

**Policy Drivers and Negotiated Decision-Making in a National
Professional Development Initiative.**

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Abstract

Developing curriculum, promoting its implementation and supporting teachers in this task are central to education systems' mission. Increasingly, systems seek the active participation of stakeholders in planning and implementing reforms. Such negotiated reform processes are likely to be prolonged but promise more faithful and lasting implementation outcomes. Through interviews with key policymakers and document analysis, this paper critically examines the partnership approach embraced in developing a program of professional development to support implementation of the 1999 elementary school curriculum in the Republic of Ireland. The data indicate that whereas stakeholders shared a broad vision of reform, differences emerged about how the vision should be realised. Findings suggest that the views of some stakeholders held more sway than others, but a workable approach to implementing the curriculum and an associated program of professional development was agreed nonetheless.

Introduction

Professional Development is increasingly viewed as a prerequisite for successful educational reform. Possible aims underpinning professional development noted by the OECD (1998) include: developing teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical skills; aiding teachers and schools in implementing centrally-led changes in curricula and teaching methods; and helping to exchange knowledge and expertise among practicing teachers and educational professionals. Strategies for realizing such aims are varied, including the workshop, on-the-job forms of support (Coleman, 2001, Convery, 2001; Corcoran, 1995; Darling-Hammond & McLoughlin, 1995; EPPI, 2003), lesson study (Hiebert & Stigler, 2000; Lewis, Perry & Hurd, 2004) and professional development schools (Levine & Trachtman, 1997).

One way of categorising professional development models is whether the processes and activities are school-based or off-site (Solomon, 1998; Craft, 2000). This is frequently a factor of two features: (i) From which direction the learning process is originating, i.e., is it in response to learning needs prescribed from the top of the education system ('top-down'), or from learning needs identified at the bottom of the structure ('bottom-up')? and/or (ii) whether the educational system itself is centralised or decentralised in structure. Internationally, there is evidence of increased

centralisation of responsibility for curriculum development and associated professional development. This centralised locus of control, resting with national or state education departments (such as Ministries, State/National curriculum development agencies), needs to be carefully calibrated to ensure that the voices of various stakeholders are heard. Where central agencies assume greater visibility and control in prescribing curriculum, this must be achieved in partnership with various stakeholders, e.g. Learning and Teaching Scotland (n.d). This process of partnership between policymakers and stakeholders forms the focus of the present paper.

Purpose of study and program context: supporting a revised elementary curriculum

The publication of a revised national elementary school curriculum in the Republic of Ireland (Government of Ireland, 1999) followed by a program of professional development was the culmination of a process of review, consultation, development, negotiation and decision-making amongst relevant stakeholders (see Department of Education and Science, 1990; Government of Ireland, 1995; National Education Convention Secretariat, 1994). This paper explores the antecedent thought-processes and viewpoints of key policymakers and stakeholders when a model of curriculum implementation and professional development was being determined. The paper reveals the consultative/development architecture underpinning the reforms and explores the processes for reconciling differing perspectives. Main issues explored include:

1. The nature of the structures established to ensure a negotiated implementation plan for the curriculum along with associated professional development for teachers?
2. To what extent did stakeholders agree on elements of the reforms and what were the points of disagreement?
3. How were conflicts about the nature of curriculum implementation and professional development resolved?

Data for the paper draw from an evaluation of an eight-year national program of professional development designed to support implementation of a revised elementary curriculum. Professional development was provided by a dedicated state agency, the Primary Curriculum Support programme (PCSP) in the Republic of Ireland. Early

evaluations of the implementation of the curriculum and student achievement levels reveal successes alongside challenges (Department of Education and Science, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007; Eivers, Shiel, Perkins & Cosgrove, 2005; Harris, Forde, Archer, Nic Fhearaile, & O’Groman, 2006; INTO, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2005, 2008; Surgenor, Shiel, Close & Millar, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

Taking professional development to scale

It could be argued that there is at work an irony (as well as a number of contradictions), concerning on one hand, the need for professional development to be individualised to meet the particular requirements of teaching and learning contexts and on the other hand, as a consequence of powerful managerialising and centralising tendencies by national and supranational state bodies over the past 20 years, the need to assert control over the structure and content of professional development¹. This in itself is part of a wider set of discourses and practices which coalesce around performativity and accountability, which are in turn set within a further cluster of discourses around the quality, purpose and mechanisms of schooling and its alignment (or not) with other non-educational policy goals such as social inclusion, employment, economic growth.

At one and the same time practitioners are confronted by both centripetal and centrifugal ‘forces.’ For writers such as Ball (1994) this apparent contradiction is explained by the notion of ‘steering at a distance’, where there exists a degree of congruence between the policy imperatives and individual practitioners’ sense of professional identity and their work; Foucault (1979) would classify this act as one of ‘self-governance,’ whereby control is engendered through a mix of colonisation through an appeal to teacher professionalism and coercion through the regulation and delimiting of their work via an ensemble of statutory and non-statutory mechanisms. However, as Osbourne (2006) notes, this is not a straightforward one-to-one correspondence with teachers accepting uncritically the new roles being mapped out for them. In talking about the UK she observes:

¹ Though as Tatto (2006) has noted, we need to be careful not to over extend this observation as other countries such as Japan, China and Chile for example have engaged in a process of de-centralisation with an emphasis on the encouraging teacher autonomy and creativity.

Many teachers, both primary and secondary, expressed common concerns centred on what was perceived as the demand for a ‘delivery of performance.’ They considered that the more affective concerns of teaching—the sense of vocation and investment of self—were being undermined by the pressure for performance, to become ‘expert technicians’ in transmitting externally pre-defined knowledge and skills to their pupils. (Osbourne, 2006, p243)

In her review of cross-European (French, Danish and English) studies of teacher attitudes towards policy change and implementation, Osbourne (2006), like other commentators (see also Day, 2006; Tatto, 2006) points to the contextual contingency of how new and old policy is mediated by practitioners. Similar to the Irish situation, the ‘enactment (or not) of policy is filtered through the interaction of context and personal belief systems’. In picking up on the issue of professional development, she makes the point that if anything, top-down systemic reforms acted as a catalyst for individual teachers to ‘take up independent learning and reflectiveness and through structured learning opportunities such as those provided by in-service training’.

Recent developments in the UK have conjoined Continuing Professional Development (CPD) with what the Teacher Development Agency refers to as the ‘professional standards for teachers’ as set out in their document *Continuing professional development: a strategy for teachers* (DfES, 2007)². Here there is a clear attempt to explicitly link the policy aims of ‘raising standards’ in schools with the regulation of teacher performance, with CPD forming an adjunct to these aims. As well as attempting to mesh the micro (teacher)³ with meso (school) needs, the process is guided by a series of nationally defined ‘priorities.’ For example for 2007-10 there are seven ‘priorities’ set out under three headings: ‘pedagogy,’ ‘personalization’ and ‘people’. Hence there is a strong sense in the UK of trying to ‘join the dots’ through connecting together the different levels within the system in an attempt to deal with the perceived quality issue (at least in terms of CPD) nationally via localized (but not

² It should be noted that performance management for teachers employed by local educational authorities has been a legal requirement since 2000. This is an extensive agreement set out in the Education (School Teacher Performance Management) (England) Regulations 2006 and sets out what are seen as five career stages for practitioners to move through. For newly qualified teachers and those just about to qualify, their early CPD needs are mapped out via a ‘Career Entry Development Profile’ (CEDP).

