations.

Interactions with charitable and public sector organisations have been identified and quantified, and these interactions evidently span the pillars of engagement and benefit from dedicated relationship management and principles of engagement no less than interactions with private enterprise.

Considering how best to stimulate and support interactions in a sustainable, responsive, but also responsible way, CIT has established the CIT Extended Campus. This model is unique in Irish higher education as a single point of contact for all external organisations seeking to interact with students, academics, and researchers. It provides a stimulus for interaction through case studies and exemplars intended to generate the 'pull' from within the enterprise sector. The Extended Campus acts as a focal point for sharing information and practice on engagement and external organisations and contacts, in order to support and contribute to institutional strategy and knowledge.

Its main aims are to:

- make it easier for external organisations to engage in mutually beneficial interactions with CIT students, academics, and researchers
- develop a clear view of the extent and depth of existing and potential engagement interactions to feed into institutional strategy and decision-making
- stimulate more interactions and measurably support regional development
- ensure that the various interactions with external organisations are collated and built upon to develop broader, supportive, long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships.

The Extended Campus model is unique in Irish higher education as a single point of contact for all external organisations seeking to interact with students, academics, and researchers.

Experience has shown that organisations tend to progress along a continuum of relationship with higher education, often starting with low-barrier interactions such as learner work placement or the provision of a live case study. These interactions allow organisations to build familiarity with students and staff; a typical partnership might begin with a work placement that leads to the specification of an undergraduate project and graduate recruitment. Depending on the absorptive capacity and organisation size and readiness, the relationship may develop to include workforce upskilling and research – often through the use of external funding mechanisms such as innovation vouchers.

While policymakers and practitioners alike envisage that engagement between higher education and enterprise is beneficial, it is not always clear what is meant by 'enterprise' or indeed 'engagement' in this context. Taking the broad view, enterprise is considered here to encompass public, private, and not-for-profit organisations across all sectors and of all sizes. Engagement embraces the full range of interactions that might occur across the academic-enterprise divide. Organisational strategy will both be informed by, and serve to inform, the interactions in practice. A planned purposeful support mechanism serves to ensure that institutional responses are cross-disciplinary and aligned to institutional strategy.

The initial Irish findings from the Study on University-Business Collaboration illustrate that there are still significant barriers and that those barriers may be felt more keenly by SMEs than by large industries. Given the proportion of active industries that are either micro or small, this presents a real challenge. This study collated responses from individual academics, university management, and businesses. Some of the barriers identified by the business respondents were:

- bureaucracy related to university-business collaboration
- differing motivations between universities and business
- lack of people with business knowledge in universities
- lack of awareness of the opportunities for collaboration
- differing time horizons.

To help overcome some of these barriers, a series of case studies of interactions spanning the full range of potential interaction and organisation types has been developed and continues to be compiled. These examples of engagement in practice include a pharmaceutical company operating in the preclinical and early stages of drug discovery working with a large research group to design and prototype a bespoke imaging system, and an undergraduate placement student helping a local charity to achieve their marketing and fundraising objectives.

This study collated responses from individual academics, university management, and businesses.

Supporting organisations in their interactions with higher education requires a thoughtful approach. Providing a clear and consistent point of contact, and recognising that issues or opportunities do not always align with our disciplinary divisions, will ensure that responses are inter- and intra-disciplinary. Offering a case management approach and collation of relevant data on engagement

opportunities and outputs will provide valuable input to strategic decision-making. Engagement with external organisations occurs throughout higher education institutions. In fact, it is difficult to point to a unit of a university which is not externally engaged. In many cases, however, these units act alone or without knowledge of what's happening elsewhere in the university. Combining knowledge of engagement interactions dispersed throughout the organisation is valuable in developing good practice and supports the development of metrics.

It also leads to some interesting questions. Uncovering current practices and shedding light on existing interactions lead us to reflect not just on what is happening across the university–enterprise divide but on what can and indeed should happen. A means to measure and quantify the extent and impact of engagement cannot or should not obviate the need for value judgements and care in avoiding unintended consequences. This is particularly true when considering higher education providers that are, in the main, publicly funded.

Supervision

teaching accessible in

higher education today.

is arguably

the highest form of

ESTABLISHING A SUPPORT FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH SUPERVISION

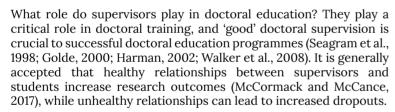
The How and Why of Supporting Doctoral Research Supervisors

This article explores the development of a support framework for research supervisors in an educational environment heavily focused on impact. What really counts in doctoral training?



Research Supervision

In any academic year, there are 6,000-7,000 doctoral students in training in Ireland (HEA, n.d.). The movement of skilled and qualified doctoral students is seen as one of the newest forms of renewable energy (Neumann and Tann, 2011), contributing significantly to the knowledge-based economy (Bryan and Guccione, 2018). These students are initially placed in the hands of supervisors who, in some universities, are offered professional development training of varying formats, levels, and duration. Supervision is arguably the highest form of teaching accessible in higher education today (Taylor et al., 2018), so it is surprising that the training offered to academic staff is rarely a requirement or prerequisite for supervising doctoral candidates, who pursue the highest award a university can offer.



Interestingly, supervisors are often unaware of their role in student attrition (Gardner, 2009), in spite of extensive literature linking dissatisfaction over supervision to student dissatisfaction and degree abandonment. Many of the concerns regarding graduate supervision pertain to a mismatch in expectations between supervisors and students about their roles and responsibilities (Adkins, 2009), something which can be resolved if addressed at early and appropriate stages in the doctoral life cycle. Specifically, these mismatches can adversely affect the working relationship, resulting in delays and non-completion (Bair and Haworth, 2004; Golde, 2005; Crede and Borrego, 2014).

As supervisors play a major role in student satisfaction, persistence, and academic achievement (Murphy et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2007; Solem et al., 2011), the absence of specialised supports seems a folly. In UCD, we therefore aim to draw the research supervisor into a community of practice, where peer learning, training, and



Dr Janet Carton Graduate Education Development Manager, UCD **Graduate Studies**

experience-sharing are the norm in a student- and supervisor-centred educational environment.

Support and Development Framework: UCD's Person-**Centred Approach**

Where did the impetus for changing focus to supervisory supports come from? The Salzburg Principles II (European University Association, 2010) state that universities have a responsibility to provide training for doctoral supervisors. UCD has proactively taken a person-centred approach to this directive in developing an inter-institutional Research Supervisor Support and Development Programme (RSSDp), now running for ten years in the university. This training programme forms a core component of the proposed Research Supervisor Support and Development Framework (RSSDf). Moving towards a person-centred research supervision practice has advantages when considering impact in higher education, as it can enhance the research environment, improving completions and throughput rates.

The proposed support framework has evolved out of the success of the existing RSSDp and the culmination of participant feedback. In addition,

insight for supports development was gained in a collaborative project in 2011, when UCD co-authored the guide 'Developing an institutional framework for supporting supervisors of research students' (NAIRTL, 2011). This unique collaboration between seven higher education institutions in Ireland, under the National Academy for the Integration of Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL) umbrella, formed NAIRTL's Supervisor Support and Development Working Group. The working relationships extended well beyond the completion of the original project, with UCD, Trinity College

Dublin, and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland going on to contribute to the first inter-institutional RSSDp in Ireland. International and national experience and best practices have thus informed the principles of UCD's proposed RSSDf.

With the advent of the framework, the university aims to embed research supervision in an active, contemporary learning environment, which is fit for purpose in training the new generation of doctorates. This is increasingly important because current research supervisors are not, in general, training students for the same kind of roles that they themselves occupy.

Applying the definition of person-centredness by McCormack and McCance (2017) to graduate research supervision implies that personcentred supervision is an approach to research supervision that should focus on forming healthy relationships between supervisors and students. This aim is at the core of any support activity, training, or development offered by the university. The aims of the Supervisor- and Student-Centred Framework are to facilitate:

- peer learning among supervisors throughout the RSSD training programme
- direct access for novice supervisors to mentors or experienced academics
- appropriate and relevant new academic and supervisor orientation
- registration and recognition of supervisory experience
- access to online supports
- sharing of practices externally (to UCD) as well as internally
- exposure to international norms and best practice through symposia and seminars
- recognition of excellence via an Award for Exemplary Practice, in line with UCD principles and strategy
- evaluation of student and supervisor experience
- ongoing review informing professional development.

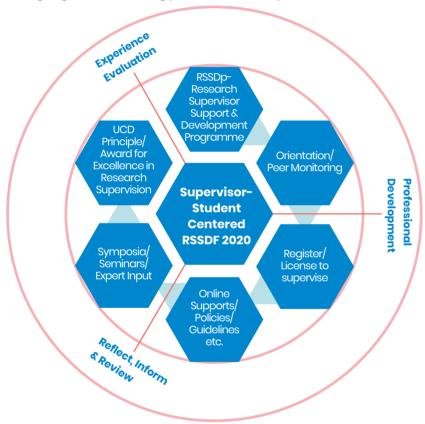


Figure 1: A representation of UCD's person-centred Research Supervisor Support and Development Framework

An organic, person-centred approach lies at the core of this framework, embracing the student and supervisor as focal points. A number of supports in the form of seminars, online policies and guidelines, and a substantial training programme underpin the framework, dovetailing with peer mentoring by experienced supervisors working in an advisory capacity. A distinct supervision orientation for new academics reinforces UCD's ethos of its commitment to doctoral research.

Excellence in supervisory practice is then acknowledged and rewarded through registration of experience (licence to supervise register) and student-driven awards for supervisory excellence. The framework will be informed by the professional development of supervisors and will be evaluated and reviewed in this context on an ongoing basis.

The Impact Agenda: Measuring Success

Why has it been all about the numbers? Systematic data collection feeds well into determining impact such as university rankings, with completions, publications, and throughputs rating highly when measuring success in doctoral education. In contrast, the newly developed awards for excellence in supervisory practice often focus on the more nurturing traits, such as 'ability to integrate students into a postgraduate community', whether the supervisor is 'engaging, inspirational, and helpful', and the extent to which supervisors can 'act as mentors for doctoral students' (Times Higher Education, 2018).

The 'how' of research supervision can therefore not be limited to focusing on audits of measurements such as enrolments, completions, throughput, and publications: it needs to be qualified, to move towards person-centred

supervisory practices. If we want to evaluate the complex processes that underpin person-centredness in research supervision (Heyns et al., 2019), we must develop creative strategies that focus on the supervision experience and an understanding that a person-centred approach is an individualised and not a routine or standardised approach to supervision (Lepledge et al., 2007).

there has been a cultural shift of responsibility, from the

to supervision (Lepledge et al., 2007).

Of course, the supervisor has been in pole position for accountability for this success, or for how success is generally perceived by universities. Recently, however,

supervisor being solely responsible for the success of postgraduate students to responsibility resting on a wider group of stakeholders (van Schalkwyk et al., 2016). An additional aim of the framework is therefore to recognise and support the role of all players in doctoral training, which UCD will acknowledge going forward. The framework thus embeds the philosophy of creating a community of practice. In the knowledge that it takes a village to raise a child, several professional university staff, at various levels and roles, as well as supervisors are needed to bring doctoral students through to successful completion of the degree. The framework must also therefore recognise and support the distinct roles of all stakeholders in the doctoral training process.

A competitive higher education environment marked by increased accountability and quality-assurance measures for doctoral study, including the desire for structured training of doctoral supervisors, has highlighted the need to clearly articulate and delineate the work involved in supervising doctoral students, and how to describe and theorise the complex, multifaceted work involved has caused a dilemma (Halse and Malfroy, 2010). The factors that influence this key relationship ultimately inform the shape and focus of 'training' programmes and professional development supports,

It is surprising that the training offered to academic staff is rarely a requirement or prerequisite for supervising doctoral candidates, who pursue the highest award a university can offer.

which are increasingly being offered as credited certificates and diplomas in university teaching, learning, or professional development.

The impact of this academic development, what constitutes impact, and how we sustain it are two topical areas for discussion in the sector. But the link between teaching training programmes and participant learning outcomes is often indirect, according to Trowler (2008) and Bamber (2008), who concluded that there is no straightforward link between a change initiative and its outcomes. So quantitative measurements are not the only answer when measuring success.

Thankfully, universities are beginning to shape their training provisions for supervisors based on the quality of the experience of the research student when engaging in the doctoral programme, hoping that improved completion rates will be a side-effect of enhancements in professional practice. An effective marriage of qualitative and quantitative metrics to measure impact of supervision and supervisor training has yet to be determined, but placing the student and supervisor experience at the centre of this equation is key.

Conclusion

So are we actually helping supervisors by engaging them with a framework that supports this complex form of teaching? Yes, academic development should be able to show that training is meaningful, valuable, impactful, and worth the effort and time invested in it. The traditional metrics can be hard to measure, and in research supervision and in reality, we now know, they should not be taken in isolation as a measure of success (Sutherland and Hall, 2018).

Feedback from the Research Supervisor Support and Development Programme in UCD shows that supervisors have begun to change their

approaches to supervision and fully intend to keep these changes going – a sign that training is having an impact on practice (McCulloch and Loeser, 2016). In fact, 82% of participants agreed that the learning aims of the programme were met, and five years after completion, changes in practice are being attributed to programme learning, with comments such as 'I feel much better prepared to supervise a PhD student as a result of completing this course' common in feedback.

Feedback from the Research Supervisor Support and Development Programme in UCD shows that supervisors have begun to change their approaches to supervision.

