



ATTRACTING,  
DEVELOPING  
AND  
RETAINING  
EFFECTIVE  
TEACHERS



COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT FOR IRELAND

National Co-ordinators: Ms. Emer Egan  
Mr. Ian Murphy  
Department of Education and Science

Author: Professor John Coolahan  
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This report was prepared for the Irish Department of Education and Science as an input to the OECD activity Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers. The document was prepared in response to guidelines the OECD provided to all participating countries. The guidelines encouraged the author to canvass a breadth of views and priorities on teacher policy issues. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of Education and Science, the OECD or its Member countries.



# FOREWORD

The issuing of this report is timely. Its publication coincides with widespread changes in education: change brought about by legislation; change wrought by social transformation; change resulting from economic developments and change arising from altered patterns of employment. In this changed and changing environment, education plays a critical role. Central to this role is the teacher.

This report arises from a conviction shared by ministers of education internationally that improvement in learning and teaching in a rapidly changing world hinges on quality in the teaching force. Emanating from this shared conviction came a request to the OECD to conduct an international research project on Teacher Policies. This country background report is the Irish contribution to the OECD project entitled *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*. The work undertaken during this OECD project is complemented by initiatives at EU level: the work of the Future Objectives Group 1.1 *A Improving the Quality and Effectiveness of Education and Training Systems* in the EU, and the European Network on Teacher Education Policies (ENTEP), established by the EU to advise on teacher education policies.

This report on teacher policies in Ireland is encouraging. It points to the past and continuing high academic standing of teachers in the profession. It highlights the recent reports on teacher education at both first and second levels and considers the emerging issues. It cites the quality and range of curriculum support services as an example of the priority given to the continuous professional development of teachers. It refers to the proposed establishment of a Teaching Council as a positive development for the teaching profession in Ireland.

While the report cites many positive developments within the system, it does not encourage complacency. It highlights a number of issues that will need to be addressed if Ireland is to remain in a position of strength in terms of the attractiveness of its teaching profession. It points to the perceived lack of attractiveness of the profession to men. It highlights the lack of recruitment of teachers from minority groups, immigrant groups and disadvantaged communities. It alludes to the competency model of teacher preparation versus the traditional academic/pedagogic approach.

In addition, the report refers to quite specific issues emerging in the day-to-day delivery of education which, if not addressed, may have considerable impact on the quality of teaching and learning in our schools. These include: the number of unqualified teachers operating in primary schools every day; the high turnover of teachers in disadvantaged areas; shortages of teachers in a number of subject areas at second level; under performing teachers; the shortage of statistical data on teachers.

Professor Coolahan's report presents a wide-ranging review of teacher policies in Ireland. He suggests that it is timely to consider a renewed policy approach to teacher education and to the teaching career which addresses the 3 Is of initial teacher education, induction and in-career development as interconnected and necessary supports in an era of lifelong learning. By placing current policies within their historical context, he facilitates an understanding of the forces that have brought them about. Such an understanding is fundamental to change and development. By describing the forces of change that are impacting on education, he creates the framework that should shape the nature of teacher policies in the future. By presenting the reader with a menu of policy strengths and weaknesses, he is assisting contemporary policy makers with a range of options in drafting policies for the education of teachers in the 21st century. In short, this report presents us with a challenge. Enriched by new thinking, research and best practice examples from international experience, it also provides us with ideas and options for responding to this challenge. As a nation, we have a rich inheritance in education. Let us build on it.



Noel Dempsey T.D.

Minister for Education and Science

# INTRODUCTION

This Country Background Report (CBR) on the teaching career in Ireland forms part of the major OECD study "Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers." Similar reports are being submitted from twenty six other countries. Nine of these countries are also engaged on 'thematic' studies of the teaching career, involving site visits by external reviewers appointed by the OECD. The format of the CBRs follows a common pattern, set out by the OECD in its Design and Implementation Plan. This is to facilitate comparative analysis of sub-themes of the reports. Thus, each CBR involves six chapters. The first two – "the national context" and "school system and the teaching force" – are intended to provide succinct overviews of these themes in line with queries posed in the OECD documentation. Each of the other four chapters is designed on a common format – identification of policy concerns; data, trends and factors; policy initiatives and their impact. Specific questions are posed regarding data, trends and factors. The same questions may be posed in relation to more than one sub-theme which gives rise to some repetition in the report, but is important for the comparative analysis.