³ The process of individualisation summed up in the following: ‘All teachers should have a professional responsibility to be engaged in effective, sustained and relevant professional development throughout their careers and all teachers should have a contractual entitlement to effective, sustained and relevant professional development throughout their careers.’ (RIG, 2005)

entirely) practitioner-led interventions. It is also worth noting, that the development of national CPD policy has taken the form of collaboration between teacher unions/associations and the DfES (called the Rewards and Incentives Group [RIG]) and a National Reference Group (NRG).

The structure of CPD in the UK is characterised by devolved funding to schools and a plethora of 'service providers' ranging from higher education institutions, local government the private sector and even other schools themselves. There is currently a project being developed which will provide schools with a list of providers and eventually a form of user-generated ratings. Hence it is fairly obvious that what is being constructed is a 'market place' of providers who will offer courses to schools on the basis of their identified needs. How this unfurls in relation to the national CPD priorities and getting schools to align themselves with this 'plan' remains to be seen. However, one would presume that this 'harmonisation' will be achieved through OFSTED inspections to ensure reasonable compliance. Also within this strategy is a strong emphasis on a school's not only developing appropriate mechanisms for identifying its own CPD requirements, but also using itself as a resource for providing professional development. But again, whilst there is a recognition of localism, 'good' CPD still has to fit within the bigger national picture. A nice example of steering at a distance as the school essentially becomes the key agent in facilitating both the needs assessment of practitioners and the realization of any training plan.

As yet, there is little evidence to support (or not) this approach to CPD due to the recency of the initiatives. However, Hodkinson (2006) reports a positive response from a small cohort (n=70) of newly-qualified teachers for their CEDP activities and is potentially a useful framework. He argues that this could be undermined by the lack of needs-based induction which the CEDP is intended to offer, if schools opt to use providers such as Local Education Authorities or private companies which have a more off-the-peg arrangement than the bespoke model intended by the policy. Hence Hodkinson makes the point that schools could be seen as avoiding their responsibilities for newly-qualified teachers through the process of 'out sourcing.'

Research commissioned by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (ICM, 2006) looked at the perceptions and experiences of newly-qualified teachers and those in their second and third year as teachers in both primary and secondary settings. In focusing on the area of performance management plans (one area amongst others the

study looked at) which was seen as being critical in not only identifying a teachers training needs, but also setting out a plan to meet them, the survey found that 78% of their sample (n=1349) had performance objectives built into the end of their induction year; that is some kind of plan to continue their training into their second and even third year. And 88% of this group had, as part of this plan, training needs identified by a combination of either themselves and their induction tutor (a teacher in the school) or their line manager. However, only 52% identified as having a training plan in their second year of teaching reported that they had had their training needs identified. The report adds that those teachers (70%) who had what they (the report) classified as having had 'full range' of induction training were more likely to have been provided with a training plan.⁴ What this seems to suggest and is noted by Hodkinson, that the more targeted the induction is indicative of a greater sense of responsibility by the school towards their newest members of the school teaching community.

Whereas the approach in the UK attempts to blend national educational priorities with professional development fashioned and delivered locally, Craft (2000) and Guskey (2000) highlight a range of benefits of what might be viewed as straight-forward centrally-provided professional development. In sum, they note that the effects should apply across a range of schools, and are more likely to be coherent with an overarching, long-term goal of improving student learning outcomes. Disadvantages are noted by Cheng and Walker (1997), Craft (2000), Guskey (2000) and the OECD (1998) the latter arguing that '*balance needs to be sought, in which teachers feel some "ownership" in their development, yet are still part of a co-ordinated strategy for change,*' (p.54). Accordingly, many education systems embrace integrated professional development models, combining top-down system prioritisation with bottom-up servicing of teacher learning needs. A broader extension of such integration is increased consultation with stakeholders to achieve collaborative decision-making about the best way forward (Granville, 2004; Gleeson, 2004). This is further explored in the following section of the paper.

⁴ 'That is, general training during induction, specific key stage and subject training AND an individualised induction programme.'

Including stakeholders in developing educational reforms

The social partnership approach to policy making in Ireland can be traced back to the early 1980's when against a backdrop of difficult economic circumstances, the Government with representatives of employers, trade unions and other stakeholders agreed the Programme for National Recovery (Government of Ireland, 1987) which sought to regenerate the economy and improve the social equity of society through their combined efforts. This innovative experiment in economic planning sought to balance and trade off moderated pay increases to employees with state commitments to address issues in taxation policy and unemployment levels.

The National Economic and Social Council was also pivotal at this time; providing a forum for discussion of the principles relating to the development of the national economy and to advise the Government on their application. Since this time a further six programmes (typically of 3 years' duration each) have been developed using a social partnership approach, the most recent involving employers, unions, representatives of farmers and representatives of the broad community and voluntary sector. The partnership strategy has also been used in the preparation of the three most recent National Development Plans: 1994-1999, 2000-2006, and most recently 2007-2013. Attempts to introduce a successor to the most recent programme (Government of Ireland, 2006) have proved difficult in the context of extraordinarily difficult financial constraints on the State.

Education and training were seen as pivotal to the achievement of partnership efforts in the early 80s and the beginnings of the social partnership approach within education preceded broader developments later in the decade, being traceable back to the then Minister for Education Gemma Hussey (Gleeson, 2000). In her first address to the Irish Parliament she stated that 'in order to restore a sense of purpose and a sense of direction to the crucial area of educational planning, I have taken the unprecedented step of involving the major groups in education, parents, managers and teachers, engaging them in a working party in my department in the planning process' (Dail Reports, vol 343, col.242, 1982 cited in Gleeson, 2000). Hussey proposed the establishment of Regional Education Boards in her 1985 Green Paper on Education, *Partners in Education*. Prior to the mid 80's curriculum planning was a centralised process within the state Department of Education, as reflected by O'Connor (1986) who noted that the original education partners in Ireland were the churches and the state, a view endorsed also by Walsh

(2008). Although some developments were already in train, the OECD in its review of Irish education in 1991 (p.75) noted that ‘one of the missing or under-developed links in the curriculum planning and decision-making system is the participation of the social partners’ and argued that the participation of employers, community groups and parents ‘would be a means whereby the current preoccupation with book and verbal knowledge accompanied by instructional modes of teaching and regurgitate practices in assessment and examinations could be reduced.’

The promotion of social partnership as a model of governance with education was exemplified by the constitution of the Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board (CEB) in 1984 and the aforementioned Green paper published in 1985. The CEB subsequently became the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in 1987 and the 1998 Education Act established a statutory role for NCCA which became effective from July 2001. The main brief of this body is to advise the Minister for Education on matters relating to Curriculum and Assessment. Gleeson (2000) notes that the establishment of the NCCA on a statutory basis in the 1998 Education Act bears testimony to the satisfaction levels of the main education stakeholders with this model. The model is representational to an extent that is exceptional by international comparison where, in other countries which have national bodies responsible for matters of Curriculum and Assessment, the majority of members are nominated by the Minister for Education rather than the ‘partners’ in education. In Ireland, The Teacher Unions and School Management bodies nominate fourteen of the twenty-five members of the Council of the NCCA. Apart from Ministerial and Department of Education nominees the remaining members consist of representatives of the National Parents Council, the Irish Business and Employers Confederation, the Irish Conference of Trade Unions, Foras na Gaeilge (an agency that promotes language immersion schools in the Irish language), the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education and the Irish Federation of University Teachers. The NCCA has to date operated on a system of designated committees on a representational basis, the role of such committees being to produce curriculum documents for consideration and potentially for approval by the NCCA Council.