The question lies in whether we feel the need or are required to meet the demands of the impact agenda in the

traditional sense of measurement. If we accept Einstein's hypothesis that not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts, we are undoubtedly on the right track. It is the university's job to contextualise this approach for the research community and for all of the stakeholders in doctoral education.

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In November 2019, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) signed an agreement which will see QQI work more closely with its Australian counterpart in the fight against academic cheating.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Dr Padraig Walsh, CEO of QQI and Anthony McClaran, CEO of Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, Australia (TEQSA) at the annual TEQSA conference where Dr Walsh spoke on the theme of Quality Partnerships with Students and Academics Driving Academic Integrity: Contract Cheating.

EQUALITY AND INCLUSION ARE PRACTICES, NOT END GOALS:

The national approach to gender equality in Irish higher education



This article provides an overview of the approach to achieving the government's vision for Ireland to be a world-leading country for gender equality in higher education by 2026. It looks at evidence gathered to date, strategies for improvement, and how Ireland compares internationally, among other areas of focus.



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for Equality and
Diversity, Maynooth
University

Early stage

Ireland is still at an early stage in developing a comprehensive national approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in higher education. We have had a national Expert Group Report (HEA, 2016) and a Taskforce Action Plan (DES, 2018) on gender equality, establishing annual reporting structures, but we are only just starting to get our heads around how to do the same in other areas of EDI, such as race and ethnicity, disability, gender identity, consent, sexual harassment, and violence against women.

In 2015, when the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Expert Group started its work, gender equality was a difficult subject to talk about. It made many people uncomfortable, and some felt they didn't have the language to engage meaningfully in the discussion, so they stayed silent rather than risk causing offence. This is where we find ourselves today with other areas of EDI in Ireland.

Common terminology

In relation to race and ethnicity, a national Intersectionality Working Group has been set up by the HEA and Advance HE to look at how gender intersects with other elements of EDI in Irish higher education. A first task will be to identify common terminology; for example, under-represented ethnic groups in Ireland include members of the Travelling, Black, Asian, Minority, and Ethnic communities. Increasing levels of immigration have brought into sharp focus how we react to diversity. As a society we need to reflect on our ability to be inclusive if we want to continue to attract international students and talented staff to live and work here, especially while other countries such as the USA and UK report declining numbers (Redden, 2018).

The Department of Education's (DES) Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (DES, 2019) resulted from a national stakeholder workshop and consideration of best practice by an expert panel addressing consent, sexual harassment, and violence against women. The Framework helpfully lists key definitions of terms, and highlights the need for a sectoral response to be in place – otherwise, sustainable improvement is unlikely to occur.

CHAPTER 5 - HIGHER EDUCATION

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Lessons from the national approach to gender equality

There is much we can learn from the approach followed for gender equality in HEIs in Ireland. A lack of comprehensive data nationally meant it wasn't until the Expert Group published its report in 2016 that there was an evidence base to show clearly that gender inequality was present in our HEIs. Annual reporting by HEIs to the HEA since, on gender equality metrics such as the gender balance¹ on governance and management bodies, the academic pipeline, and the professional, management and support staff pipeline, has allowed progress to be monitored. Only marginal improvements (1-2%) have been reported annually in addressing the under-representation of women at senior levels and in the governance and management of institutions. The Gender Equality Taskforce set up in 2017 by the Minister for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O'Connor, was charged with identifying actions to accelerate progress in the sector.

Confidence in the system

Both the Gender Equality Taskforce and Expert Group focused their recommendations and actions on 'organisational and cultural change' rather than the 'fix the women' approach taken historically. The myth that women don't reach the highest points of the academic career ladder

because of low ambition, lack of career planning, or low self-esteem (O'Connor, 2014) contradicts research which indicates that women are as ambitious as men but have significantly less confidence in their chance of success in the current environment - not a lack of confidence in their qualifications (McKinsey & Company, 2017).

Systematic barriers in HEI organisation and culture mean that talent alone is not always enough to guarantee success (Wenneras and Wold, 1997; Moss-Racusin et al., 2012; HEA, 2016; Holman et al., 2018; Periyakoil et al., 2019). The reason women are not found in the most senior positions in the same proportion as men is not because women are not

talented or driven enough to fill these roles; it is because numerous factors in HEIs, conscious and unconscious, cultural and structural (including measures of success being gendered: see van den Brink and Benschop, 2012; Nielsen, 2016; O'Connor and O'Hagan, 2016; White and O'Connor, 2017), mean that women face barriers to progression which are not experienced to the same degree by their male colleagues.

It should therefore come as no surprise that many female PhDs facing this environment begin to wonder if it's really worth it. This is not a zero-sum game. We need more talent overall, so it is not about pushing men out but keeping women in, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) areas. It is critical that HEIs be transparent and visible in the actions they take to address gender inequality, so that women are encouraged to remain in the system.

Valuable insights can be gained from public surveys on the perception of issues in higher education. Of around 4,800 responses to a national online public survey by the HEA Expert Group, most believed that gender inequality

The reason women are not found in the most senior positions in the same proportion as men is... that women face barriers to same degree by their

progression which are not experienced to the male colleagues.

The reason

was present in Irish HEIs. More female (68%) than male respondents (38%) reported this. Both male and female respondents mentioned a 'macho misogynistic culture', 'boys' club', 'attitudes of the alpha male', and 'residual sexist attitudes ... rife throughout the system'. They said this culture was 'often masked by the success of a small number of very accomplished women'. This culture is also likely to affect staff and students who have the talent and capability to contribute but find themselves in the minority because of their ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, identity, or cultural background.

Leading by example

Culture is led from the top, and the HEA Expert Group included recommendations directed at the presidents, deans, and heads of department which were endorsed and built upon by the Gender Equality Taskforce in 2018. Linking core grant funding of HEIs to their performance in progressing gender equality, as part of the HEA Strategic Dialogue Process, has ensured that this continues to be a key focus for leaders of HEIs, with 10% of their institutional funding at risk if progress is not made. All HEIs in Ireland are required to have an institutional gender action plan with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) targets and goals, and to report their progress annually to the HEA.

The three largest research funding agencies in Ireland, SFI, IRC, and the HRB)... all now have organisational gender equality policies or plans, publish their data disaggregated by gender, and require their assessors to complete unconsciousbias training.

Role of research funders

The three largest research funding agencies in Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), the Irish Research Council (IRC), and the Health Research Board (HRB), have fully embraced the Expert Group recommendations and Gender Equality Taskforce actions. They all now have organisational gender equality policies or plans, publish their data disaggregated by gender (e.g., assessment board members, applicants, and awardees), and require their assessors to complete unconscious-bias training. They require applicants to fully consider whether there may be a sex or gender dimension in their research, which is also a requirement for European Commission research funding. Valuable guidance on how to do this is provided by the Gendered Innovations project.²

Athena SWAN Charter

SFI, the IRC, and the HRB have linked eligibility to apply for their research funding to institutional Athena SWAN Charter certification. The Athena SWAN Charter³ was introduced into Ireland in 2015 and subsequently in Australia, USA, and Canada. HEIs and departments are advised to take at least one year to prepare an Athena SWAN application. It requires comprehensive, critical self-assessment, honest, evidence-based reflection on the results, and identification of time-bound actions or targets to address any issues highlighted.

This is different from applying for a research grant, where you sell yourself as the best candidate to receive funding. By gathering institutional or department-level data (both quantitative and qualitative), and by consulting with staff (e.g., through surveys or focus groups) to identify issues and propose a SMART action plan specific to the HEI, a tailored approach to organisational and cultural change can be developed and championed by the institution.

Irish versus international situation

Gender inequality in higher education is an internationally observed issue, and the path to equality is neither linear nor guaranteed. The Helsinki Call to Action from the Finnish presidency of the EU reiterates the importance of using a structural-change approach to address gender inequality in research and innovation. It highlights areas 'with high social transformational potential, including Artificial Intelligence and digitalization, Open Science and Open Innovation', where addressing gender inequality is critical.

The European Commission (2019) She Figures for 2018 report that women lead only 22% of Europe's HEIs and hold only 24% of Professor A posts. Ireland, though identified as the fastest riser from 2005 to 2017 among EU states (now placed 7th, according to the Gender Equality Index, 2019), has never had a female president of a university, and only 26% of our professors in 2018 were female, compared with 52% of lecturers (HEA, 2019), the entry level for academic posts.

Ireland's Glass Ceiling Index (GCI)⁴ continues to be higher (at 2.16) than the EU level of 1.64. Despite this, Ireland has set itself ambitious targets to achieve gender balance (minimum 40% of each gender) at Professor A by 2024, and the government has outlined a vision that 'by 2026 Ireland will be a world-leading country for gender equality in higher education'.

Ireland's Glass
Ceiling Index
continues to be higher,
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of 1.64.

Targeted positive action

A Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality has been established in the HEA to accelerate progress and share best practice in structural change across the sector. New data analysis by the Gender Equality Taskforce, on the estimated rate of change for the future, suggested that adopting a Flexible Cascade Model⁵ alone, as recommended by the HEA Expert Group, could take some twenty years to achieve gender balance at professor level.

The Senior Academic Leadership (SAL) Initiative, launched by the HEA and funded by the DES, is a targeted approach to accelerate gender balance at senior levels. Forty-five new and additional senior academic leadership posts will be awarded to HEIs over three years in areas where women are significantly under-represented. The initiative is based on approaches used in the Netherlands and Germany and aims to complement the organisational and cultural change to be actioned through institutional gender action plans.

Everyone's responsibility

A collaborative national approach is needed so that everyone can be empowered to engage, embrace diversity, and adopt equal and inclusive practices. It cannot be left to the people experiencing EDI problems – it is everyone's responsibility. A key catalyst for momentum in addressing gender inequality in Ireland was the engagement of men in advocating for equality. This changed it from a 'women's issue' to a 'society issue'.

HEIs that allow inequality to exist cannot perform to their full potential. The entire HEI community needs to engage in dialogue about how we can embrace our increasing higher education diversity in a positive manner. Bystander intervention needs to be encouraged so that we are all held to account for encouraging a culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Recognising one's biases, unfortunately, does not make them go away (O'Connor, 2018). Rather, we all need to find ways to work around our biases every day to minimise the effects they have on our behaviour, choices, and actions. Equality and inclusion should therefore be considered practices, not end goals, and we have a long road to travel.

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ENDNOTES

- Gender balance is taken as a minimum of 40% of either gender, reflecting research that selection panels have been found to rank candidates who are in the minority (e.g., the only man in a group of women, or the only women in a group of men) as less competent than members in the majority, unfairly disadvantaging them in a recruitment process (Johnson et al., 2016).
- 2. http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/.
- Advance HE's Athena SWAN Charter was established in 2005 to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths, and medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education and research. It has since expanded to recognise work undertaken in arts, humanities, social sciences, business, and law (AHSSBL), and in professional and support roles, and for trans staff and students.
- 4. The GCI is used to compare how difficult it is for women to move into a higher academic grade, with a GCI of 1 indicating that there is no difference between women and men in their chance of being promoted. A score above 1 indicates the presence of a glass ceiling effect, meaning that women are less represented in grade A positions than in academia generally (grades A, B, C).
- 5. In this model, the proportion of women and men to be recruited or promoted to a certain level is based on the proportion of each at the career level directly below.

Girls are weighed down by restrictions, boys with demands - two equally harmful disciplines."

- Simone de Beauvoir

ALL STUDENTS MATTER, EVERY STUDENT COUNTS

Student engagement, progression, and success – an institutional approach



This article looks at student engagement and success in the current higher education context. What drives an increasing focus on student progression? Who benefits? How did we at Cork Institute of Technology set about taking up the challenge?



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Head, AnSEO:
The Student
Engagement Office,
and Head, Teaching
and Learning Unit,
Cork Institute of
Technology

Cork Institute of Technology continues to invest in improving student engagement, progression, and success. This cross-institute commitment is evidenced by the proactive establishment and resourcing of AnSEO: The Student Engagement Office. AnSEO actions this commitment through relationship-building, consultation, partnership, and collaboration across the entire student and staff community. We have placed both AnSEO and our Teaching and Learning Enhancement Unit side by side to maximise the synergies and to reflect our belief that the educational environment created by CIT, our actions and attitudes have a very substantial impact on student learning and engagement.

—Dr Barry O Connor, President, Cork Institute of Technology

Preamble

Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) has gained recognition both nationally and internationally for its leading work in student engagement, progression, and success. It hosted the European First Year Experience conference (EFYE) in June 2019, attracting over 400 delegates from 22 countries. After the conference it hosted Ireland's first National Think Tank on Student Success, in partnership with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

CIT has twice won the Student Engagement and Communications award at the Irish Education Awards, and AnSEO has been shortlisted as Outstanding First Year Champions by the International Centre for First-Year Experience and Transitions in the US and named as an exemplar in this space by the Higher Education Authority of Ireland (HEA).

What is student engagement?

At Cork Institute of Technology, we use Trowler and Trowler's 2011 definition of student engagement, reflecting both student and institutional responsibility: 'The investment of time, effort and other relevant resources by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes

and development of students, and the performance and reputation of the institution'. Expecting student engagement to happen of its own accord has been described as 'magical thinking' by Chang et al. (2005).

Why is CIT committed to enhancing student engagement, progression, and success?