The questions posed seek to elicit more than factual responses. As is stated in the Design and Implementation Plan, "The questions are intended to draw out a problem-oriented and dynamic view of teacher policy issues from each country... They are intended to draw out coherent analyses and discussions on key policy issues." The study is intended to be policy oriented, with the overall aim of providing policy makers with information to assist them in formulating and implementing teacher policies leading to quality teaching and learning at the school level.

The OECD wishes to ensure the Country Background Report does not just reflect the views of the central administrative educational authorities, but that it also encompasses views of other stakeholders. The views of senior officials within the Department of Education and Science were sought through a series of meetings and through written submissions. A National Consultative Forum, with representatives of fifty two stakeholders was convened in September 2002 and care was taken to record their viewpoints. Care has been taken to enrich the report with concerns and viewpoints of many interested groups. The views of researchers have been sought, and material has been drawn from a range of recent research reports, relevant to the theme. The National Co-ordinators for the CBR and the author are very grateful for all the oral, documentary and statistical data made available to them, and for the co-operation of many people. We hope that this Country Background Report may be regarded as a valuable resource for policy makers and others on the teaching career in contemporary Ireland, and that it will be helpful in the general OECD study.

It is planned that the overall OECD study will be completed in 2004, and that the findings will be readily available to all interested parties.

April 2003.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	–	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
ASTI	–	Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland
CAO	–	Central Applications Office
CMOD	–	Centre for Management Organisation Development
CPSMA	–	Catholic Primary School Managers' Association
DES	–	Department of Education and Science
ERC	–	Educational Research Centre
ESAI	–	Educational Studies Association of Ireland
FETAC	–	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HEA	–	Higher Education Authority
HDEAC	–	Higher Diploma in Education Applications Centre
HETAC	–	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
ICDU	–	In-career Development Unit
IFUT	–	Irish Federation of University Teachers
INTO	–	Irish National Teachers Organisation
IPPN	–	Irish Primary Principals' Network
IVEA	–	Irish Vocational Education Association
JMB	–	Joint Managerial Body
NAPD	–	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NCCA	–	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCGE	–	National Council for Guidance in Education
NCTE	–	National Council for Technology in Education
NPC	–	National Parents' Council
NQAI	–	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
TUI	–	Teachers' Union of Ireland

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ireland's Country Background Report on Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers (2003) comes against a background of twelve years of unprecedented appraisal, analysis and formulation of educational policy. All aspects of the education system have been reviewed from "the cradle to the grave", within a lifelong learning paradigm. In 1991, the government identified education as a strategic force for the social, economic and cultural development of the state. Since then, a formal review of the system was conducted by the OECD, the government issued two green papers (policy proposal documents), and three white papers (policy decision documents). The approach taken was a highly consultative one with all the stakeholders, the highlights of which were a National Convention on Education (1993), a National Consultative Forum on Adult Education (1996) and a National Forum on Early Childhood Education (1998). Outcomes of the process included curricular reforms for all stages of the school system, as well as a raft of major educational legislation including the Universities Act (1997), the Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the National Qualifications Authority Act (2001), the Teaching Council Act (2001). This period was also one during which Ireland experienced remarkable economic growth, well ahead of the OECD average. In the view of both international and national commentators, the quality of Ireland's education system has been a key causal factor in the socio-economic change involved.

To help sustain Ireland's position within the emerging knowledge society, a major agenda of educational change and reform has now been put in place. It is realised that the teaching force is a crucial agent for the implementation of this agenda. As was noted by the OECD examiners in 1991, "Ireland has been fortunate in the quality of its teaching force." Traditionally, the teaching career in Ireland has enjoyed high social status and regard. In all policy documents of the nineties, the government paid generous tribute to the work of teachers, affirmed the significance of their roles and proposed a proactive series of measures in support of the teaching career. Teachers retain the confidence of the public, entry to teacher education is still highly competitive from well-qualified candidates, teacher education, both pre-service and inservice, is well regarded. Teaching is an all graduate career, with a common salary scale, and it has become more diversified in recent years. Teachers are highly unionised in Ireland, with the teacher unions projecting both a concern for professional issues as well as a traditional union approach. They have been partners in a sequence of national partnership agreements since 1987, relating to economic and social planning.