The original intention of social partnership was to broaden the social base of decision making – despite this intention Gleeson (2004) raises two particular issues in relation to the model of partnership utilised in the Irish context: the use of partnership

for the legitimation of policy and the dominance of strong sectoral interests in the context of the partnership approach. He argues that the representational nature of the NCCA provides an excellent example of how partnership in the Irish context is predicated on a sectoral agenda and that along with the school management bodies, the teacher unions, who are particularly strong by international standards, effectively control the NCCA and its committees. Legitimation of policy is based on the desire to achieve consensus through partnership, and that policy can be seen as legitimate because it was achieved via this route. However Gleeson articulates the view that given the inevitable familiarity between the sectoral representatives there is the likelihood that the consensus achieved may be what he describes as ‘cosy consensus’ and ‘compromise borne out of familiarity’ rather than on the basis of critical questioning of taken for granted values and assumptions. Gleeson (2000) and Granville (2004) both acknowledge that the model of social partnership in place in Ireland has achieved much but that there is a need to reassess and review the form of partnership in place and to explore new models of participation, which are more inclusive, especially as Gleeson contends there is little sense of participation on the part of the education community in curriculum decision making. In capturing and analysing the direct views of many of the key participants in this partnership agenda, the present paper seeks to articulate the nature of the partnership in the context of development of major reforms in primary education.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual frame underpinning this paper is characterised by an emphasis on change and how such change can be facilitated through a negotiated approach involving the main partners in education. Previous work by Hopkins (1990), Bowe & Bell with Gold (1992), Spillane (2000) and Spillane, Reiser & Reimer (2002) suggests that unless teachers and those required to implement change both understand and are in agreement with the long term overriding goals of professional development, change may be difficult to sustain. This emphasises the need for teachers to feel ownership of the change process and its constituent elements and for the enabling structures to reflect their needs and concerns as a key interest group, amongst others.

Change in teachers’ practice is but one element of a more systemic change in curriculum, and such a systemic change encompassing its various elements such as a

programme of professional development is more likely to succeed if based on a negotiated or partnership based approach. Curricular change and/or implementation is viewed as a process which is influenced by system level priorities for reform, individual teacher readiness and responsiveness to reform as well as school and peer level support. This perspective views change as context bound (at both system and school level) rather than as being a mere function of change in teachers' knowledge and skills.

In the Irish context the desire to ground the identification of system level priorities in a negotiated or partnership based approach may also be linked to what House (1981) describes as the political perspective on educational innovation. Political concerns centre on power and authority relationships, negotiation between the main players (particularly relevant given the strength of the teacher unions) and the legitimacy of the authority system or official policy. Schwab (cited in Reid, 1984) identifies two models of partnership: democracy where power comes to be exercised through numerical majorities and polity where power is collaboratively shared amongst groups with the resultant outcomes as described by Reid (1978, p.112) as 'justifiable acts with public significance'.

Drawing from the theoretical framework and discussion above, this paper sought to explore:

1. The enabling structures established to facilitate a negotiated implementation plan for the curriculum along with associated professional development for teachers?
2. The dynamics of the main educational partners within and outside of the enabling structures and to what extent stakeholders agreed on elements of the reforms? And how the curriculum and professional development reflects the needs and concerns of the various interest groups.
3. How were conflicts about the nature of curriculum implementation and professional development resolved?

How these questions were addressed is described in the next section.

The Research Context

The present study is set in the context of a national program of professional development for primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland. Taking as its starting point the intention of the policymakers to promote new knowledge, understanding and pedagogical practice amongst the country's 28,000 elementary teachers, the paper explores the process by which decisions were reached amongst the many stakeholders involved in developing structures and systems. The Primary School Curriculum (Government of Ireland, 1999) represents the first major revision of the elementary curriculum in the Republic of Ireland since 1971. A phased implementation process was completed in 2008 when schools were expected to have introduced all 11 subjects. In tandem with the phased curriculum implementation, the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP), established by the Department of Education and Science (DES) in 1998, has provided on-going professional development to help mediate the curriculum to teachers in order to enable them to implement it effectively. Details of the programme of professional development are provided in Loxley, Johnston, Murchan, Fitzgerald, & Quinn (2007) and Johnston, Murchan, Loxley, Fitzgerald & Quinn (2007).

Method of Inquiry

The methodological framework for this part of the study drew on a number of different sources commensurate with a mixed methods design. Firstly some of the data were constructed via a series of semi-structured interviews over a period of 6 months. Interviews were conducted by a research team of five individuals. The interview schedules for the heterogeneous sample of participants were designed to 'capture' a sense of the history, process and politics involved in framing the implementation plans for the curriculum and attendant professional development, the latter operating under the auspices of the PCSP. A number of relevant themes were probed, including (i) stakeholders' perspectives on the curriculum implementation planning process along with (ii) insights into the design, implementation and impact of the programme of professional development. All but one of the interviews were tape-recorded and then fully transcribed. Due to the volume of data generated, the software package MaxQDA was utilised as a mechanism to aid storage, coding and retrieval. The approach to analysing the data was informed (but not determined) by the techniques outlined by

Strauss and Corbin (1992) and Dey (1993). Initial data were sieved using relatively open-coding to gain a sense of what was ‘occurring’ relative to the research questions. Through a process of constant comparison these codes (and their attendant categories) were elaborated on or discarded as the analytical framework developed iteratively. Regular moderating meetings amongst the researchers were structured to ensure consistency in the application of the coding scheme as well as allow for a dialogical engagement around the data.

Population and instrumentation

A number of different data sources were utilised for this paper. The experiences and views of individuals who were centrally involved in the planning and delivery of the professional development were explored through the interviews described above. As a way of managing, as well as conceptualising their roles within the programme, the research participants were placed into one of three broad categories: either as programme *planners*, *deliverers* or *receivers*. As ever with such forms of categorisation they are never wholly exhaustive, as some participants inevitably occupied more than one category. However, it nonetheless served as a useful organising device. Forty seven interviews were conducted with a broad range of individuals termed, for the purposes of the evaluation, *System Planners* by virtue of their association with the planning of the PCSP initiative. These interviews provided conceptual and practical understanding of professional development and its implementation, from the perspective of the key decision-makers and architects of the PCSP. Related, but somewhat distinct interview schedules were developed for the three system planner sub-groups:

- *Group I: the core planning group.* This group consisted of representatives from the Department of Education and Science/In-Career Curriculum Development Unit, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the Association of Teacher Education Centres of Ireland (ATECI), and of two representative committees that, in effect, enabled the partnership process, the Primary Curriculum Implementation Group (PCIG) and the Technical Working Group (TWG).
- *Group II: the delivery group.* This was made up the coordinators and other representatives from the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP),

including design teams who were responsible for designing the overall framework for seminars

- *Group III: representatives of the education partners, relevant stakeholders and interest groups.* This heterogeneous group included the teacher union Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), National Parents' Council-Primary (NPC-P), school management authorities, the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN), the School Development Planning Support, and the universities/colleges.