- Our mission statement commits us to deliver on our ethical and moral responsibilities to help all students to succeed.
- Taking a proactive and purposeful approach to enhancing student engagement will improve student learning and outcomes, resulting in more confident and employable graduates.
- Student engagement can facilitate a more responsive institution, leading to better collaborative relationships. Engaging students as partners and co-creators creates real buy-in when leading change.
- With greater numbers and diversity of students in higher education, the probability of non-completion is increased. This is often at a huge personal cost to students and their families.
- Failure to engage students carries potential significant financial impact for the student, the higher education institution (HEI), the government, and the taxpayer.
- Student engagement is a matter of national and international attention, according to the Department of Education and Skills, the HEA, and QQI policy. There is increasing strategic focus on student success by the National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, the Irish Survey of Student Engagement, HEA Compacts, and NStEP (National Student Engagement Programme).
- In a globalised education setting, with increased competition for both home and international applicants, students rightly expect high-quality learning experiences in a multicultural campus.

So while student success does not happen by wishful thinking, we know that enhancing student engagement is good for both our students and our institute. We also know that student success is not always a straight line from first year to graduation. Students have complex lives. Sometimes their ability to progress may be hindered by situations outside our control. However, we can provide knowledgeable assistance to students to make prudent decisions when faced with challenges.

But how then do we move from 'knowing' to effective, intentional policies and action? What are the best thinkers on student engagement, progression, and success telling us, and how are we applying this research? At CIT we study the best international research through the lens of respected thinkers in the field.

Engaging students as partners and cocreators creates real buy-in when leading change.

John N. Gardner and Betsy Barefoot were among our keynotes at EFYE and active contributors to the National Think Tank on Student Success. They spoke with conviction of a whole-of-institute approach to student success, recognising that enhancing student engagement, progression, and success is our core mission as educators.

Effective HEIs 'foster learning by everyone on campus, recognising that faculty and staff must continually learn so that they can help students to learn.'

Vincent Tinto (2012) also speaks to the need for an institutional approach and effective action. He writes: 'Too often, institutes invest in a laundry list of actions, one disconnected from another. The result is an uncoordinated patchwork of actions whose sum impact on student retention (progression) is less than it could be or should be'. Tinto's 'Conditions for Student Success' are: expectations, support, assessment and feedback, and involvement.

These converge comfortably with the six core commitments espoused by Gardner and Barefoot that matter most in HEIs that are 'successfully navigating the challenges facing higher education':

1. Learning Matters

Effective HEIs 'foster learning by everyone on campus, recognising that faculty and staff must continually learn so that they can help students to learn' (Felten et al., 2016).

 At CIT we are actively developing AnSEO's activities alongside our Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU), with a view of maximising synergies and working in partnership with both students and colleagues to enhance learning and teaching.

2. Relationships Matter

All relationships count and are purposefully cultivated and nurtured. 'Strong institutions value strong relationships, and they do not leave these to chance' (Felten et al., 2016)

- At CIT, AnSEO and TLU have an enacted policy of working in partnership with academic faculties and departments, other central services, and students. For example, AnSEO funded and supported over forty department-led Transitions to CIT projects in 2018–19.
- AnSEO has an Academic Success Coaching programme for students.
 Here we develop a sense of purpose and agency that encourages
 students to connect and interact with staff and peers in ways that are
 beneficial to their academic progress.
- Our Teaching and Learning Unit established a staff mentoring project in 2015. Forty-three staff participated in a European Mentoring Coaching Council-accredited foundation certificate in coaching skills in 2018–19. All new lecturing colleagues are offered the opportunity to pair up with a trained induction mentor.

3. Expectations Matter

'Clear and high expectations are central to the value and impact of an institution,' write Felten et al. (2016). Student engagement and success do not happen by chance. We need to communicate explicitly what our expectations are and ensure our actions align accordingly.

 CIT's new academic plan, strategic development plan, and explicit commitment in HEA compacts set out a vision and commitment to

- the ongoing development of our CIT student experience, with student engagement, progression, and success at their core.
- Our investment in enhancing our academic induction programmes through Good Start (for students) and Tús Maith (for staff), Transitions to CIT projects, academic success coaching, and messaging campaigns show our continuing commitment to setting out clear expectations.

4. Alignment Matters

Felten et al. (2016) write, 'Thriving institutions transform silos into systems by supporting cross-unit coordination and by paying more attention to the student experience.' Collaboration is a key element and needs facilitation, encouragement, and support.

- CIT has a tradition of working collaboratively across functions, Recent programmes from AnSEO and TLU have benefitted from this culture. All academic departments and central student services collaborate with our initiatives.
- Fifteen new discipline-based Learning Communities were established in 2018–19. Twenty-four Teaching and Learning Development Projects were completed in 2018–19, led by academic department and central services colleagues.

5. Improvement Matters

'Excellent institutions critically assess student progress and their own effectiveness on specific, relevant measures, and use the results to help students deepen their learning and faculty and staff to make improvement in their programmes' (Felten et al., 2016).

- Our Students as Partners in Quality (sparg at CIT) programme enables our students to work with faculty teams to have meaningful discussions about issues of concern, with agreed action plans emerging.
- Our new Learning Communities enable groups of colleagues to identify and assess what matters most to them and to work together to improve these areas. It is envisaged that these communities will use sparq events to build student-staff partnership projects that will lead to co-created solutions.
- This evolving infrastructure enables cross-unit collaboration, contributes to stronger relationships, and involves everyone in the process of change-making.

6. Leadership Matters

According to Felten et al. (2016), 'In strong institutions, leaders at all levels share a sense of vision and purpose. [...] People throughout the organisation need to see themselves as part of the leadership team. This requires everyone to work together to nurture an institutional culture of inclusion, intentionality, and purpose.'

IRELAND'S YEARBOOK OF EDUCATION 2019-2020

 CIT has articulated ambitious goals as part of its HEA compact on student progression and success.

We are working with a clear understanding that student engagement, progression, and success are the business of everyone in our institute.

- CHAPTER 5 HIGHER EDUCATION
- We are working with a clear understanding that student engagement, progression, and success are the business of everyone in our institute, as described in our academic plan.
- We work to build cohesive, sustainable change by empowering staff and students to shape their teaching and learning experiences.
- CIT's continued resourcing and support of AnSEO and TLU activities gives voice to an explicit intention to follow some of the best thinking. as illustrated above.

Students have the most important role to play as engaged learners, and we want them to really recognise this. At the same time, we also seek to develop and support the critical role staff have to play in cultivating an effective partnership approach to student communications and engagement.

-Dr Áine Ní Shé.

Registrar and VP for Academic Affairs, Cork Institute of Technology

Risam Uile: Let us all achieve!

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You can't change what's in your students' bank account, but you can change what's in their emotional account."

- Eric Jensen

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Leading researchers from Dublin Institute of Advanced Science (DIAS) were joined by astronaut Chris Hadfield to witness the first ever image of a black hole being revealed. The momentous event took place in April 2019 at a European press conference which was screened live at DIAS to reveal the ground-breaking results from the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT).

Commander Chris Hadfield is pictured here with Professor Peter Gallagher, Head of DIAS Astrophysics. "The common facts of today are the products of yesterday's research."

Duncan MacDonald

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH IN 2019



2019 was a year of continuing change and evolution in Ireland's research and innovation ecosystem, and indeed in the Irish Research Council itself. This overview of the field describes some of the salient issues in Irish research today and in its relationship with the wider world.



Peter BrownDirector, Irish
Research Council

I am delighted to introduce once again the research chapter for this year's yearbook from Education Matters. It was a year of continuing change and evolution in the research and innovation ecosystem, and indeed in the Irish Research Council (IRC) itself. This article features just some of the salient issues in the ecosystem and in its relationship with the wider world.

Technological Universities

A milestone for the Irish higher education and research system early in the year was the commencement of Ireland's first technological university, TU Dublin, officially on 1 January 2019. In a statement to mark the occasion, Minister of State for Higher Education Mary Mitchell O'Connor TD said that it 'marks the start of a new era in Irish higher education':

New higher education institutions such as TU Dublin will be distinguished from traditional universities by an ethos that is more closely aligned with, and which builds upon, the mission and focus of Institutes of Technology from which they stem.

The emergence of TUs, and the associated consolidation of Institutes of Technology (IOTs), will give these institutions new opportunities to carve out a distinctive role in Ireland's research and innovation system, particularly at regional level. Across modern economies, including Ireland's, there is concern over regional inequities in economic and infrastructural development, and TUs will be on the front line of helping to ensure balanced growth across the country, as targeted by critical national blueprints such as *Project Ireland* 2040.

In his article in this chapter, Dr Niall Smith of Cork Institute of Technology discusses the potential for a unique type of institution in which a distributed campus can drive new ways of thinking and innovation in how a higher education institution (HEI) serves its stakeholders. The Council looks forward to supporting the development of excellent individual researchers in TUs in the years ahead.

Open research

In the arena of policy development, the launch of the National Open Research Forum (NORF) statement by Minister of State John Halligan TD was an important step forward. The IRC, Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), and the Health Research Board (HRB) are signatories to the statement. Dr Patricia Clarke of the HRB and co-chair of NORF writes in this chapter on the latest developments.

At national, European, and indeed global levels, there is determination to ensure that knowledge and data benefiting science and society, which is made possible by publicly funded research, should be available to all. This topic is an example of the valuable role the Irish Research Council, comprising senior researchers across all disciplines, can play in system-level policy developments. The perspective of all disciplines underpinned the Council's intensive engagement with the development of the statement.

There is, however, much work to be done to make open research a reality. The arts and humanities community in particular are rightly concerned that the evolution of open research take account of the different research outputs and practice that constitute the lifeblood of individual disciplines. All this points to the importance of the next phase of work: implementation. The Council looks forward to working with all stakeholders on next steps.

Interface between researchers and the political system

A topic of considerable interest to contributors to the Yearbook's research chapter this year is the interface between experts and the political system, and the broader 'crisis of expertise'. Dr Charles Larkin of the University of Bath and Prof. Maria Baghramian of UCD address these areas. The Irish Research Council, as an agency that serves to develop expertise across disciplines, is acutely concerned to ensure that Ireland's community of experts is actively used as a resource to inform policy, legislation, and evidence-based decision-making.

We support this in many ways, most directly through our successful Shadowing Scheme for Oireachtas members. Minister of State David Stanton, and Deputies Michael Harty, Hildegarde Naughton, and Jan O'Sullivan, are just some of the recent participants. Under the programme, an IRC-funded researcher shadows an Oireachtas member for a day; the researcher generally works in a field of interest to the Oireachtas member. In this way, the Oireachtas gains from the latest knowledge and evidence, while the researcher gains insight into the challenges and constraints facing legislators.

The Council also connects funded researchers with Ireland's MEPs, and we aim to have at least one such engagement each year. Further initiatives such as the #LoveIrishResearch campaign and support of RTE Brainstorm (see Jim Carroll's article in the Themes chapter) promote the wide dissemination of knowledge and expertise across all disciplines. Looking at the interface more broadly, Dr Larkin's article discusses the different challenges for the two groups: researchers in maintaining their ability to be objective honest brokers, policymakers in seeking to develop feasible policies that can be implemented.

Prof. Baghramian, also writing in this chapter, applies the discipline of philosophy to the urgent need to look at trust in expertise and its implications for integrating that expertise. With humanity facing existential

threats in the form of the climate emergency, expertise will be needed like never before, yet there is evidence of backlash. Prof. Baghramian's research project is an excellent example of IRC funding leading to European success. When Experts Disagree, focusing on peer disagreement, was funded by the Council under its New Horizons interdisciplinary research programme. This supported the development of a successful European consortium application to Horizon2020 focusing on the broader issue of trust and expertise – a project that will have important policy impact for the European Commission itself as a funder of research.

The value and use of data

Data is critical to research and evidence, and by implication policy, but we also face the challenge of ensuring that data is used for the good of humanity and supports broad societal progress. Data is transforming our lives and will continue to do so at an increasing pace, particularly with the application of artificial intelligence (AI).

Longitudinal data sets such as Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) present new opportunities to systematically evaluate the impact of policy and practice. In this chapter, Georgiana Mihut and Selina McCoy of the ESRI mine the GUI data to generate important new insights on students with special educational needs. The GUI is just one example of a rich inventory of data that will enable researchers in multiple disciplines to enhance the footprint of evidence in policymaking on children, youth, and education.

Data and research should always evolve to respond to new challenges and concerns. Workplace stress and burnout is one such challenge, and the 'always on' nature of the digital society heightens the risk. Staff in the education sector are exposed to these risks like in other workplaces, and face the added burden of supporting students who may themselves feel under severe pressure to perform in exams. Prof. Patricia Mannix McNamara and Niamh Hickey, both of the University of Limerick, examine this topic in more detail in their article on systemic stress in education.

In an entirely different way, data is an increasingly contested space as we enter the age of the digital society and as machines replace many tasks traditionally carried out by humans. Dr Jennifer Edmond of Trinity College Dublin explores what measures we should be taking to enhance the positive contributions of AI to the digital society and to minimise the risks.

Excellence across all disciplines

A key action of *Innovation*2020 was to establish a new stream of funding for frontier basic research, identified as a critical need for the ecosystem for all disciplines and career stages. This responsibility found a natural home in the Irish Research Council, given its mandate, and the game-changing Laureate Awards were instigated. I reported in last year's *Yearbook* that the Laureate Advanced grant call was in process, and in 2019 the Council was pleased to announce the outcome of this call.

Twelve major awards for world-class research were made at the Advanced career stage, across life sciences, physical sciences and engineering, and the humanities. Across the two Laureate calls, the total investment in leading

knowledge and researchers by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) through this programme is €30m. The Council is very confident that this scheme will more than recoup its cost by enhancing Ireland's success in European research funding programmes, in particular the European Research Council (ERC). Indeed, we are already seeing early success for Laureate awardees in the ERC.