While many positive features exist, there is also a realisation that it is timely to establish a more comprehensive policy approach to teacher education and to the teaching career so that they can fulfill the challenging roles which current policy and social change present. Major reviews of primary and post-primary teacher education were commissioned by the Department of Education and Science and have been presented to it in the recent past. The recommendations of these reports arise from analysis of the interface between the current extensive education reform agenda and the preparedness of the teaching profession to meet it. It is expected that these reports will pave the way for policy initiatives

in the period ahead. The first major research study on gender attitudes to the teaching profession was completed in July 2002, and it recommends a comprehensive range of policy responses. Another major research study on the provision of in-career education and training of teachers was completed in 2001, and it recommends the development of a more comprehensive strategic policy on the topic, with a stronger partnership dimension. A landmark development of the recent past was the passing of legislation in 2001 to establish a Teaching Council, giving wide-ranging responsibilities to the teaching profession on entry standards, training courses, in-service education, research and professional conduct. Thus, the elements for a developmental, rather than a serious remediation, policy drive on the teaching career are in place. Problems and difficulties do exist, and the great value of this OECD research project is the stimulation it provides to diagnose and reflect on these from a policy perspective, enriched by some best practice procedures from international experience.

As is indicated in chapter 3 of the Report, Ireland experiences no problems at present in attracting high level recruits to the teaching profession. However, recruitment is not without its problems. Due to changing employment patterns and conditions of work, as well as a recent increase in the primary school population, Ireland has a shortage of about 1,000 qualified primary teachers. Increases in recruitment to teacher education courses have been instituted. The current shortage may put a brake on the recommendations of a review body to extend the primary teacher education course to four years. There is also a great imbalance in the nature of recruitment between men and women candidates, with about a nine to one ratio in favour of women. Research indicates that complex causes are involved here, but it would seem that the image of primary teaching is one of involving "women's work". In the past, no special initiatives were undertaken, or perhaps needed, to promote the image of primary teaching, but this now requires attention. The very long incremental scale of twenty-five years is also regarded by some commentators as inimical to the image, particularly for males. The recent review body on primary teacher education has also urged the re-introduction of interviews as supplemental to academic achievement, for selection into teaching.

In an increasingly multi-cultural society, another problem is the lack of recruitment of trainee teachers from minority groups, immigrant groups, and Travellers. It has been recommended by a recent national forum on the disadvantaged that positive discrimination measures should be applied as one way of addressing the problem. While there has been an increase in mature student entry to teacher education, it is recognised that the teaching profession could be enriched by a greater influx from personnel with varied work experience. A major disincentive for such personnel at present, however, is that they get no credit for such work experience, and they have to begin at the bottom of the teacher salary scale. The consultative processes, held as part of this project, and research indicate that there are shortages in a number of subject areas in post-primary schools. It is desirable that more attention be paid to this issue. The value of introducing some subject quotas on recruitment to post-primary teacher education should be explored.

There have been no expressions of public dissatisfaction or controversy with regard to existing processes of educating, developing and certifying teachers, and teacher educators have been involved in course development and reform. Yet, it is recognised that it is desirable, periodically, to analyse, in a more comprehensive way, what is being done with a view to restructuring and modernising in line with



evolving needs and new thinking and research. Accordingly, reviews by ministerially appointed committees on both primary and post-primary teacher education have been presented over the last two years to the Minister. While the reviews endorse both the concurrent and consecutive models which exist, they each make a series of recommendations which should guide policy-makers in the years ahead. Among key priorities for policy development in educating, developing and certifying teachers are the extension of the pre-service teacher education courses, the restructuring of some course content to give a greater sense of cross curricular integration, foster a reflective practitioner approach and provide closer links with school personnel on teaching practice.

While there has been a great expansion in the provision and variety of in-service teacher education since the early nineties, the recent reviews also urge improvements in this area, regarding the 3I's of initial teacher education, induction and in-service education as interconnected, and as vital supports for the teaching career in an era of lifelong learning. Recommendations include the establishment of a national induction system with appropriate financing for timetable provision and the support of school mentors, a more strategic policy agency which would more overtly develop a coherent partnership between all relevant agencies for INSET and more direct financial support or recognition for teachers undergoing certificated in-service courses. It is also recommended that more flexible support structures should be put in place whereby other career personnel might be attracted to teaching. Other analyses of in-service teacher education have also been conducted in 2000-01, which urge a more strategic, comprehensive, connected policy approach. These studies and the expected establishment of the Teaching Council early in 2004 should prove of great value in bringing about improvements to existing practice. Action on these issues would greatly enhance the teaching profession's preparedness for the challenges which lie ahead, and position it well to build for the future on the solid foundations which exist. There would be strong support among stakeholders for such policy options. Many of the issues involved have been widely discussed, and the initiatives would be seen to be timely and appropriate. The main difficulty would appear to be the provision of the necessary financial resources to bring them about, rather than any sectoral opposition. There will be a need to prioritise lines of action within an implementation plan, over a time period, for the teaching career.