Table 1 provides an overview of the three groups. In addition some relevant official documentation from committees charged with framing and managing the curriculum implementation and professional development was reviewed (Table 2). This incorporates data from three main committees: the PCIG, TWG, and PCSP steering Group. The study therefore, represents a review of planning for curriculum implementation that is based on an exhaustive range of sources that were used for both data and instrument triangulation. The interview schedules went through a careful developmental process, and commentary was received from a steering committee familiar with the overall programme and all the stakeholders being consulted and were constructed to the highest possible standards. Development of the schedules were informed by a range of sources including independent commentary from relevant stakeholders, curriculum material, observations of professional development initiatives (workshops and advisory teacher services, by the researchers, discussions with PCSP personnel and others familiar with the issues under investigation, relevant theoretical and empirical academic studies and data evolving within the evaluation itself, such as responses from other participants.

Table 1
System Planners, Grouped

Group I	Group II	Group III
<i>CORE PLANNING GROUP</i>	<i>DELIVERY GROUP</i>	<i>PARTNERS and STAKEHOLDERS</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Career Development Unit / Department of Education and Science ICDU/DES • National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. NCCA • Association of Teacher Education Centres in Ireland. ATECI • Primary Curriculum Implementation Group. PCIG • Technical Working Group. TWG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Teams • Primary Curriculum Support Programme. PCSP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish National Teachers' Organisation. INTO • National Parents' Council -- Primary. NPC-P • School Management Authorities • School Development Planning Support. SDPS • Universities / Colleges of Education • Irish Primary Principals' Network. IPPN

Table 2
Committee documents reviewed

Documentary Source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of meetings of the Primary Curriculum Implementation Group • Minutes of meetings of the Technical Working Group • Minutes of meetings of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) Steering Group.

Areas of inquiry, analyses and technical issues

Conclusions are informed by responses to individual semi-structured interviews undertaken with 47 of the key national educational policy-makers associated with the development and administration of the programme of professional development. Many of the personnel interviewed were centrally involved in the development of the revised curriculum, in deriving strategies for its implementation and also in framing the program of professional development. As such, they offer a unique perspective on the

overall process of curriculum reform recently undertaken. In addition, the researchers obtained access to relevant documentation and records of planning meetings, these data offering unique archival records on the process of curriculum reform.

Drawing on Moser and Kalton (1971) and Fink (2003) a qualitative approach to construct validity was utilised in the research. Rigorous processes underpinning development of tailored interview schedules strengthened the construct and face validity of the instruments. High co-operation rates amongst agencies and individuals approached attest to the acceptability of the research instruments to participants. All major stakeholders were consulted in identifying interview participants and this was complemented with the researchers' knowledge of the agencies and individuals involved, thereby enhancing external validity. As noted earlier, interview data were coded with the aid of MaxQDA data analysis software (VERBI, 2001) and a thematic approach was used to drawing inferences from the data.

Results and Discussion

With approximately \$50 million allocated to the program over an 8 year period, the scale of the professional development was unprecedented in Irish education. A centralised 'cascade' format was adopted and three advisory groups were established to facilitate planning and implementation. Whereas these representative groups offered the potential for genuine partnership amongst all stakeholders in decision-making, the research revealed a perception among some of the minor partners (e.g. parents) that the views of a small number of key partners were dominant, a perception confirmed in documents reviewed. It is interesting, therefore, to understand how decisions were reached in relation to this program and to what extent the perspectives of various stakeholders were incorporated.

Structural features facilitating decision-making process: Key enabling structures

Three advisory structures (groups) were established to facilitate planning of curriculum implementation and associated professional development: (i) the Primary Curriculum Implementation Group (PCIG), (ii) the Technical Working Group (TWG) and (iii) the Steering Committee. As the Primary School Curriculum neared publication, attention within the NCCA and DES turned to considering how best to

ensure that the changes in the curriculum would, in actuality, be implemented by teachers. The PCSP evolved out of this concern and the Primary Curriculum Implementation Group (PCIG) was formed in 1997 to help promote curriculum implementation. This group operated under a 'partnership' structure common in the curriculum development agency (NCCA) at the time. Representatives were invited from a wide variety of interested parties and stakeholders. During this stage and thereafter, the three committees guided the work of the PCSP, two policy level committees and one managerial committee. A number of other structures or management layers supported the programme also.

PCIG and TWG

The Primary Curriculum Implementation Group (PCIG), chaired by a senior official of the DES, was established both as a consultative forum and decision-making body to represent the views of the education partners in relation to implementing the Primary School Curriculum. This committee acted in part as a monitoring committee, receiving implementation reports and dealing with all issues related to curriculum implementation, such as the process of phasing implementation and the provision of professional development to support teachers. It was a large committee representative of the education partners, with a membership that ranged between 15 and 22 people. From an early stage it was felt that the size and nature of the PCIG would make it too unwieldy to develop ideas efficiently and effectively. Consequently, a subcommittee, ranging in size from 7 to 10 people, the Technical Working Group (TWG), was established to work out the detail of providing support for teachers in relation to curriculum implementation and professional development. The working group consisted of representatives from the DES, curriculum development agency and some other significant stakeholders. Table 3 outlines the groups represented by the PCIG and a subsection of that group, the Technical Working Group (TWG).

Table 3

Organisations represented on PCIG and TWG

Organisation	PCIG	TWG
Department of Education and Science (DES)	✓	✓
In-career Development Unit (ICDU) of the DES	✓	✓
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	✓	✓
Dublin West Education Centre (DWEC)	✓	✓
Association of Teacher Education Centres of Ireland (ATECI)	✓	✓
Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)	✓	✓
National Parents Council – Primary (NPC-P)	✓	×
Catholic Primary School Managers' Association (CPSMA)	✓	×
Association of Primary Teaching Sisters (APTS)	✓	×
Educate Together (ET)	✓	×
Church of Ireland Board of Education (CIBE)	✓	×
Gaelscoileanna (GS)	✓	×
Colleges of Education	✓	×
Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP)	✓	✓