The benefits of investing in frontier basic research go well beyond leveraging other grants. The frontier research of today will drive the innovations, technologies, and social progress of tomorrow. The Irish Research Council is acutely aware that government investment to future-proof Ireland – which the Laureate Awards undoubtedly are – competes with priorities seen as more immediate. The Council will continue to work with the DES and other stakeholders to embed the awards as a core annual feature of the research funding landscape.

Developments in gender equality

Although the digital society will transform entrepreneurship and is generating many new opportunities for start-ups, a gender-based 'digital divide' limits the scope for all potential innovators in society to benefit. Dr Maura McAdam of Dublin City University addresses this important topic in her article.

It would be unusual for a year to go by without developments of note in relation to gender equality, given the urgency to continue progress in this area in higher education and research. In June 2019, the Irish Research Council welcomed the launch by Minister Mitchell O'Connor of the Senior Leadership Academic Initiative (SALI). This will award funding for up to 45 new and additional senior permanent posts across Ireland over a three-year period, and is aimed at supporting institutions to take positive action to accelerate and achieve their gender equality and diversity goals and objectives.

From a Council perspective, there were three other developments of note in relation to gender and research in 2019. Firstly, in March, the Council was delighted to announce the outcome of the Horizon2020 ERA-NET Gender-Net Plus,¹ of which the Council is a member and co-funder. Seven international consortium projects included Irish principal investigators (PIs) drawn from three institutions. The outcome for Ireland was enhanced by a funding partnership with the HRB, to which we are most grateful. We were particularly pleased to be able to organise a showcase event for the Irish PIs, who presented details of their projects to Minister Mitchell O'Connor.

Secondly, the Council developed a new partnership on gender with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI). A new postgraduate scholarship in the area of Women in Leadership, funded by the DBEI through the Council's Employment-based Postgraduate Programme, was announced in November 2019. Thirdly, the Council instigated a process to review its own gender strategy and action plan, which ends in 2020. The review will assess progress to date and identify important themes for consideration in developing our next gender strategy and action plan.

Partnership, nationally and internationally

Partnership with agencies at home and abroad has continued to be core to the Council's activities in 2019. New and exciting partnerships are opening up on existing core programmes, as well as bespoke initiatives with international peers. COALESCE (Collaborative Alliances for Science Challenges), launched in 2018, is a partnership-driven programme designed to address national challenges (Ireland 2040) and the global context (Sustainable Development Goals).

Investment of almost €5m in research arising from the first COALESCE call was announced in March 2019 at a special event attended by Ciaran Cannon TD, Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). A strategic funding partnership between DFAT and the Council was signed at the launch event, and further DFAT-funded projects will be announced in the first quarter of 2020 following the second COALESCE call. The Council is working with other government agencies and departments in respect of COALESCE, and also on our postgraduate and postdoctoral schemes. New partners this year include DBEI, the Department of Rural and Community Development, Met Éireann, and Creative Ireland.

Internationally, the Council is guided by its International Engagement Strategy 2018–2021. Following the inaugural UK–Ireland research funders forum meeting in late 2018, jointly founded by IRC, SFI, and UK Research and Innovation, the Council is working on two new UK–Ireland research collaboration initiatives, in digital humanities and the economic/social sciences. It will soon launch a research networking initiative in partnership with FAPESP, the research funding council in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. Other examples include a new partnership with the European Southern Observatory, which follows Ireland's accession to the organisation as a member.

Looking forward

Strategy will be a dominant theme next year, both for the Irish Research Council and nationally. The Council will launch a new strategy in early 2020, designed to maximise delivery of our mandate, demonstrate the value and full impact of the research we fund, and make a valuable contribution to the ecosystem and its further development. Government work will get under way to develop a new national strategy for science and research, to succeed Innovation2020. The mid-term review of Innovation2020 identifies a number of key themes for consideration. The Council looks forward to working with stakeholders and helping to shape the next phase of developing Ireland's research and innovation system.

The Irish Research Council is pleased to be associated with Education Matters' Yearbook of Education again this year. The yearbook team are to be congratulated on bringing together a diverse range of topics across the entire spectrum of education and research which will inform, engage, and challenge a wide audience. The research chapter captures just some of the topical issues of the day, and I would like to thank each of the authors for their contributions.

ENDNOTES

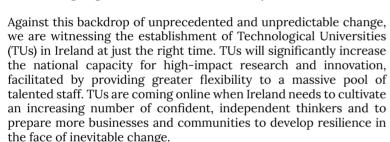
 GENDER-NET Plus has received funding from the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 741874.

RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND THE TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY:

A focus on the Munster regions

Against a backdrop of unprecedented and unpredictable social change, Technological Universities (TU) are being established in Ireland at just the right time. This article looks at the role they will play in innovation and research, with particular focus on Munster Technological University (MTU).

We live in a time of unprecedented social change. The fourth industrial revolution promises to redefine how we live and work. Climate change is already evident, and its accelerating impact is likely to be the single biggest driver of human behaviour for the next fifty years or more, necessitating novel adaptation and mitigation strategies that will affect us all. The complexity of what we face will demand ongoing evolution of our education systems.



The need has never been so pressing to develop innovation-driven TUs, some of which are naturally embedded in both rural and urban communities, and all of which are naturally inculcated with an ethos of external engagement. The spatially distributed nature of TUs, derived from Institute of Technology (IoT) campuses that currently do not act together in an optimally coordinated way, can play a crucial role in ensuring that sectors of our society are not left behind when technologies like artificial intelligence, and realities like global warming, challenge us like never before.

Unique regions

As required by legislation, at least two IoTs must merge to be eligible to form a single-entity TU. The merging of two or more legally independent IoTs will always entail difficulties, none of which can be treated lightly, and it is inevitable that during any merger these challenges will take up a lot of the discussion time. In the long term, however, TUs will be populated by staff and students who have never known them to be anything else.

A key question for today is whether it makes sense to establish a given TU by merging a particular combination of IoTs. Not all TUs will be



Niall SmithCork Institute of Technology

identical. Indeed, they shouldn't be. The imperative for their establishment comes from their enhanced capacity to respond to the unique situations facing them in the primary region they serve. Even a country as small as Ireland will benefit most if there is diversity among TUs rather than uniformity, and certainly not if we simply require them to be 'different' from traditional universities.

In the domain of Irish research and innovation, there is less room for meaningful differentiation between TUs or IoTs and universities than in many other European countries – if only because, for some time now, the funding model in Ireland has required all higher education institutions (HEIs) to include industry in almost all applications in almost all disciplines. The opportunity to engage in truly curiosity-driven research is limited at present, so all HEIs have focused significantly on research that is more applied or mission–focused.

This is in contradiction to the oft-quoted simplistic model of TUs which might be summarised as 'closer to industry'. Within the legislative constraints, TUs can implement strategies that 'characterise' rather than 'differentiate' them. Defining those characteristics, taking account of each TU's spatial and socioeconomic realities, presents great opportunities for TUs to excel.

We are witnessing the establishment of Technological Universities (TUs) in Ireland at just the right time.

In the case of Munster Technological University (MTU), the merging institutions are Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and IT Tralee (ITT). The two are physically separated by almost two hours of driving, with one located in a large urban centre and one in a rural neighbourhood. On the face of it, their merging could be seen as a marriage of convenience born of the necessity to meet criteria set down in legislation. Delve deeper and the MTU merging can be seen as an exciting opportunity to take advantage of the nexus between an urban location and a rural one.

The proposed MTU campuses cross socio-economic boundaries highlighted in major government strategies such as Project Ireland 2040: The National Planning Framework. This document includes two chapters on 'making stronger urban places' and 'planning for diverse rural places'. It recognises that a balanced spatial strategy is better for both the local and national economy, and by extension for Irish society. With its geographically displaced campuses, MTU is naturally constituted to address many of the diverse economic and societal issues of the south and west region in a coherent, systemic approach that is only possible when distributed campuses are part of the one entity.

Realising the research and innovation potential

We can expect that taking full advantage of system coherence in MTU will take time, being also cognisant that time is not a luxury that the education system in Ireland has in any abundance. The world is changing rapidly, and the levels of investment in research and innovation, and education in general, are growing faster elsewhere than here. If MTU is to make the sort of impact that comes from having distributed campuses, then issues such as physical infrastructure, flexible academic contracts, equal treatment

of researchers (e.g., in respect of pensions), and an appropriate research funding model will need to be addressed urgently at government level.

To assume that redesignation as a TU will immediately and significantly improve capacity to win competitive funding would be unwise, even foolhardy. If research and innovation are to grow in line with that envisaged in the TU legislation, then internally moderated excellence must be continuously fostered, and external investment will be crucial. MTU may not immediately join the race towards achieving a high global university ranking, but in any case it is debateable whether university rankings should be a priority for Ireland when investment in TUs may show a better return on the State's investment.

So how can research and innovation in MTU best support the region that we serve in the south and west? Fortunately, as we have been engaged in research and innovation for many years, we have already well-defined thematic research areas, such as ICT, Lifesciences and Wellbeing, and Photonics, among others. We have built lasting relationships with companies and local authorities, implemented a quality-assured postgraduate research programme, and developed a career framework for our researchers, among other achievements.

Our focus on excellence in areas aligned to National Research Priorities, where we have the institutional capacity to be successful and where investing from limited own-funds generates a measurable payback, has helped us to ensure strong outcomes. For example, data from Knowledge Transfer Ireland's Review and Annual Transfer Knowledge Survey (2018) shows that CIT and IT Tralee researchers are class-leading in terms of return on investment, consistently generating intellectual property and completing contracts with industry at a rate above the national average, often significantly so.

Researchers' publications in CIT over the past five years have been cited 1.9 times more frequently than the global average, according to the Scopus database, while our success rate in Horizon 2020 is currently the third-highest in the country and higher than any of the traditional universities, according to EU Commission statistics. These independent yardsticks of performance give us confidence in our future growth, based as it is on a strength-and-need analysis.

The spatially distributed nature of TUs can play a crucial role in ensuring that sectors of our society are not left behind.

New opportunities

Perceived opportunities for one community may be a threat for another. In MTU, we recognise that solutions which work in an urban setting may not be what's required in a rural one, and vice versa. Almost 40% of people in Ireland live in rural communities (a similar figure applies across Europe). Planning for future MTU research and innovation necessarily involves taking advantage of having campuses embedded in rural and urban environments. New ideas can be developed 'in the lab' and then trialled in rural or urban communities, as appropriate, and extended across Ireland and beyond.

The spatial separation of Cork and Tralee naturally empowers us to be advocates for balanced policy development. Despite the challenges that such spatial separation brings on many fronts, MTU researchers will find themselves in the heart of small and large communities, with the opportunity to learn from end-user feedback and to hone solutions by employing an iterative real-world approach.

Not all TUs will be identical. Indeed, they shouldn't be.

Given the uncertainties arising from the coming age of globally disruptive change, MTU research must occupy the full continuum from fundamental (curiosity-driven) research, to applied research (at the cutting edge of complexity in many instances), to commercialisation, including incubation. The effort expended will not be evenly distributed in each category, and MTU research must be structurally agile to continue to have impact.

Nowhere will this be more important than in developing the next generation of talented individuals capable of thought leadership in business and community affairs. The TU legislation target to have 7% of the research student population engaged in research at master's or PhD within ten years of designation poses the most substantial challenge from a funding perspective, but it also underlines how legislators appreciate the critical role that leadership talent development will play in all our futures. That's a challenge we look forward to excelling at.

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At the Irish Research Council Awards on 4 Dec 2019, NUIG Professor Laoise McNamara was named 'Researcher of the Year' for her work in bone mechanobiology and osteoporosis. She was presented with her award by President of Ireland Michael D Higgins.

HOW TO MAKE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WORK FOR THE GOOD OF HUMANITY

Increasingly, we see examples of advanced technologies deemed to be out of step with social norms and requirements such as privacy, transparency, accountability. 2019 saw the State rebuked for the misuse of data via the Public Services Card, Facebook removing 'coordinated inauthentic behaviour' from its site, and Amazon discontinuing use of a recruiting tool found to be biased towards male candidates. This article outlines measures that should be taken to minimise risks and enhance the positive contribution of AI to the digital society.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence applications promise to be some of the most powerful knowledge technologies ever developed, supplementing and shaping how we develop our understanding of the world, as they will not only supplement human capacities but in many cases outstrip them. Given the potentially very sharp double edge on this sword, what measures should we be taking to minimise any risks and enhance Al's positive contributions to the digital society?



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What is a 'digital society'?

The vision behind the term 'digital society' is that digital technologies maximally support the functions of society to govern, educate, heal, connect, and protect its members. Ireland launched its first National Digital Strategy in 2013 (Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, 2013), with the goal to be 'a foundation step in helping Ireland to reap the full rewards of a digitally enabled society'. To read this optimistic document now is to be reminded of how far our awareness has come of the potential effects of technology on our societies and our lives since that time, when the greatest concern seemed to be that Ireland might miss the wave of prosperity that 'doing more with digital' could bring us.

A public consultation to revise the strategy and extend it beyond phase one status was launched in October 2018. Over 300 responses were received, as yet unpublished, and in May 2019 the Taoiseach confirmed that the new strategy is under development, overseen by an interdepartmental committee. In July 2018, the government released a report in partnership with the Microsoft Applied Innovation Team and the Fletcher School at Tufts University. Entitled 'Enabling Digital Ireland' (Office of the Chief Information Officer, Dept. of Public Expenditure and Reform, and Microsoft Ireland, 2018), it portrays the role of digital in improving society very differently from the 2013 document, positioning itself far more as an e-government strategy than a comprehensive digital society agenda.

We can see similar trends at European level, with widely varied digital society visions and policies being underpinned by sweeping narratives of progress through technological adoption. But in spite of lofty rhetoric in reports such as 2019's 'Digital Europe' on how the digital transformation touches 'every aspect of our lives' (European Commission, n.d.) the only perspectives really represented in this

technological imperative makes reference to and seems to assume a basis in an underlying social good, but this is far from proven. Whether we take a narrow or a broad perspective on how technology should support society makes a big difference to how we view the best modes for introducing new technologies like AL Defining social problems.

case are those of software developers and researchers, according to which

we have not 'collectively invested enough in the latest technologies'. The

whether we take a narrow or a broad perspective on how technology should support society makes a big difference to how we view the best modes for introducing new technologies like AI. Defining social problems as engineering challenges can often lead to blind spots and unconscious biases entering the system. Similarly, if we view the digital society too narrowly and optimise only one aspect of it, like efficiency of services, other necessary aspects, like privacy, can be quickly and gravely compromised.

What do we mean by AI?

Even before we had computers, we had data and statistics. Ledger books tracking trade flows and legal transactions can be found as far back as the material record takes us, and using mathematical and operational models to track such flows is an innovation of the second industrial revolution, not the fourth. Yet the difference in scale, speed, and complexity of the models and the material they are trained on makes the current moment and the potential it holds seem a difference in kind, not just degree.

AI has a variety of meanings, representing both software systems and the scientific disciplines that create them. The European Commission's High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence therefore began its work by defining its object of study:

Artificial intelligence (AI) systems are software (and possibly also hardware) systems designed by humans that, given a complex goal, act in the physical or digital dimension by perceiving their environment through data acquisition, interpreting the collected structured or unstructured data, reasoning on the knowledge, or processing the information, derived from this data and deciding the best action(s) to take to achieve the given goal. ... As a scientific discipline, AI includes several approaches and techniques, such as machine learning (of which deep learning and reinforcement learning are specific examples), machine reasoning (which includes planning, scheduling, knowledge representation and reasoning, search, and optimization), and robotics. (HLEG on AI, 2019a)

These definitions remind us of the breadth of activities included under AI. They also remind us of how different AI as we now know it is from how science fiction has taught us to imagine it. From the uncanny animated mechanical dolls found in nineteenth-century literature, to the modern-day disembodied AIs such as Samantha (from the 2013 film Her), our imaginations tend to start from the human and add or subtract attributes to imagine the machine.

This tendency encourages us to think in terms of what is called general (or strong) AI rather than narrow (or weak) AI. In spite of the amazing progress made in developing software that can achieve human-like, even superhuman, results in such human activities as playing chess or Go, general AI is still very much in the future. In spite of what it may seem like a computer can do, even the most human-like communication abilities of

software like Google's Duplex project are narrow in their application (in this case making restaurant or salon reservations convincingly).

To understand the potential of AI for both good and ill, therefore, we must divest ourselves of the robots and sentient software of our imagination, and focus instead on the idea of systems that can perceive or sense, reason, learn, and or make decisions, and finally invoke an action based upon these processes. No doubt this is an exceptionally powerful set of capacities, but it falls far short of true human flexibility and capability. The responsibility remains with us humans to decide how we might create and use software agents with these capabilities as a positive supplement to existing human social interactions and processes.

Trustworthy AI

Recognising the potentially broad, but not necessarily always positive, impact of AI on society, the Expert Group mentioned above also developed Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (HLEG on AI, 2019b). The guidelines call for AI to be lawful, ethical, and robust, but they also put forward seven key requirements that AI systems should meet in order to be deemed trustworthy. These stand as a reminder of exactly how AI implementation might go wrong, calling for:

- · proper oversight
- · safe, secure and resilient systems
- data governance;
- transparency and explainability
- an avoidance of unfair bias
- societal and environmental well-being
- · an assurance of responsibility and accountability.

The modelling of social processes that lies at the heart of the actions that AI will effect is always based on an incomplete view of the complexity of human motivations and interactions. As the saying goes, all models are wrong, but some models are useful. How will we know the difference, or at least the limits?

Why the digital society needs the humanities more than ever

Most pressingly, as these technologies become ever more mature and widespread, how will we know what social processes we can and cannot turn over to systems based on AI? Already we have seen the kinds of human costs paid from this impetus. Uber drivers report that their management by machines is detrimental to their sense of job satisfaction and well-being (Möhlmann and Henfridsson, 2019). Others have been denied job interviews, insurance, and even parole based in part on the conclusions of software algorithms that may have been inappropriately biased against them (O'Neil, 2016).

Although there are clauses in the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that give EU citizens the right to know the basis for any algorithm-based decisions made against them, there may be as much reason for concern about advanced knowledge technologies that work well as about those that result in obvious unintended negative consequences. The mass adoption of social media platforms, for example, speaks volumes about how well they respond to the social and psychological requirements of their many users. But they have also become agents through which our capacity for tolerating different viewpoints has been diminished, where the spread of hate speech and purposeful disinformation has been facilitated to the detriment of democracy, and such fundamentally human resources as our attention and our privacy have become monetised and sold, largely without our awareness or any real form of consent.

The arts and humanities, with their traditions of critical thinking, cross-cultural understanding, emphasis on knowledge creation via empathy, and approach to challenging ethical and moral questions, develop many of the skills we will need to ensure that advanced technologies such as those based on AI are adopted in ways that support social justice and community cohesion. In addition, these disciplines deal with complex human problems that are not reducible to discrete parts or controlled experiments.

In this case, AI will increase rather than decrease the requirement for problem-solving, as even the engineers building this software may not understand all the nuances of the mechanisms by which the machine-learning processes reach the conclusions they do. The competence to weigh evidence and reject easy conclusions will be an ever more essential counterweight to foreign governments and companies that may want to unleash (or not see the harm in unleashing) software that disrupts public discourse and democratic processes.

The future will require us to grow the number of citizens who understand the workings and limitations of the AI that will inevitably come to underpin our social processes. Indeed, the Finnish government's release of a free and open online course (University of Helsinki and Reaktor, n.d.) that explains, in simple and straightforward language, the underlying techniques and assumptions of AI is an inspiring example of how this awareness might be delivered.

But more than anything else, Al's capacity to make social processes reliant upon technological black boxes will require societies to make a commitment to shared values and goals before these systems are deployed. This very analogue process of explicit dialogue, education, and perhaps even active resistance to the worst inclinations of a profit-driven system will be one of the most important enablers for the digital society.

Treat pharmaka like pharmaceuticals?

Making citizens aware of how AI may be shaping their social and individual lives, and empowering them to engage wisely with it, is one way in which the promise of the digital society can be assured. This cannot be the only way, however. Placing responsibility for the unintended consequences of a profitable industry on the consumers of that industry's products is at best naïve and at worst a convenient and egregious form of victim-shaming. Technologies that are destined to become part of our digital society must therefore also be regulated from the top down, just as users are educated from the bottom up.

If we are looking for models by which to structure an approach to regulating knowledge technologies based on big data and AI, there is perhaps no better place to look for inspiration than another industry that revolves around things that can heal or harm: pharmaceuticals.

First of all, drugs, like technology, emerge from a sophisticated research pipeline, but still need to be rigorously tested to tease out any possible unintended consequences or side effects of their widespread use before they can be sold. Even after being approved, their use may be subject to restrictions, and they will probably not be available without the case-by-case approval of a medical professional, the cornerstone of whose education is an oath to 'first, do no harm'. These professionals are also required to abide by a professional code of conduct to maintain their right to practise and to put the health of their patients above personal profit motives.

While the regulatory system for pharmaceuticals is by no means perfect, it provides a set of possibilities to consider for how other research outputs might be meaningfully regulated. In the final analysis, to know how best to deploy AI and the data that feeds it for the good of the digital society will require governments, communities, and individuals alike to consider carefully what they want their lives and communities to look like. The hardest part of building AI will most certainly be creating a consensus about what we want it to do.

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OPEN RESEARCH

Innovating in the Public Sector



This article explores the recently published National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment, the process behind its preparation, and the move to implementation. It argues that ultimately, open research requires system thinking and a change in research culture and behaviour, including the need for alliances across departments, sectors, and communities.



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In Europe and beyond, there is growing recognition of the value of open research and the need for a forward-looking view to shape and prepare for the future. The environment in which research is performed and how knowledge is shared are changing fast. There are significant efforts to re-engineer research publishing for a modern, digital era and to enable better use and re-use of research data. In parallel, the criteria for assessing funding decisions and career progression must also change. The transition to greater transparency and openness has a key objective of enhancing and supporting research excellence, research integrity, and public trust in research.

In July 2019 the Irish government published the National Framework on the Transition to an Open Research Environment. ^{1,2}The Framework recognises the importance of coordinating at national level to better support research and researchers in this changing environment. It focuses on the key areas of open access (OA) to publications, enabling FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) research data, underpinning infrastructures for access to and preservation of research, development of skills and competencies, and changing incentives and rewards to adjust the research evaluation system.

The Framework combines two years of activities under the National Open Research Forum (NORF), where diverse working groups joined up the conversations from a myriad of 'open' agendas happening at local, national, EU, and international levels. Emerging from an earlier committee on open access to publications, and responding to EU policies³ and multinational initiatives,⁴ the NORF provided a space to think about and design how the Irish research system should work in the future.

The Forum is co-chaired by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Health Research Board (HRB), with secretariat from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) and support from the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Importantly, its members combine the expertise of representatives from policy, research funding, research performing, library sector, and other key stakeholders in the research system across Ireland.

The National Framework articulates a common understanding from different perspectives, and major efforts were made to include all voices. The final document was shaped by a public consultation involving twenty-seven organisations or institutions, and by a national meeting of over 150 stakeholders co-hosted with the Royal Irish Academy to consider the impact of Plan S.⁵ It coordinated with the strategic review of the Irish Research eLibrary (IReL)⁶ and the National Working Group on Bibliometric Tools and Resources.⁷ The National Library of Ireland (NLI) and the Research Data Alliance (RDA Ireland) hosted a workshop with international speakers on open research data.⁸ A joint meeting of the NORF and the National Research Integrity Forum (NRIF) discussed the linked agendas of integrity

and openness, essentially two sides of the same coin, and their contribution to the overall Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) agenda.⁹

Regular updates and presentations were given to the Innovation 2020 Implementation Group meetings, the body responsible for national research strategy. Finally, before the Dáil rose for its summer 2019 holidays, Minister Halligan formally launched the National Framework and welcomed continued collaboration for its implementation.

The National Open Research Forum provided a space to think about and design how the Irish research system should work in the future.

What has emerged is an ambitious but achievable agenda for implementation. Noticeable are the more mature clauses under open access to publications where there were existing national coordination efforts. Some of the main elements are:

- clearer and cleaner routes to open access publications, including the use of newer open publishing platforms¹¹
- recognising the role of international repositories such as Europe PMC¹²
- commitment to develop national measurement of OA publication practices
- moving towards 'no embargoes' for OA publications
- clarity on the national approach regarding support for payment of article processing charges (APCs) to hybrid journals
- embracing the FAIR data principles¹³ and the use of research data management plans
- commitment nationally to look at underpinning infrastructure needs, such as global persistent identifiers and better use of metadata
- national consideration of skills and training needs for open research at all career levels
- national conversation on infrastructure needs (rather than institution by institution), especially for research data
- system-wide lens for 'responsible metrics', shifting from reliance on journal impact factor, in line with the Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA)¹⁴
- consideration of system approach for rewards and incentives
- funders requirement for OA at both grant evaluation stage and contracts stage in the funding process.

The National Framework is but a first step towards creating a national action plan. It is built on a genuine willingness to adapt and to do things differently, and it enshrines the belief that no one should be left behind. The multi-annual planning will engage with researchers at every research

career stage and representing all disciplines; it commits to respect, engage with, and support the research community in the broadest sense, and to address disciplinary, professional, national, and global concerns in the area of research. Agreement on a common direction acknowledges that some funders and research-performing institutions may have specific requirements relating to open research which should also be observed.

Implementing public sector reform

Ultimately, open research requires system thinking and a change in research culture and behaviour. The conditions required for implementation need to be cultivated. NORF membership is now being refreshed to focus on agreeing 'concrete actions, allocation of responsibilities, and associated financial planning'.

On a grand scale we are looking at public sector reform. It may be helpful to consider an 'innovation curve' that illustrates the process from exploration

of opportunities and challenges, through delivery and implementation, to system change. This reflects the different kinds of support needed for growth at each stage, and is being used to good effect by the Goal Programme for Public Service Reform and Innovation. Is It has been championed by NESTA UK (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) and the Young Foundation under its social innovator series. In the series of the series of

What has emerged is an ambitious but achievable agenda.

Successful reform has been shown here to need good levels of trust and mutual respect, a strong sense of collective responsibility, and data and evidence to benchmark and measure transformation and to adjust or stop practices that are not working. While accountability may sit with one department or agency, the solution more often sits with a broader group.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedication of my NORF colleagues in delivering what has been great progress on open research in Ireland to date. Renewed efforts are now needed to assess the readiness of our infrastructure, working processes, and capacity to help open practices to grow and thrive.