Source: Interviews with system planners & review of documentation

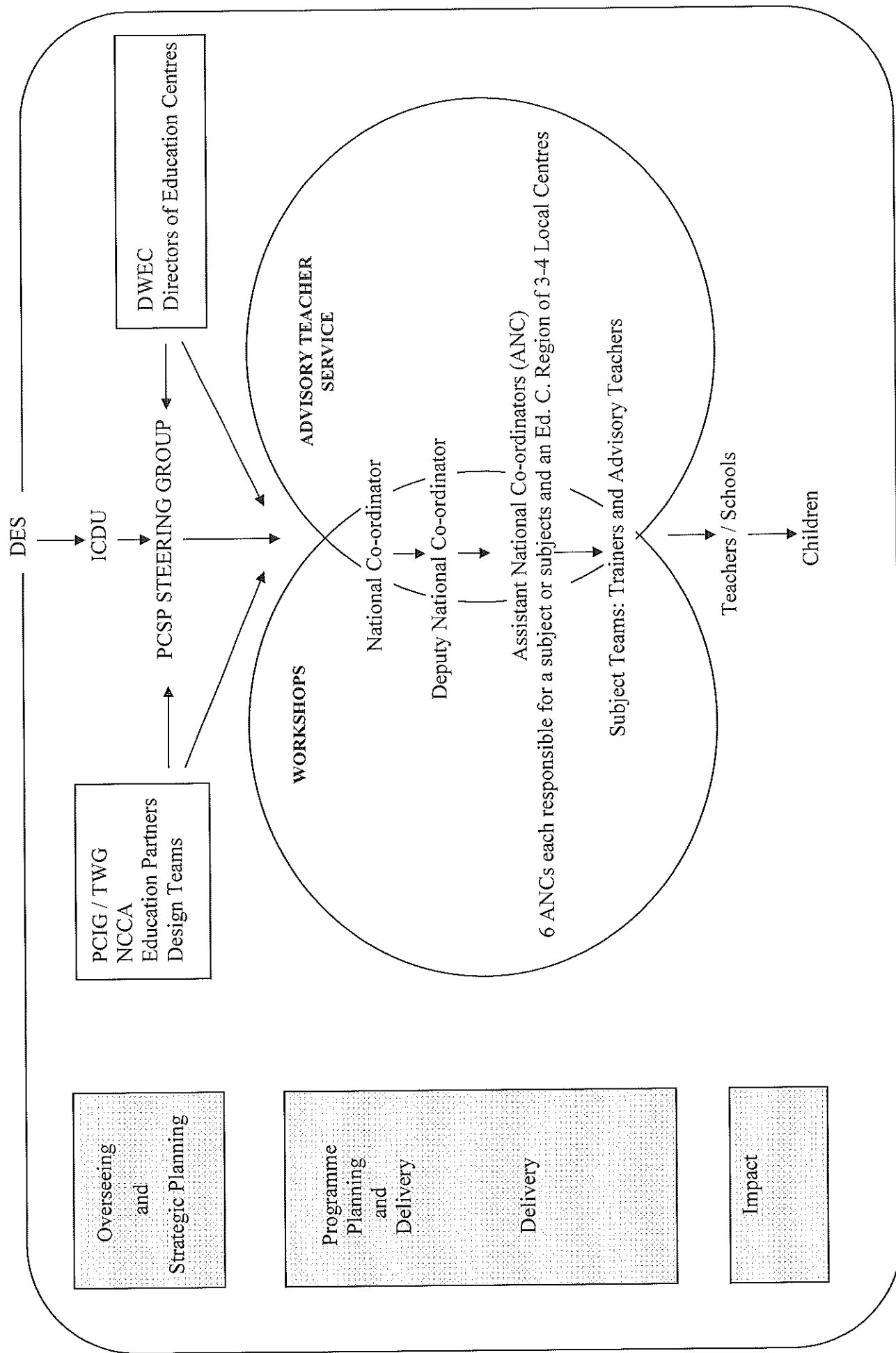
A further committee, The PCSP Steering Committee, was established to deal with the technical administrative aspects related to the operation of the PCSP. This group dealt with issues of budget, staff, recruitment, etc, the committee acting somewhat like a board of management, assuming responsibility for most of the day-to-day management of the programme. Underlying these groups, the DES had the overall say in determining budget and staffing for the PCSP and, as such, it had a very influential role on what could be done. The full enabling architecture for the professional development programme is illustrated in Figure 1. An explanatory list of Acronyms is provided in Appendix A.

Interviews with system planners revealed that, in essence, the TWG worked out the details and brought them back to the PCIG for ratification. For example, at an early stage, the TWG debated the issue of subject-based or multi-subject support and recommended a subject-based model to the PCIG who accepted it, but not without some reservations. From interviews with members of both committees and from a review of documents from the meetings, it seems that the TWG effectively made the decisions. There was a very positive dynamic amongst members of the TWG that resulted in much

discussion, usually leading to consensus positions being taken and the presentation of options to the PCIG. As was the intention in establishing the TWG, the “*group made a lot more of the proposals.*” However, it was probably never the intention that those same proposals were “*very often ... rubber-stamped back to the main Implementation Group*” (Member of PCIG). In principle, the PCIG was an inclusive model but there is evidence that the feeling of inclusiveness was not shared by all parties to the process, some of whom believed that the real discussions occurred in the TWG. For example, another member of the PCIG felt that many decisions were effectively taken by the TWG and that many of those represented on the PCIG had no input as a consequence: “*it was more or less telling us that this was the modus operandi.*”

The PCIG was established as both a consultative forum and decision-making body to represent the views of the education partners in relation to implementing the Primary School Curriculum. This seemed to work well for some of the ‘major’ partners but not for some of the others. There is a perception amongst some of the partners that certain decisions were taken by, and disproportionately suited to the interests of, some partners. Thus, curriculum implementation was stretched out over 6-7 years, professional development was organised during school time and there was to be no separate curriculum support for principals. For some participants, meetings of the PCIG were sometimes perceived as “*fora*” where members were informed about what was happening rather than taking the strategic decisions to make things happen. The comment of a PCIG member reflected the views above that “*at the implementation group meetings [named person] told us what was happening. We were reported back to and it was not consultative.*” The minutes of meetings of the PCIG and TWG lend some credence to that view.

Figure 1: Structural model for the Primary Curriculum Support Programme



Dynamics between the participating stakeholders

Role of PCIG & TWG

In the interactions between the two committees (with significant overlap in membership), according to one stakeholder, *“usually...what happened was, the technical group obviously did the work and then we [PCIG] would have been called for meetings and we would have been told look, this is what’s proposed for the coming year, you know, what do you think about it.”* Recognising that the locus of control was with the TWG, the interviewee added, *“well I suppose the technical working group would be the people who, when we got in at the stage, it was more or less telling us that this was the modus operandi. It was decided at that stage that was the way they felt they would go forward with it.”* Another partner noted that the TWG *“started working and they did fantastic work, my goodness but we weren't in on that so, they would come back with, their findings and recommendations and, I suppose, it was kind of imposed - not imposed, we just didn't have the input.”*

Depending on one’s perspective then, the work of the TWG facilitated the decision-making efficiency of the PCIG or drove the agenda. Some participants perhaps not unsurprisingly identified a hierarchy of stakeholders, centred on the DES and NCCA

What was expected from the process was not perceived identically amongst stakeholders. Parents were as much interested in modernisation of pedagogical methods than of curriculum content, in essence arguing that whereas the content of the curriculum had changed radically in 1971, many of the teaching methods remained *“far too formal, far too rigid, straight lines of desks, as opposed to being actively worked out with child-centred learning.”* Parents hoped for *“more active involvement of children in their own learning [and]. a more relaxed classroom and a more relaxed teacher and more busy sounds in classrooms.”*

Decision to implement the curriculum in phases

The approach to curriculum implementation and the approach to providing support for teachers were considered at the same time and are inextricably interlinked. A decision to introduce the curriculum in a phased manner was reached collectively by the Education Partners through the mechanism of PCIG. A number of implementation options or models were considered as outlined in Table 4. It was

considered that specific professional development issues would be associated with each of the four options.