We are moving beyond the individual areas of open research to understand the complex relationships between them and the underpinning regulatory and legal environment. The demand for alliances across departments, sectors, and communities – from the top down and from the bottom up – to deliver open research lends itself to a distributed leadership model, one that can better influence culture.

A long journey awaits.

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FRIENDSHIP AT THE INTERFACE OF RESEARCH AND POLICYMAKING

Finding a common language



At the interface of research and policymaking, researchers must maintain their ability to be objective, honest brokers, while policymakers must devise feasible policies based on the evidence and analysis they receive. This article, by examining the avenues of research entering the policymaking conversation, shows how the relationship can be deepened for the benefit of both parties.



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How can policymakers and academics be friends? The major challenge for researchers is to maintain their ability to be objective, honest brokers, whereas policymakers need to have feasible policies that can be implemented.

Academic training develops powerful analytical tools that enable a researcher to interrogate questions, break them down, hypothesise and then test them with data. The power of the scientific method is clear to everyone, but it takes a special talent to move its outcomes into practical application. Researchers in certain disciplines are used to this in the context of product development, where research outcomes are made manifest in safe, regulation-compliant, cost-effective products.

Policymaking is more difficult in many ways. While analysis is an essential component, it requires synthesis to achieve outcomes. Policymakers tend to take the principle of the 'art of the possible' as their foundation. What can be achieved within the context of law, fiscal resources, personnel, economic pressures, international conditions, and public opinion feeds into the matrix of variables to deliver policies. The volume of information involved is often difficult to absorb, and the challenge is to separate signal from noise while maintaining effective control over all these external and internal factors.

Policymakers are not immune to ideas, as many academics may assume, but few high-minded principles beyond EU-defined fiscal probity survive the minister's first time to 'meet the MAC'.¹ Few ministers can maintain a strategic vision when faced with the challenges of leading a government department, especially a large 'spending department'.

Policymakers often make compromises between these factors to achieve timely outcomes. Sometimes this results in dramatic failures of delivery or, at worst, constitutional challenges. The price of failure for the policymaker can be high: typically the loss of a ministerial portfolio, a shift from government to opposition, or ultimately the loss of a seat in parliament. Civil servants have a different experience, but a well-manicured public-sector career includes few policy blunders.

The academic labour market and rewards system is closed, with few avenues to the policymaking community. Its preferences militate against responding to the question of 'What's your policy?'. The political system needs an 'ask', a 'policy', or, put simply, a statement of what should be done and ultimately what can be done to achieve a real outcome. Ministers find the 'five years and five billion' response off-putting, since it is beyond their realm of the possible. While long-term programmes are sometimes feasible, most policymakers seek solutions where progress, even if incremental, can be seen and understood by the electorate and the civil and public service.

Essential elements of policy reform and management are lost on many researchers, as their recommendations rarely incorporate the necessary components. Policy change must have a specific purpose, must be systemic such that all levels of the organisation have to engage and understand, must have clearly explainable benefits to allow for involvement, ownership, and empowerment, and must be built upon reciprocity between the principal and the agent.

In the UK, work has begun on ensuring that academics and policymakers can be more effective in their engagement, with mutually beneficial outcomes. It is being undertaken by the Universities Policy Engagement Network, Civil Service Learning, the House of Commons Library, and longstanding research engagement units such as the University of Cambridge Centre for Science and Policy, and the Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex. A slow process, it has taken years of analysis and programme development to achieve the current levels of engagement. Usefully, Ireland, as a second mover in the space, can incorporate these lessons into an impact and engagement system and achieve the quick wins sought by policymakers and higher-education management.

One of the most effective methods used to bridge this divide is the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)² Fellowship programme. This allows recent PhD graduates and postdoctoral fellows to work for a year in Congress or an executive branch agency or department. The programme is operated by the AAAS, but the posts are paid for by the host body. Host bodies compete for fellows, as they bring cutting-edge research to Washington and a willingness to learn how to translate that into practical policy decisions. (Even funding agencies like the National Science Foundation compete for these fellows.)

The challenge is to separate signal from noise while maintaining effective control over all these external and internal factors.

Alumni of the programme typically go on to successful careers outside academia; some even return to academic life having learned important lessons. All act as ambassadors for science in society. It is a powerful tool that the scientific community, the political system, and the civil service have all come to value. Such a programme would be useful to develop in Ireland.

In Ireland the political system has been slow to develop more active engagement with research. Longstanding learned bodies had a more elite model of engagement. Some, such as the Social and Statistical Society of Ireland, had origins in addressing the policy challenges of the Great Famine of 1845–1849 but had limited encounters with the political system, though it

greatly influenced civil servants, such as Department of Finance secretary general T.K. Whitaker in the 1950s.

Most policymakers seek solutions where progress, even if incremental, can be seen and understood.

A more general move towards evidence-based and evidence-informed policy has taken place since the late 1990s. This reflected a wider movement globally towards what is termed 'new public sector management', which places a high preference on the collection and application of performance indicators to the public service. The importance of this in areas such as large capital project appraisal by cost-benefit analysis was hardwired into the decision-making process of government departments as a result of the European Commission. In other

spending departments this interest in data and analysis arrived later. In many cases, evidence-based policy had to give way to evidence-informed policy as data, methods, idiosyncratic conditions, and exogenous factors necessitated an iterative and humbler approach to research-engaged policymaking.

The Oireachtas has three main avenues of research entering the policymaking conversation: Committees, information sessions, and the research units of the Oireachtas.

1. The Oireachtas Committee system:

These bodies rely on expert evidence from individuals, organisations, and government departments and agencies. Many of these experts are academics, presenting their research findings and subject knowledge to the committees. Certain government agencies, lobby groups, and Section 39 bodies (i.e., independent of the state but reliant on Exchequer funding and heavily regulated) are closely aligned to researchers and rely on academics to present their research or lend their expertise, thus adding credibility to their claims and requests. Academics still maintain their independence and objectivity but are being led to policy recommendations in light of their research findings.

The testimony and supporting documentation that academic researchers provide can be comprehensive, sometimes including published academic work; in other contexts, researchers act as providers of annotated literature reviews, contextualising international research to Irish idiosyncrasies or providing updates and explanations of ongoing research. This often results in a lack of clarity on potential policy solutions or the presentation of solutions that do not acknowledge exogenous limitations in terms of time, finances, personnel, and law. Final reports of the committees are drafted by the clerk with their research team. Committee researchers support the committee by providing summaries and briefing notes for especially complex sessions, and help draft the final report that will be published by the committee.

2. Information sessions:

Various information sessions are held by different interest groups and hosted by different members of the Oireachtas. These sessions, commonly held in the Audiovisual Room of the Oireachtas, highlight topics of interest to members of the Oireachtas. Sometimes presentations are associated with private members' motions or bills, which are legislative actions designed to highlight topics to government where there is a desire for policy action, even if it is not a priority of a government department. Recently, the status and progress of these bills has become a matter of academic interest due to the role of the 'money message' in their progression through the Oireachtas.³

Academics who engage in such briefings, again, are led there on the grounds of their research findings. Members and their staff attend these meetings and ask questions of the academics present. While these may not have an immediate and direct effect, information sessions are valued by members and may trigger future Parliamentary Questions, Topical Issues, Leaders' Questions, Seanad Adjournment debate, or Seanad Order of Business queries, placing the matter on the record of the Dáil or Seanad.

3. Research units of the Oireachtas:

The final method is the secondary use of research outputs to inform members via the Oireachtas Library and Research Service (LRS). The LRS is the research arm of the Oireachtas and is made up of civil servants with expertise in various areas of research. These researchers tend to be in the humanities, social sciences, and law, but efforts are afoot to expand the expertise to include more researchers from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The Oireachtas Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) is a new unit designed to provide greater oversight to the budgetary process and follows an OECD review in 2016.4 PBO staff are also civil servants and do independent research into general economic conditions, taxation and social-benefit effects, demographics, and dynamic stochastic general equilibrium (DSGE) macroeconomic models.

In Ireland, academics and their institutional senior management do not fully appreciate how much impact they already have on policymaking.

These two units avail of a large pool of academic outputs produced by the Irish research community and then cite them in their Bills Digests, PMB (Private Members' Bill) Briefing Papers, LRS Notes, Spotlights, and North/South Inter-Parliamentary Assembly Briefing Papers. The PBO has a series of briefing papers, quarterly economic commentaries, infographics, and budgetary monitoring notes.

At present, the lack of digital object identifiers (DOI) makes it difficult for academics and higher-education institutions to track their impact on the policy process via online metrics (e.g., Altmetric.com). The Oireachtas communications strategy causes some delays, as DOIs are not used and there is a significant delay in the publication of research materials, typically until after the legislation has been debated.

The UK House of Commons Library takes a different approach, with realtime publication of materials; accessible committee microsites presenting submissions, testimony, and supporting materials; and effective use of social media. These empirical tracking techniques are useful but not the entire aspect of impact. Work on the qualitative aspects of academic researcher engagement with policymakers is currently being completed by the Inter-Parliamentary Research and Information Network (IPRIN).

Ultimately, in Ireland, academics and their institutional senior management do not fully appreciate how much impact they already have on policymaking. Policymakers sometimes appreciate the volume of academic work they consume via secondary or tertiary sources, but they rarely understand how much more effective that researcher–policymaker relationship could be if structures and frameworks for engagement were properly designed and resourced.

I asked at the start of this article if the academic and policymaker can be friends. They are already friends but do not know it yet. The next step is to deepen the relationship and find a common language that will allow both to flourish.

ENDNOTES

- 1. MAC: Management Advisory Committee, the executive body of a government department.
- 2. The AAAS publishes the journal Science.
- 3. A recommendation from the government, signed by the Taoiseach, supporting the expenditure of public monies proposed by a Private Members' Bill (PMB).
- www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/Review-of-budget-oversight-by-parliament-Ireland. pdf.

A portrait of the pioneering mathematical physicist Dr Sheila Tinney was unveiled at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS) in January 2019 in the presence of her son Hugh and daughters Ethna and Deirdre.

In 1941, Dr. Tinney was appointed the first ever female fellow at DIAS and she went on to become a Research Associate at the Institute's School of Theoretical Physics. She was also the first Irish woman to earn a PhD in mathematical science, and one of the first four women admitted to the Royal Irish Academy.



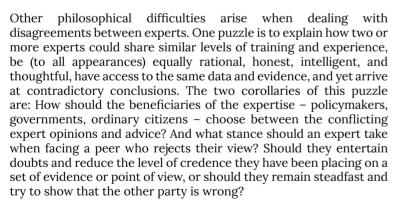
EXPERTS, DISAGREEMENT, AND TRUST

When politics invites itself into your research

The research project When Experts Disagree, funded by the Irish Research Council, was an attempt to resolve the complexities of peer expert disagreement. During its work, the philosophical discourse on expertise changed, with the very standing of experts undermined in an age of political anxiety and suspicion. This article explores the topic of trust in experts and the role of philosophy in defending against the dark clouds of irrationality and extremism.

Introduction

Disagreement among individuals or social groups, a common feature of our daily lives, is troublesome not just because of its impact on our personal and sociopolitical relationships but also for the philosophical dilemmas it creates. One longstanding challenge, discussed by philosophers since the Sophist Protagoras (490–c.420 bc), is how to understand and deal with persistent disagreements, particularly in the normative domains of ethics, aesthetics, and matters of taste, which, despite centuries of debate, do not seem amenable to rational resolution. The ancient but enduring philosophical doctrines of relativism and scepticism are among the best-known attempts to resolve or dissolve this so-called problem of intractable disagreement.¹



The question, as the psychologist Robert Hoffman puts it simply but effectively, is: 'If the "experts" are experts, why do they disagree? And since they do disagree, how can we [and even they themselves, I would add] rely on their judgments and advice?'²

New perspectives for a national project

The research project When Experts Disagree (WEXD) (2015–2017), funded by the Irish Research Council's New Horizon scheme, was an attempt to come to terms with the complexities of peer expert disagreement. Co-directed by astrophysicist Luke Drury (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies), the project compared cases of



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expert scientific disagreement in astrophysics, a field relatively free of economic and political pressures, with cases in the politically charged area of climate change. The comparison, we argued, could lay bare some of the essential methodological and normative differences in the treatment of disagreement in the two arenas.³

Within a few months of the launch of WEXD, the political world imposed a new perspective on our enquiry. In April 2016, Donald Trump declared his official hostility to experts: 'They say, "Oh, Trump doesn't have experts," he told a crowd of his avid supporters. "You know, I've always wanted to say this. … The experts are terrible." Michael Gove followed suit: 'I think the people in this country have had enough of experts, with organisations from acronyms saying that they know what is best and getting it consistently wrong. … Because these people are the same ones who got consistently wrong what was happening. The concern occasioned by these remarks was not so much about a few politicians posturing just before a crucial vote but the sense that they are tapping into a new sociopolitical zeitgeist, a concern that was further confirmed by the Brexit and US presidential election results.

What stance should an expert take when facing a peer who rejects their view?

Researchers increasingly are asked to make their work 'relevant', to prove its value for the industry, society, or politics. This demand is not always easily met by philosophers working on epistemological and metaphysical questions, or indeed by astrophysicists working on cosmic rays emanating from the deep recesses of the universe. But the traffic between research on abstract topics and those relevant to the messier

'real world' is not always unidirectional. The real world can invite itself, if not indeed force its way, into even the most abstract research agendas and thus open new and interesting horizons of investigation.

The recent development and popularity of 'applied epistemology' is one such example. A significant number of established philosophers, specialists in traditional epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of language, have turned their attention to politically pressing issues of the day: the discourse of post-truth, conspiracy theories, and the politics of knowledge.⁶ What binds us all is a common feeling that extraordinary times require out-of-the ordinary intellectual responses, and philosophy can have a role in constructing some defence lines against the threatening dark clouds of irrationality, extremism, arrogance, and bigotry.

An international consortium

With the new political climate, it became obvious that the philosophical discourse on expertise was also changing. The urgent challenges now were not about the dilemma of the disagreeing experts, but the more troubling question of the very standing of experts and expertise in an age of political anxiety and suspicion. The experts, this vanguard of the 'intellectual elites', were deemed as suspect as other reviled elites: the bankers, politicians, and media. The politically motivated question now was why, and whether, we should trust the experts, rely on their advice, or allow their presence in public or private decision–making.

As a result, the final academic event of WEXD was an international conference on Trust in Experts, an event organised in part to signal the new direction that our original research was going to take. By that stage, trust in experts had become the topic of the day, and Luke Drury and I were invited to join a British Academy and All European Academies (ALLEA) working group on Trust, Truth, and Expertise (TTE) co-chaired by Baroness Onora O'Neill, a publicly engaged philosopher who had been writing on trustworthiness for decades.⁷

The Working Group, in the course of four workshops over 15 months, produced three working papers on issues we deemed fundamental to the topic of trust in experts. But it was clear that we were only scratching the surface of the problem and that there is much more to be done. The discussions of the TTE working group, and the results obtained by WEXD, became the springboard of a successful application to the Horizon 2020 European funding scheme for a new project on trust and expertise, entitled PEriTiA (Policy, Expertise, and Trust in Action).

The condition of trust

Technologically advanced societies increasingly rely on knowledge-based or knowledge-driven forms of governance, where policy decisions and legislation are reliant on advice and data from various sources of expertise. Key policy decisions, ranging from food safety to climate change, lifestyle to healthcare, economic planning to education, are guided by data, evidence, and advice from experts in the relevant fields.

In democratic systems of government, where consent by citizens is a requirement of good governance, trust in experts and their advice is a

requirement for achieving a workable triangulation between expert opinion, governance, and citizens' consent. For instance, no amount of sound advice and strong evidence would be enough to implement a mass vaccination policy or a particular piece of dietary advice, on a voluntary basis, without prior judgement of the trustworthiness of the sources and the quality of advice given by the experts and transmitted by the relevant health authorities.

The experts were deemed as suspect as other reviled elites: the bankers, politicians, and media.

More pressing still, democratic governments will find it difficult, if not impossible, to legislate on policies directly informed or even shaped by expert advice, however well-intentioned, that encounters distrust by those affected by the policies. It is a truism that if citizens trust governmental policies and authorities, then they are more likely to comply with their directives. But trust is a commendable stance only when it is warranted, when the objects of our trust are genuinely trustworthy.

Epistemic vigilance is one way to ensure that the leap of faith involved in trust is not confused with a thoughtless dive into the complete unknown. However, the nature and the correct measure of social trust, and the requirements of epistemic vigilance, particularly in the changing landscape of social media, instant communication, and big data, are not well understood.

New directions in the study of trust in experts

PEriTiA conducts in-depth multidisciplinary research on the topic of trust in policy-related advice from scientific experts. By focusing on the type of trust required to create legitimacy for informed, evidence-based policy decisions on complex issues, it aims to shed light on the alleged breakdown of trust in various facets of public governance – what is often called a 'crisis of trust'. We also aim to clear some of the conceptual confusion on the notion of trust and trustworthiness.

Trust is a commendable stance only when it is warranted.

Our chief research hypothesis, to be investigated in various theoretical and empirical ways, is that epistemic public trust, contrary to some established views, should not be confused with mere reliance. There is always an element of risk or a leap of faith involved in trust, and with it comes the feeling of betrayal that broken trust entails. Our study will try to show that trust in people or organisations not only requires

epistemic vigilance but also has significant affective and normative dimensions that have a decisive impact on judgements of trustworthiness.

The investigation is carried out in three phases – theoretical, empirical, and ameliorative – and relies on the work of philosophers, behavioural economists, sociologists, policy experts, and media specialists from UCD, ALLEA, University of Oslo in Norway, CNRS in France, University of Utrecht in the Netherlands, King's College London, University Vita-Salute San Raffaele in Italy, the American University of Armenia, the Polish Academy of Sciences, campaigning charity Sense About Science, and SME Strane Innovation. The project also benefits from the direct involvement of a distinguished advisory board that includes Onora O'Neill, Susan Owens, Cass Sunstein, David Farrell, and Dan Sperber. The results of the research will be published online and in scholarly journals and books over the next three years.

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- 7. It's a testimony to the popularity of this and cognate topics that many similar invitations were soon to follow, including one by the Pew Centre and *The Economist* to their global Evidence Initiative.
- 8. ALLEA working papers by the Working Group on Trust, Truth, and Expertise. Working Paper 1: Loss of Trust? Loss of Trustworthiness? Truth and Expertise Today. Berlin, Germany: All European Academies, 2018. Working Paper 2: Trust Within Science: Dynamics and Norms of Knowledge Production. Berlin, Germany: All European Academies. Working Paper 3: Trust in Science and Changing Landscapes of Communication. Berlin, Germany: All European Academies, 2019.
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During an event at NovaUCD on 9 December 2019, Ministers Heather Humphries and Regina Doherty announced that 16 research projects would share €65 million over the next three years under the second round of the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF). University College Dublin will partner in four of these funded research projects.

Pictured (l-r) at NovaUCD are:

Regina Doherty TD, Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection; **Heather Humphreys** TD, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation;

Julie Sinnamon, CEO Enterprise Ireland, and

Dr Nicky Bertollo, CEO and Co-Founder Latch Medical.

DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND GENDER

The rapid acceleration of digital technologies is reshaping markets and society globally. This article explains what exactly 'digital' is, what it means for entrepreneurship and innovation, and how women can be encouraged and empowered to become digital entrepreneurs.



Maura McAdam Director of Entrepreneurship, Dublin City University

Introduction

The rapid acceleration of digital technologies is reshaping markets and society globally. In Ireland, whether you are a student, employee, customer, business leader, or mere observer, it seems that everyone is talking about 'digital'. But what exactly is 'digital', and what does it mean for entrepreneurship and innovation?

Digital has been happening over the last twenty-five years. In entrepreneurship and innovation, the digital component relates to what Parker et al. (2016) refer to as 'digital platforms', which allow the development of digital start-ups and scale-ups – ventures that incorporate novel digital technology as a vital part of their business model and could not feasibly operate without it. Digitalisation is opening up fascinating opportunities for entrepreneurs and innovators (McAdam et al., 2019), who are adopting digital technologies to develop new forms of entrepreneurial actions that move beyond traditional industry boundaries.

Digital entrepreneurship, 'the pursuit of opportunities based on the use of digital media and other information and communication technologies' (Davidson and Vaast, 2010, p. 2), is a socio-economic and technological phenomenon that can be considered as the use of digital technologies to shift the traditional way of creating and doing business. It is widespread and growing in internet-connected societies. It is a popular form of entrepreneurship, because it can lower the normal barriers to entry when starting a business, reduce overheads, provide access to a global customer base, and increase the flexibility of work. Digital technology is an important 'external enabler' of new-venture creation, reducing the time and resources needed in creating disruptive or radically new products or services.

Entrepreneurs and innovators in Ireland are adopting digital technologies such as social media, mobile, business analytics, Internet of Things, big data, advanced manufacturing, 3D printing, cloud, and artificial intelligence to develop new forms of entrepreneurial actions. Nambisan (2017) argues that digital technologies are not simply tools to facilitate entrepreneurship; rather, they are fundamentally changing the boundaries of entrepreneurial processes and outcomes.

Digital technology is therefore posited as a source of significant disruptive transformation in entrepreneurship. As my research shows, however, a broad view of digital entrepreneurship, not limited to 'high-tech' entrepreneurship, is necessary if we are to fully understand the wider social and economic impact of digital technology (McAdam et al., 2018; McAdam et al., 2019).

Levelling the playing for women

Digital entrepreneurship has been described as a 'great leveler' (Dy et al., 2017), leading to the democratisation of entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurs benefit from greater access to ideas, potential customers, and necessary

resources (Nambisan, 2017). The incorporation of digital architectures (e.g., online communities, social media) and artefacts (digital components, applications, media content) means that spatial and temporal boundaries – when and where activities are carried out – are less constrained, and product and service opportunities are constantly evolving (Nambisan, 2017).

Digitalisation is opening up fascinating opportunities for entrepreneurs and innovators.

In addition, internet attributes of convenience, ease of use, large audience reach, anonymity, and interactivity mean that digital entrepreneurship offers great potential

for groups who face barriers to engagement in bricks-and-mortar entrepreneurship. Indeed, digital entrepreneurship can facilitate the engagement of marginalised groups, one such being women, since online platforms develop their own social and contractual frameworks that are often independent of local restrictions (McAdam et al., 2019). Digital platforms can thus provide women with greater access to markets and knowledge, more flexible working arrangements, and greater reach to customers.



More generally, cyberfeminism research, which examines the relationship between women and digital technology, has highlighted the potential of the internet as a forum for women's empowerment and emancipation (Rosser, 2005). It suggests that the internet, with its protection of individual privacy, may provide a 'safe space' for negotiating the challenges that women encounter in their daily lives offline (Daniels, 2009), given that online they can be bodyless, sex-less, and gender-less.

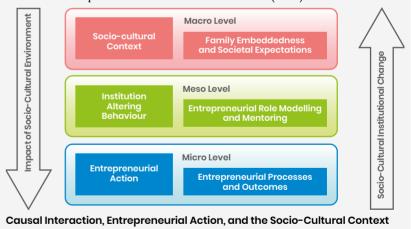
Research insight: Women's digital entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia

My research explored the emancipatory possibilities of digital entrepreneurship for women constrained by social and cultural practices, such as male guardianship of female relatives and legally enforced gender segregation: specifically, how women in Saudi Arabia use digital technologies in pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities. The findings reveal that women in Saudi Arabia do not use the online environment to escape embodiment but to transform their lived realities by providing a 'safe space' to challenge social and cultural norms in terms of the behaviours permissible to and expected of women.

The women in this research were digital natives, fluent in digital technology, who used digital tools to circumvent restrictions in the offline world, such as gender segregation and limited mobility due to male guardianship. Digital tools and technology thus provide a means to navigate these social and cultural practices, which have historically been limited to women's paid work outside the home. In choosing to engage in entrepreneurship rather than enter into traditional occupational roles for women, such as teaching or other government service, women are fundamentally changing their social position, particularly in their family relationships.

Hence, in navigating boundaries and pursuing their entrepreneurial ambitions, the female entrepreneurs became agents of change. However, while digital entrepreneurship may have transformational potential, it is not a 'magic', individualised solution addressing embedded patriarchal systems. As such, its transformative potential is constrained by women's individual circumstances, with family support or at least acquiescence being a prerequisite.

One of the key outputs from this research was a multi-tier model (see image) that can be applied across geographical contexts, including Ireland. It is explained further in McAdam et al. (2019).



No place for young girls?

Women represent just 20% of tertiary graduates in the natural sciences, engineering, and ICT disciplines, which are particularly relevant for the digital era (OECD, 2015, 2016). Stereotypical expectations of masculinity and technology have been given significant explanatory value, to the exclusion of women in these technological fields. Indeed, young girls' interest in and enthusiasm for digital entrepreneurship and leadership are often damaged

by stereotyping, cultural discouragement, peer pressure, and lack of role models, resulting in a lack of confidence to engage with entrepreneurship, leadership, and technology. Underrepresentation of women's technology entrepreneurship is a significant problem globally, with only 5-15% of high-technology businesses owned by women. It is the focus of the Irish Research Council-co-funded GENRE project.1

One factor is the entrenched stereotypes that are passed on to children by their families, teachers, and society at large, with technology seen as part of a masculine script and deemed an essential part of boys' upbringing. Promoting positive role models and enhancing digital skills among girls are therefore important in tackling the gender gap and boosting female participation in science, technology, and business. It is essential to empower women entrepreneurs and to nurture women leaders by increasing the number of girls aged 12-18 years interested in technology, innovation, digitalisation, entrepreneurship, and leadership.

A cautionary tale

Recent research suggests that digital technology's potential to facilitate entrepreneurship for marginalised groups may be overstated, in that it remains a resource-based activity, requiring capital investment, technical knowledge, access to online marketplaces, and supporting hardware and software (Dy et al., 2017, 2018). In fact, there is evidence of a 'gender digital divide', wherein some women entrepreneurs, due to lack of digital literacy, skills, access, and resources, are excluded from the opportunities and benefits offered by digital technologies.

Promoting positive role **Promoting** models and enhancing digital skills among girls are therefore important in tackling the gender

Policy can play an important role in creating a more inclusive digital world by improving access to digital technologies and by giving people the skills necessary to thrive in the digital era. The Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE), which has been adopted in Ireland, focuses on modern technologies and online services that will allow Europe to create jobs and promote economic prosperity.

Moving forward

To understand the true potential of digital entrepreneurship for Irish society and its economy, more attention must be paid to everyday interactions with digital technology, leading to the creation of new business ventures, often outside of high-technology industries. Specifically, it is important to understand how the ubiquity and everyday experiences of digital technology provide opportunities for innovation. Advances in digital technology offer significant potential for women to engage in entrepreneurship, but as my research demonstrates, these opportunities exist within the confines of existing social and cultural practices.