Table 4
Models of curriculum support

Model	Main features
Big bang	All curriculum areas and subjects to be implemented simultaneously in every primary school. Similar to approach taken in 1971.
<i>Incremental</i> (starting with Junior Infants and continuing up through the classes)	Model is conceptually similar to the 'big bang' but implemented on a systematically rolling basis up through the primary grades, beginning with Infants. In year 1, all subjects to be implemented simultaneously in Infant classes. In year 2, addition of all subjects for 1 st and 2 nd Classes, etc. etc.
The wheel	Different subjects would be implemented on a rotational basis in four different regions of the country, thereby implementing the full curriculum simultaneously. For example, In Year 1, Arts Education would be implemented in Region 1; SESE in Region 2; Language in Region 3 and Mathematics, Physical Education and SPHE in Region 4. Over the course of Years 2-4, each region would implement the different curriculum area(s).
<i>Subject-by-subject / PCSP model</i>	Implement one or two subjects per year over a span of 5-6 years. Support to be provided to teachers in Year 1, with implementation in Year 2 (during which time support would be provided in another subject).

Source: Interviews with system planners & review of documentation

Whereas there may have been ultimate agreement amongst the education partners to operationalise the subject-by-subject approach, there was not a consensus to whether it was the best approach. The teachers' union, (INTO) was keen on the subject-by-subject approach and this approach was adopted despite the reservations of some of the partners, notably the parents' representatives who favoured the 'wheel' approach. The main arguments advanced in favour of the subject-by-subject approach were that teachers would "*connect*" more easily with subjects and that, in reality, the curriculum was subject based. The arguments in favour of the wheel were that full curriculum implementation could be achieved in a shorter time frame and that the integrity of the integrated curriculum would be more easily maintained, although, in the words of one professional development leader, "*this wouldn't have been practical.*" The parents' council argued that some children, already in the primary school, would have moved on to secondary school before some of the curriculum was introduced and therefore wouldn't experience some of the changes. The counter argument was made that many children never experienced the full richness of the previous (1971) curriculum due to the way in which it was introduced.

The ‘big bang’ approach, though tabled, was never seriously considered. The incremental approach was rejected primarily on the basis that it would place an unacceptable burden on teachers in small schools where a teacher in, say, a 2-teacher school would be expected to implement half the curriculum during a 2-year period. In the end, the subject approach was adopted as the easiest and most practical way to structure the support, taking account of the practicalities of the teaching and school contexts.

Essentially, the view advanced by the teachers’ union that its members would balk at a simultaneous implementation of all subjects sidelined the “big-bang” option. The union highlighted the benefits of a 5-6 year timeframe, a view shared by many other stakeholders. One union representative advanced the view that

“I think it takes time to absorb a lot of what’s in the revised curriculum and I think it would have been unrealistic to expect teachers to take on board unless you close the schools for a few months. And then again that wouldn’t be answer either, because when ... you don’t just take up a revised curriculum, read it and then implement it. It’s a process which means, it’s gradually implemented anyway. I think the workload issue would have been the main reason to phase the curriculum in, and spread it out”

In contrast, parents’ representatives worried about the slow pace of implementation and loss of opportunity to some students as a result:

The other thing I think from a parents point of view that has been very disappointing is how long it’s going to take to get the curriculum implemented, and I think we’ve said openly that this wouldn’t happen in any other walk of life that you can take seven eight years to fully implement a change. Like children will have gone through their school days by the time, so I think the slowness of doing it, and maybe the kind of a more cross-curricular look at it would be helpful, certainly in terms of competent teachers, with good leadership from the principal and good school planning and good curriculum support should be able to teach the curriculum because it’s the manner of teaching I feel is more of a change than the actual content.

Mixed into the above is a reinforcement of the view from parents, highlighted earlier, that the greatest change and need for change in curriculum lay in pedagogy rather than content. This view differs from that of the INTO who highlighted the necessity to recognise the level of new content in the curriculum and to ensure that

teachers were made aware of the content at the subject level. One union official noted that

there was new content and that as a phase one that it was important that teachers would have access to the information. We were constantly thinking all the time about that kind of cross-curricular approach, but we felt that it was really important to give people the information about the new subject areas.

It was felt that teachers would need to come back to the principles of the curriculum year on year through different subjects so that the basic principles could be assimilated by them.

School managerial authorities, whereas they agreed in principle that a phased approach to implementation was necessary [*“we had to look at what was practical from an implementation point of view”*], nonetheless identified disadvantages in the phased model of professional development that flowed inevitably from that decision. It was decided that teachers and principals could be “seconded” temporarily from schools to join the professional development provider for a year or more, with the State paying for replacement teachers in their schools. It seems that the planners had not fully anticipated the impact of this on schools:

And it actually has had a knock-on effect which I don't know if we'd factored into so many highly motivated... principals and teachers throughout the country came out of the teaching system of the school system There were an awful lot of the best people have actually gone into the PCSP

Managers were also resolved to the necessity of *“maintaining the education of the children who were currently in the school but at the same time beginning to introduce our teachers to the new approach and so the best we could do was to introduce a couple of subjects of topics each year.”* They also advanced the opinion that *“the Primary Curriculum is so wide that it would be very difficult to sort of put it all into place in one fell swoop the rationale was the planned implementation of it over a period of time, in such a way that people felt comfortable with it and it didn't entirely disrupt the school year and the teaching taking place.”*

Being more concerned with the practical implication of introducing the curriculum and facilitating professional development, managers were particularly attuned to difficulties in implementation, such as the short notice of school closure provided to parents (and schools) in advance of professional development workshops by the

PCSP. One manager colourfully noted that when notice to parents was short, "*the principal got it in the ear, rightly or wrongly.*"

In the end, the PCIG recommended the decision to phase in the curriculum and the decision to phase in-service flowed from that decision. The union (INTO) took seriously the need to recognise the level of new content in the curriculum and to ensure that teachers were made aware of the content at the subject level, one union representative noting that

the view was held that there was new content and that as a phase one that it was important that teachers would have access to the information. We were constantly thinking all the time about that kind of cross-, kind of the cross-curricular approach, but we felt that it was really important to give people the information about the new subject areas.

The principle of integration in the curriculum

One possible unintended consequence of the decision to phase in the curriculum was some compromising of the principle of subject integration across the curriculum. Perhaps it was this decision that encourages the colleges of education to largely continue to provide education in the 11 subjects separately. In the words of one DES representative,

Schools are comfortable with the notion of a curriculum being compartmentalised like that, it's not necessarily ideal from the point of view of integrating the curriculum that it's presented in that particular way, but it would be the way the teachers have been trained in Colleges of Education in their pre-service years, where the training would have been given for specific subjects. I think that they're quite comfortable with that now, but whether it's the ideal way to implement curricula in schools is a much wider debate, that's how we have it.

Another Departmental representative queried

"why wasn't the curriculum designed as an integrated curriculum, because it wasn't... it was developed and then brought together and maybe we walked ourselves into it.

A view not entirely without support within the NCCA

How the curriculum was going to be rolled out, that was decided first. There were very strong cases made for say introducing Maths

and English first or English and Irish or whatever, you know the core subjects. Or let's do it in Infants first, let's bring it up gradually but eventually the argument prevailed that because it was an integrated learning construct, because if you started in Infants for example, it would be eight years before it reached sixth class or possibly longer, that if you started with English then other subjects would come later. Now essentially that's what happened, I mean it was introduced in groups of subjects and it was inevitable that you couldn't do the whole thing together. But the decision as to how the curriculum was to be rolled out was anti to the nature of the in-service development programme.

That representative noted that the decision to introduce the curriculum and associated professional development in a manner essentially inconsistent with one cardinal principle of the curriculum (integration) was due to “*sheer practicalities. It was not practical to in-service the whole curriculum together. It had to be done like a piecemeal basis and inevitably that was going to be by subjects.*” The professional development coincided with concern nationally in relation to the take-up of physics and chemistry in upper secondary school and the supply of science graduates to industry so “*the Department was keen and a lot of people were keen that for example Science should come in to the area, it was given a lot of high profile.*”

Such sentiments, highlight a perception, even within the NCCA, of the existence of a core curriculum, explicitly acknowledged in the curriculum itself where, highlighted prominently among the key issues in primary education, are literacy and numeracy, the Irish language and science education (Government of Ireland, 1999). This potential dilemma was anticipated at the planning stage, and it was agreed that teachers' first tranche of professional development (3 days in Year 1) would not address any particular subject but would address the whole curriculum.

Parents' representatives considered the subject-by-subject development of the curriculum as a mistake to be rectified. The curriculum

developed by the NCCA was developed as a series of separate subjects, and one of the discussions that took place at the beginning of this was how could we seek to try and overcome that through the kind of in-service teachers would have, could it be looked at say through themes, so that you'd be looking at carrying a theme through the different subjects...

Finding the balance between presenting the curriculum in some sort of integrated, thematic professional development exercise and as subject-training occupied the

thoughts of another Group 3 stakeholder who shared the perspective that “*there’s an awful lot of evidence in terms of school effectiveness done, that dealing with single subjects on their own works better.*”

In the end, the view of the INTO in relation to subject-by-subject professional development prevailed, perhaps not surprisingly given the critical necessity of ensuring that teachers would buy into and take ownership of the curriculum. A Group 1 planner acknowledged that

we would have ideally liked I think for perhaps the first two years to be more integrated or even three and then to go deeper into the subjects but I think in practical terms, probably mainly the INTO felt, look you mightn’t connect with people, people look at the curriculum in terms of subjects.... I suppose we had to deal with the reality on the ground and the INTO I suppose got, from feedback from teachers that whilst that would be very helpful that it was a bit of a luxury because teachers wanted to connect with the different subjects.

The sequencing of subjects actually implemented largely reflects a perspective of curriculum that emphasises a core consisting of language and mathematics, with science not far behind, as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5
Primary School Curriculum: Phased implementation deadlines.

Proposed Implementation	Subjects
2000–2001	English T1 ^a , Irish T1 ^b
2001-2002	English T2 ^c , Visual Arts
2002-2003	Gaeilge T2 ^d , Mathematics
2003-2004 ^e	Science, SPHE
2005-2006	PE, Music
2006-2007	History, Geography, Drama

Notes:

^a EnglishT1: English curriculum where the main language of instruction in the school is English

^b Irish T 1: Irish curriculum where the main language of instruction in the school is Irish

^c English T2: English curriculum where the main language of instruction in the school is Irish

^d Irish T2: Irish curriculum where the main language of instruction in the school is English

^e 2003-2004 was designated as a Review and Consolidation Year where the pace of curriculum implementation was slowed to enable teachers accommodate existing changes into their planning and practice.

Whereas Science did not come in sequence as early as it might have, given the prevailing labour-force needs, the subject was fast-tracked in that it was split it from the two other subjects in the curriculum grouping known as Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE). The two other subjects in that, group, History and Geography), were introduced later. The accelerated implementation of Science was undertaken to meet the Government's broader commitment to promoting Science for long-term strategic economic reasons regardless of the principle of integration within the curriculum.

Reasons for embracing centralised professional development.

Discussions with key informants revealed that one of the main reasons for establishing a centralised system of professional development was to ensure that the work that had been invested in the development of the curriculum did not falter at the stage of implementation by schools. Experience (negative) in relation to implementation of the previous curriculum influenced the revised policy and, as evident from the preceding sections of the paper, the particular model of professional development chosen was also influenced by concomitant decisions in relation to phased implementation of the curriculum itself. These decisions about the form and pace of curriculum implementation and of the professional development provided to teachers have impacted how the curriculum is perceived by teachers. For example, as discussed earlier, it is doubtful whether a majority of teachers truly perceive the curriculum as an integrated construct; rather they see it as a set of subjects in the traditional sense.

A number of stakeholders argued for professional development linked specifically to subjects rather than more generic support in relation to differentiation, classroom management, assessment and planning for teaching. Interviewees noted reservations amongst teachers and principals in relation to the length and complexity of the curriculum documentation and therefore the need for subject-based support. Whereas the decision to offer subject-based support seems to run counter to the principle of integration (of subjects) underlying the revised curriculum, responses from a variety of interviewees revealed a tacit acceptance across the policy-making spectrum that the curriculum is, in reality, not integrated and is unlikely to be, as indicated by the views of one senior official:

'many of us are at an age and of a disposition to think in terms of subjects so we didn't feel bound by that rhetoric [curricular integration].'

Indeed, initial soundings from a main stakeholder [DES] suggesting that professional development might only be required in 3 subjects, revealed at an early stage it's vision of a "core" curriculum. Eschewing a large-scale professional development initiative, and anticipating more recent developments, a Group 1 system planner advanced the view that *"the last thing we need in in-career development is to build an army that want to do things in the same way across the board. I think what we need is a multi-disciplinary response."*

Timing of professional development

A final decision that highlighted sharp divisions between the stakeholders relates to the perennially thorny issue of when the support is provided. The literature on professional development constantly highlights the allocation of sufficient time as a key issue affecting change at an individual and school level. For example:

Time is one of the greatest constraints to any change process, whether at the individual, classroom, or school level (Collinson and Cook, 2001: 266)

Every analysis of the problems of change efforts that we have seen in the last decade of research and practice has concluded that time is the most salient issue (Fullan and Miles, 1992: 570, cited in Collinson and Cook, 2001).

In the present study, the parents' representatives wished to see at least some of the professional development occur outside of school hours, in teachers' own time, noting that *"it can't all be during working hours, I mean everybody does stuff that's outside the working hours."* The context in which parents' views emerged was predicated partly on calls to their helpline from parents frustrated with the number of days on which their children's school was closed, or the short notice in relation to closures; letters from working parents, some *"who aren't very well off who are employed outside the home, ... who ... aren't earning enough to pay for childminding so there losing pay at random."* Parents highlighted the dual concerns of their members, children missing out on school time but also how the parents themselves can *"cope with it."*

The view of the teacher union centred on the extreme difficulty of encouraging teachers to agree to professional development to support the introduction of a revised curriculum, outside of school time. Put simply, “*it wasn’t conceivable that this was ever going to be able to be delivered, ... say during the holiday period or in an after school model.*” The polarised positions of the two stakeholders is highlighted also in the view from some parents that even the professional development days that were introduced (reflecting the length of the typical teaching day – student-contact day at primary level of approximately 6 hours) could have been longer.