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ENDNOTES

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We've heard about the Internet of Things - I think we need an Internet of Women"

> Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank

GROWING UP IN IRELAND

Insights on Inclusion in Irish Schools

This article assesses the evidence on how students with special educational needs (SEN) compare with their peers across a range of dimensions. It then considers the new special-education funding arrangements as a policy lever to potentially address the gaps between SEN and non-SEN students.

The Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study has been groundbreaking in terms of the data it gathers on students with special education needs (SEN). Research based on GUI has been central in highlighting that inclusive policies and programmes don't always mean true inclusion for these students. This article assesses the evidence on how students with SEN compare with their peers across a range of dimensions. It then considers the new special-education funding arrangements as a policy lever to potentially address the gaps between SEN and non-SEN students.

Prevalence of SEN

GUI identified 21% of students as having one of four main disability types: general learning, specific learning, emotional/behavioural, and physical/sensory. Boys, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and children attending disadvantaged schools were more likely to be identified as having an SEN (McCoy, Banks, and Shevlin, 2012, 2016). The disproportionate prevalence of SEN among disadvantaged students has prompted concerns about over-identification of emotional and behavioural conditions and under-identification of learning disabilities (Banks et al., 2012; McCoy, Banks, and Shevlin, 2016).

Diagnosis is not always a reflection of student needs, which are often heterogeneous and shifting among SEN students with similar diagnoses. These findings prompted calls to change the funding for special education, which was recently revised (Banks et al., 2015; NCSE, 2014), an issue we return to later.

Gaps between SEN and non-SEN students

GUI data shows that across multiple dimensions, students with SEN were more likely to face difficulties than non-SEN students. SEN students were less likely to like school and more likely to find it difficult, they had different interactions with peers and teachers, and they were more likely to have a difficult transition into second-level education. Key differences were also identified between the parents of SEN students and those of non-SEN students.



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Evidence shows that, in mainstream settings, students with SEN like school less than their peers without SEN. This pattern widens between primary and second-level school. Students with SEN are also more likely to find all school subjects more difficult. The differences were less pronounced in Science and most pronounced in Irish. The academic self-image of SEN students was less positive than non-SEN peers, and the gap between the two groups grew over time. While 27% of non-SEN students reported an above-average academic self-image, the equivalent figure for SEN students was only 13%, indicating lower self-confidence among this group (Williams et al., 2018). In part, this gap is explained by differences in parental expectations.

At age thirteen, SEN students were likely to have fewer close friends than both Irish non-SEN and immigrant students. They were also more likely to miss their primary-school friends and to experience anxiety about making new friends (Smyth, 2017). In fact, SEN students were twice as likely to be bullied than students without SEN (Cosgrove et al., 2018). These findings are not unique to Ireland, and research more widely shows that the number of contacts and friendships does not spontaneously increase when children with SEN attend mainstream schools (Pijl and Hamstra, 2005). Further evidence from GUI found that while teachers reprimanded SEN students to a similar extent as non-SEN students, they were less likely to praise SEN students (Williams et al., 2018).

SEN students were less likely to like school and more likely to find it difficult.

New research is examining how students with SEN fare at key transition points in their education. Progressing from primary to second-level, students with SEN were far more likely to experience a negative transition than those without SEN. The transition measure captures multiple dimensions, including emotional, social, peer, and academic adjustment. Students with specific learning disabilities and general learning disabilities were at greater risk (McCoy et al., 2019). The

findings align with earlier research highlighting the challenges for students in progressing in an academic environment. Challenges include the change in pace, breadth, and complexity of schoolwork and increased demands in terms of academic progress, including the ability to learn independently (Makin et al., 2017).

Parents of SEN students typically are highly engaged in their children's education. More than twice as many parents of SEN students (44%) have attended talks or meetings with teachers or the principal than parents of non-SEN students (18%), a pattern not explained by levels of misbehaviour. They were also more likely to be involved in their children's homework, partly reflecting the greater academic needs of some of these students. Yet parents of SEN students were also found to have lower academic expectations of their children. Parental expectations were found to be significant in shaping academic skills at age thirteen and changes in academic skills between nine and thirteen years. The role of parental expectations in inhibiting students from maximising their potential is likely to stem from how parents view the opportunities their children have for further and higher education. This highlights the need to promote equality of opportunity at all educational levels and the importance of information and guidance for all students and their parents on the full range of postschool education and training options available (McCoy, Maître, et al., 2016).

RESEARCH

A new resource model

Evidence on the gaps between SEN and non-SEN students and on some of the factors that contribute to these gaps has not gone unanswered. In September 2017, a new Special Education Teaching Allocation was introduced, providing a unified allocation for special educational teaching needs to each primary and secondary school, based on that school's educational profile (Cosgrove et al., 2018). The previous funding model distributed money based on diagnosed SEN, with pre-assigned resources by disability type and regardless of student and institutional need. The new model gives schools more autonomy in how to manage and deploy special education teaching support, based on students' individual learning needs rather than primarily on a diagnosis of disability.

Conclusion

Evidence from Growing Up in Ireland has consistently highlighted the role of school context and composition in shaping the identification of different types of SEN, the adequacy of supports for these students, and the experiences of students in different school contexts. It is to be welcomed that the new funding scheme is attempting to address these challenges (McCoy et al., 2019) and provides more resources to schools that most need them (DES, 2019). Additional curricular and assessment reforms, particularly at junior cycle level, are also likely to positively influence the educational experiences of SEN students.

The challenges faced by SEN students are systemic and span all societal settings, not just schools.

Schools and parents have made substantial efforts to facilitate the integration of SEN students in mainstream schools, and their efforts should be recognised. However, the challenges faced by SEN students are systemic and span all societal settings, not just schools. Recent reforms may not be enough to directly address some of the gaps between SEN and non-SEN students and their outcomes. Additional interventions in schools and beyond may be required to address the academic and relational barriers evidenced from GUI.

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The Growing Up in Ireland researchers with Minister Katherine Zappone at the launch of Key Findings from age 20 years, November 2019.

L-R: Dr Amanda Quail (ESRI), Dr Aisling Murray (ESRI), Dr Eoin McNamara (ESRI), Minister Dr Katherine Zappone (DCYA), Professor Dorothy Watson (ESRI), Dr Desmond O'Mahony (ESRI), Professor Emer Smyth (ESRI), Caoimhe O'Reilly (ESRI), Professor Richard Layte (TCD)."

Teacher stress

is associated

with adverse impact

on student academic

achievement.

EDUCATOR WELL-BEING

Ignoring systemic stress at our peril

There is growing discourse in the teaching profession about stress and educator well-being. Ignoring the increasing pace of education work, and the increasing pressures that go with it, will not result in these pressures going away. Given the challenges in recruiting school principals due to workload, stress, and burnout, this article calls for the need to recognise and engage with these issues.

Introduction

Recent years have been characterised by radical reform in education, particularly in post-primary schools. The national curricular reform agenda has resulted in a welcome reconceptualising of the role of the teacher that has fostered agency and recognition of teachers as curriculum innovators. Increased accountability in the profession and the changing nature of curriculum have come at some cost, however, with teachers often decrying 'initiative overload'.

There is little doubt of a growing discourse in the profession about stress and claims of reduced educator well-being. It is not limited to the primary and post-primary sectors. Educators in further and higher education also experience growing pressure and collective stress, influenced in no small part by poorer funding, increased workloads, and often unmanageable expectations. Ignoring the increasing pace of education work, and the increasing stress and pressures that go with it, will not result in these pressures simply going away.

Stress results from the perception of the demands placed on a person and the resources available to address those demands (McCarthy et al., 2010; Reiser and McCarthy, 2017). Curriculum change is a significant contributor to teacher stress (Putwain and von der Embse, 2019). The Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI), based on a Red C poll in 2018, identified rising workload as contributing to increased stress and falling job satisfaction among teachers. Its then president pointed to the fact that teachers' work has changed significantly in the past decade, with teachers trying to keep up with the expansion of their role, new initiatives in schools, and the faster pace of their implementation.

Teaching has often been perceived as stressful work; current research and discourse point to the scale of the problem and the attendant lower morale in the profession. Teachers clearly feel the pressure that comes with expectations of student achievement and increased accountability.

Stress is often seen as an individually bounded problem. But an interesting, less thought about, and perhaps more insidious aspect is that stress often engenders further stress in others (Deasy et al.,



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2016). As students progress through post-primary schooling, the focus turns sharply onto the pressures of the Leaving Certificate, and assessment is the main stressor reported by students. When students experience assessment stress, ironically it impairs their judgement and their ability to think, learn, and concentrate (Stixrud, 2012). Teacher stress is also associated with adverse impact on student academic achievement (Richards et al., 2016; Reiser and McCarthy, 2017). The literature is clear that organisational behaviour associated with stress causes school ineffectiveness (Griffith, 2004). As such, it is vital that the profession take cognisance of the intersubjectivity and interrelationality of stress.

Levels of stress appear to be pervasive in educational institutions and indeed in life more generally. The proliferation of mindfulness programmes and initiatives to support work-life balance and work well-being show the increasing acknowledgment of the need to address the challenges posed by stress and burnout. The nature of education work has changed considerably. For example, increasing prioritisation of performance indicators has

fostered workaholism in educational institutions across Ireland, with 50 per cent of academics reporting workaholic tendencies (Hogan et al., 2016).

Yet the evidence shows that workaholic behaviours do not increase productivity and are linked to negative health outcomes such as stress and burnout (ibid.). The implications for the system are worrisome, as stress and burnout are

precursors of teacher attrition (McCarthy et al., 2010; Prilleltensky et al., 2016; Richards et al., 2016; Fernández-Aguayo et al., 2017; Reiser and McCarthy, 2017). We have not yet felt the burden of teacher attrition in Ireland at the level that is evident in the UK, but the warning signs are there for school leader attrition and recruitment. We would benefit from paying heed to the trends in the profession among our nearest neighbours.

In recent times the *Guardian* has reported consistently on teacher conditions. It reveals, based on an OECD study of 48 countries, that UK secondary school teachers have one of highest workloads in the world, and that teacher workload is linked to psychological distress. A recent article titled 'Record levels of stress "put teachers at breaking point" reports that "burnt-out" school staff are suffering severe psychological problems.' It quotes Sinéad Mc Brearty, chief executive of the Education Support charity: 'Overwork has become normalised. Education professionals don't feel trusted.... They are almost twice as anxious as the general population.'

School leaders are often seen as the solution to the problem of teacher stress, yet principals themselves are experiencing overload. A recent article in the *Irish Times*, titled 'Ever-expanding workload turning teachers off becoming principals', cites Kieran Golden, president of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), as identifying the shortage of teachers willing to take on the role of school principal and warning that it will be the 'next emergency' in education.

Principals are often perceived to have a duty to reduce stress, offer support, and promote and improve job satisfaction (McCarthy et al., 2010; Ho, 2016). But they work in constrained systems with limited autonomy to effect the systemic change that is required to address workload and the sometimes

toxic staffroom cultures. School leaders are influential but they also carry the weight of expectations of school success in ever more performative educative agendas.

Simkins (2005) writes that 'leadership is one of the major factors – sometimes it seems the only factor – that will determine whether an educational organization, be it a school, a college or a university, will succeed or fail'. However, according to Lynch (2016), 'when success is judged exclusively by measurable performances (rankings and league tables of colleges, schools and people) what cannot be numerically recorded becomes inconsequential'. Navigating these competing imperatives, promoting positive work cultures, and protecting the work–life balance of their staff can be a mammoth task for school leaders.

It is unhelpful, in stress discourse, to position stress as an individual problem, with no recognition given to the systemic and organisational antecedents of stress and burnout in the profession. Research has shown that a change in work culture in recent decades has encouraged long hours and increased work intensity (Mazzetti et al., 2014). Stress, burnout, overload, and diminished mental health have become the zeitgeist. Discourses of well-being abound in education in Ireland but are global in terms of the issues raised.

Workaholic behaviours do not increase productivity and are linked to negative health outcomes such as stress and burnout.

While the need for educational reform is acknowledged, the way that reforms are implemented must allow for the impact on those whose work lives they deeply affect. Stress, burnout, and overload are not solely attributable to reform: they are also linked to performativity (which current reform is seeking to address) and to work cultures; they are systemic, not individual, in antecedence.

Principal associations – the IPPN and the NAPD – are calling for the need to listen to what the research and trends in the profession are showing. The systemic warning signals are there. We ignore them at our peril.

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Irish-American philanthropist Loretta Brennan Glucksman was conferred with an honorary doctorate of letters by University of Limerick at an event in downtown New York in November 2019.

The degree was conferred by UL Chancellor Mary Harney in Glucksman Ireland House at New York University on Fifth Avenue.

Mrs Brennan Glucksman is a leading light in global philanthropy and has worked tirelessly to establish strong ties between America and the island of Ireland and is also Chairman Emeritus of the American Ireland Fund

Speaking at the conferring, Dr Des Fitzgerald, President of UL, paid tribute to the "vision, advocacy and leadership of Loretta, and her late husband Lew... Their generosity and access to extensive networks allowed UL to grow and prosper."

Spanning more than 20 years, Mrs Glucksman and her late husband Lewis made major contributions to the University of Limerick, funding key projects such as the Frank McCourt Chair in Creative Writing; Brennan Court Residence; the Glucksman Library; the Glucksman Chair in Contemporary Writing; the Glucksman Reading Room and the University Concert Hall.



NOTES