Teachers have very favourable working hours by comparison with anybody else and the day has to be longer so that, I mean this idea of having just the school day for in-service, I mean most people if they’re doing a days training, like if I’m doing a days training it starts maybe at half-eight and it goes on to five, and you get a break in the middle and you work very hard all day, and by breaking the thing up well so that it’s partly workshopy stuff and partly hearing things and partly practicing things, people are well able to put in a longer day, so we get better value for money from a state point of view, but also more training in the same period of time. I think that’s, I don’t know if that will ever happen, but I think that’s, there is an issue around that.

It was further suggested, contrary to the view of the union that there should be some scope for professional development of the type required to introduce a revised curriculum to be structured as:

“night courses, or summer courses, they’ve got plenty of time in the summer, and trying to get a culture where people, teachers in this case, feel responsible for their own professional development, it’s not something like The Department does or somebody else does it. In most professions you’ve got to, I mean a professional is part of being in a profession, you’ve to take responsibility for your own professional development, and take steps if you need to do things. I think more a culture of that would be something that would be very helpful.

In the end, the views of the teachers prevailed. Given these polarised positions, with, in the main, the other stakeholders standing back from the discussion, how can time be generated to allow for professional development? Collinson and Cook (2001) suggest that a possible option for overcoming shortages of time is to re-conceptualise teachers’ employment year. The participants in their study reported that their most productive learning period, when they had most unpressurised time and more

opportunities to meet with colleagues, was during the summer. In other words, Collinson and Cook suggest that it may be time for teachers to look upon their working year in terms of a 12-month year, as opposed to a 9-month year. Likewise, Trant and O'Donnabhain (1998), in the Irish context, suggest that it is time to re-conceptualise the traditional format of the school day, and how classes are structured. They suggest experimenting with various learning groups, from team teaching to peer teaching, thereby releasing the teacher from the classroom environment for other activities such as teacher learning. Sugrue, Morgan, Devine & Raftery (2001) speculated at that time that the benchmarking process within the National Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (Government of Ireland, 2000) offered an opportunity to initiate professional development in teachers' own time. However, re-structuring the traditional school day and/or year in order to free up time necessary for the process of change to occur is a significant challenge facing the education community.

Discussion and Conclusions

A large degree of consensus marked the process of reform implementation. The curriculum itself was the culmination of an 8-year period of review, consultation and design and was published in 1999 with a minimum of controversy or dissent. Key informants interviewed in the study converged in relation to a range of issues including: the provision of professional development through a national network of 21 Education Centres; each school and each teacher should receive identical support regardless of need; and the extent of the professional development to be provided (approximately 6 days per year). Not surprisingly, differences emerged between the parties, in relation to a number of issues.

Although the overall approach to reform was predicated on a partnership, consensus-based approach to discussion and decision making, there is evidence from the interview and documentary data that this did not always work in practice: 'bigger' players sometimes had more influence, for example, the controversial decision to eschew any separate support for principals during the early phase of the programme. Principals were required to attend the same workshops as the teachers and received no advance or separate briefing on the curricular changes or on the proposed professional development. Similarly, the decision to accommodate all support during school hours (thereby closing schools to students for 6-7 days annually) instead of in teachers' own

time represented a victory for the position (and strength) of teachers in comparison with parents' representatives. Whereas the teacher union was also happy to secure positions as professional development trainers for many of their own members, temporarily 'seconded' from schools, the school managerial authorities became increasingly concerned about the effect this was having on schools' capacity to implement the changes as key staff exited to work with the in-service agency.

Differences of opinion emerged amongst the stakeholders also in relation to the actual phased implementation of the curriculum itself and this had a profound effect on the professional development model adopted also. Four specific options for curriculum implementation were considered and whereas there was broad agreement to adopt a phased approach, radical differences emerged in relation to the method of phasing and the timeframe to be allowed. Parents and the DES favoured a shorter timeframe involving implementation of groups of subjects simultaneously; the teacher union favoured a much more elongated process, as slow as one subject per year. A modification of the latter view prevailed. Some differences emerged also in relation to the sequencing of the subjects to be implemented. Science was fast-tracked ahead of its related subjects, Geography and History, a policy acknowledged by Ministry officials designed to meet the Government's broader commitment to promoting Science for long-term strategic economic reasons. Some differences were evident also in relation to the structure of the support: while there was broad acceptance of the need for active learning methodologies based on adult learning theory, one stakeholder subsequently commented on a *'certain silliness in how these activities were organised.... A sense that there were activities for the sake of having activities.'*

Interesting differences emerged also in relation to stakeholders' expectations of the program of professional development. The DES was strongly oriented to delivering change for children in class via change in teacher practice. The NCCA shared this view, with somewhat less emphasis on observable change in children's learning, concentrating more on the features of the curriculum that need to be communicated to the teachers. Both agencies were anxious that teachers would move beyond knowing about the curriculum and cooperating with it: *"reviews of the implementation of the 1971 curriculum [showed] that whereas teachers thought the ideas were wonderful ... it didn't translate into practice so we were ... after changes in practice,"* [DES representative]. This expectation differs somewhat from other groups, notably the teacher union and the PCSP who emphasised the teacher rather

than on the child: *'help teachers understand the curriculum'* [PCSP representative], ease teachers into new subjects, give teachers a sense of ownership of the curriculum. The union's main aim was to encourage teachers to be comfortable with the curriculum, to believe in the curriculum and to be supported in implementing it, a far cry from the more specific and student-centred expectations of the DES and NCCA. As highlighted earlier, parents' representatives expected that the professional development would enhance teaching methodology and bring about the child-centeredness that was not fully delivered from the previous (1971) curriculum.

The story of the planning for implementation of the curriculum and associated professional development involved a partnership model that reflects a wider "social partnership" approach successfully adopted within the Irish economy and society over the past 20 years. Whereas there were disagreements between the stakeholders, decisions were reached, sometimes on foot of stakeholders' relative strengths, sometimes on the basis of genuine compromise. Noting that the key players *'had a very similar vision and got on extremely well and were very much listened to,'* one senior participant highlighted the important influence of personal relationships between the most influential players in setting the agenda and ensuring that it was fulfilled.

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Appendix A

Acronyms Used in the Paper

APTS	Association of Primary Teaching Sisters
ATECI	Association of Teacher Education Centres Ireland
CIBE	Church of Ireland Board of Education
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPSMA	Catholic Primary School Managers' Association
DES	Department of Education and Science
DWEC	Dublin West Education Centre
ERC	Educational Research Centre
ESRU	Evaluation Support and Research Unit
ET	Educate Together
GS	Gaelscoileanna
ICDU	In-Career Development Unit
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
IPPN	Irish Primary Principals' Network
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NPC-P	National Parents' Council - Primary
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCIG	Primary Curriculum Implementation Group
PCSP	Primary Curriculum Support Programme
PRSI	Pay Related Social Insurance
PSC	Primary School Curriculum
RCSS	Regional Curriculum Support Service
SESE	Social, Environmental and Scientific Education
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SDPS	School Development Planning Support
TES	Teacher Education Section
TWG	Technical Working Group