In Ireland, teachers are not assigned by a central agency to schools. The Department of Education and Science determines the number of teachers which a school can employ, linked to pupil teacher ratios. However, it is the school management board or the vocational education committee, as the appointing body, which makes the arrangements for appointment, and is the employer of teachers. Thus, a great deal of freedom exists for teachers and school managements regarding appointment. Despite the pattern of employment at local level by individual school managements, to date, there has not been a significant difficulty in securing teachers for schools throughout the country, whether urban or rural. The teachers' union indicates that in recent years some schools have difficulty recruiting qualified teachers, probably linked to the current shortage of such teachers. It is also acknowledged that some schools in disadvantaged areas experience high turnover of staff. Consideration is being given for preferential recruitment of trainee teachers from disadvantaged contexts.

Both primary and post-primary teachers are required to serve a probationary year. The inspectorate evaluates the probationary experience at primary level, but at post-primary level it is more informal,

with the school principal certifying the satisfactory completion of probationary service. If, following probation, a teacher secures a permanent position, then tenure follows. In the event of school amalgamation or declines in pupil population a panel scheme exists for primary teachers, and a redeployment scheme for teachers in voluntary secondary schools which secures employment for teachers surplus to requirements, under certain conditions. Mobility of teachers within the school system is limited, partly influenced by the significance of retaining seniority in a particular school for promotion purposes. Neither does mobility exist for teachers between primary and post-primary schools.

Among areas for policy concern in the area of teacher employment are the processes for evaluation of probation at post-primary level, the difficulties for newly qualified post-primary teachers in obtaining permanent teaching positions, up-skilling of teachers to meet the needs of pupils, better training for extra support staff introduced into the system. The issue of a satisfactory redeployment scheme for all post-primary teachers is likely to become more urgent in the light of the projected significant decline of post-primary pupil numbers.

The retention of effective teachers in schools needs to be a key policy concern in any country. International research indicates that teacher retention can be affected by an inter-connected range of factors, over a career span. Ireland does not appear to have a serious problem in retaining effective teachers. Some of the factors which are operative in countries experiencing high teacher attrition rates seem to be less evident in Ireland. When a range of relevant issues such as image and profile of the job, public confidence in and affirmation of teachers' work, the quality of pre-service teacher education, the opportunities for continuing professional development, the opportunities for partnership and input to policy, the conditions of work, opportunities for diversification, worker-friendly leave arrangements, modes of teacher appointment, security of tenure, supports in times of difficulty, general salary scales, scope for promotion and are appraised, they reflect a mainly positive framework regarding the teaching career. Of course, there are difficulties and problems among which are teachers' views that salaries are inadequate, the lack of teacher induction systems, the unsatisfactory condition of some school buildings, inadequate investment in teaching resources and equipment, the need to implement recommended reforms in teacher education, high pupil teacher ratios, the stress levels in some teaching contexts, the need for better management of career breaks and secondments, some of which are elaborated on in chapter 6.3. A particular problem, emerging from the policy of pupil integration, is the training of classroom teachers, as well as learning support assistants for the needs of pupils with disabilities.

It has been stated above that Ireland does not appear to have a problem in retaining effective teachers, but it is also the case that Ireland does not know enough about the issue. In recent years, efforts have been made to build up a data base on teachers, but it is still quite inadequate, leaving many gaps in our knowledge of different features of teacher trends and attitudes. More precise data is needed on the qualifications of teachers, on the fit between their qualifications and their teaching duties, on the age range patterns, on the retention patterns in teaching, on the pool of former teachers, on the attitudes of student teachers, on the attitudes of former teachers, on male perspectives on the teaching profession, on the needs of teachers at different stages of the teaching career, on teacher attitudes to

varying forms of teacher in-service education, on attitudes of teachers to engaging in formal teacher induction on the views of teachers on qualification allowances, on the attitudes of teacher unions to incentives for teacher retention in difficult teaching contexts, on the views of school management groups regarding aspects of the deployment of teachers, on exploring ways to improve teacher deployment arrangements within a changing demographic scenario.

The issues relating to teacher retention are multi-faceted and impinge on almost all aspects of policy on the teaching career. Teachers in the era ahead will be operating in fast-changing circumstances. The future configuration of schooling is uncertain. One thing which is certain is that quality in the teaching force will be of pivotal importance. It is also clear that high quality statistical and attitudinal data on the teaching profession will be essential for enlightened policy on the teaching profession in the years ahead. In Ireland, there is scope for improvement in these regards. As well as policy measures aimed at ensuring the retention of effective teachers in schools, their effectiveness also needs to be supported and sustained if teachers are to sustain a high quality, vibrant and effective school system throughout their teaching careers.

# COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT — IRELAND

## CHAPTER 1 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

### 1.1 Changing Education Policy for a Changing Society

1.1.1 In common with other developed countries, Ireland has been experiencing a period of profound economic, social, technological, occupational, cultural and demographic change. It has probably had to accommodate this accelerated pace of change within a shorter time span than most developed countries. A school system is expected to serve the needs of society and when that society is undergoing such significant change, as at present, pressures emerge to improve the alignment between school and society. Effective school systems need to have the adaptability to engage constructively with society in the light of new needs and developments. Over the last decade Irish society and its schooling system have been engaged in seeking to establish a satisfactory and constructive alignment. A great deal of re-appraisal and analysis of the education system has been undertaken during the nineties, leading to the formulation of an educational policy and legislative agenda which is the most significant in the history of the state.

1.1.2 The consensus of national commentators and of multinational employers is that the quality of the education system has been a significant factor contributing to Ireland's impressive economic progress particularly over the last decade. In the context of what is often referred to as the emerging knowledge society the Irish government has been determined that Ireland should build on its educational strengths and reform, adapt and modernise its education system so that it can continue to serve the needs of its citizens in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment.

1.1.3 In 1987 a national agreement was negotiated by the government with the social partners which was to be the first of five such agreements which created a stable and secure environment for investment, with a minimum of industrial unrest. This contributed to a decade of sustained economic growth and social development. In 1991 the government decided that education should be viewed as a central plank of national policy. This coincided with the publication of a review of Irish education by the OECD, which affirmed many strengths of the education system, but also pointed the way for improvement and modernisation. To initiate strategic planning for primary, post-primary and tertiary education, the government published a Green Paper (a government discussion paper), with proposals for education change in all sectors. In contrast to earlier policy traditions, the Minister for Education adopted a highly consultative approach and invited all stakeholders in education to engage in discussion of the proposals. This proved to be a remarkable success, involving very wide-ranging debate throughout the country and including the input of a thousand written submissions. To help clarify issues, analyse submissions and foster consensus a National Education Convention was convened

in autumn 1993, which was attended by representatives of forty-two stakeholders, over a two-week period. The Convention, convened by the Minister for Education, was organised by an independent secretariat of academics, and it proved to be highly successful. *The Report On The National Education Convention* (1994) paved the way for the government's White Paper, *Changing Our Education Future*, in 1995. This was a major statement of government policy on primary, post-primary and tertiary education. Among major outcomes of these processes were two comprehensive education acts, the Irish Universities Act (1997) and the Education Act (1998), which formed the legislative framework for the change agenda. Meanwhile, much development work in areas such as curriculum reform was progressing concurrently. Much of this latter was undertaken by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, an advisory body to the Minister for Education set up in 1987, also representative of major stakeholders. These consultative processes did much to foster a good degree of consensus and ownership of new policy measures by major actors in the system. Despite changes of government during the period there was great continuity of the broad lines of policy. The only area of significant disagreement was that one government favoured the establishment of regional education boards, while the other favoured the retention of centralised governance. This latter was the viewpoint which got enshrined in legislation. The sustained economic buoyancy also assisted both the resourcing of, and the climate for educational change.

1.1.4 Ireland held the Presidency of the European Union in the second half of 1996 and took as its major educational task the preparation of "A Strategy for Lifelong Learning," which incorporated implications for the teaching career. This strategy was approved by the EU Council of Education Ministers in Council Conclusions of 20th December 1996 and was to influence subsequent EU policy directions, as well as extend the agenda for reform in Ireland. This coincided with renewed interest in this concept by international agencies such as the OECD. Lifelong learning was now viewed as the guiding principle for education in the new century in Ireland and internationally. If "a cradle to the grave" approach was to become a reality, the ground had to be prepared in the two areas – early childhood and adult education – which had got less attention in the policy formation of the early nineties. Thus, a major consultative forum — The National Forum for Early Childhood Education — was convened in March 1998. It operated on the lines of the earlier National Education Convention, and it also proved to be a success in fostering consensus and a sense of ownership of proposed changes. The report on the Forum influenced the government's White Paper, *Ready To Learn*, published in 1999, setting out government policy for early childhood education. The Department of Education and Science has since established an Early Childhood Education and Development Centre, in St. Patrick's College in Dublin, and Ireland is currently participating in an OECD thematic study of early childhood education. The government also published policy proposals on adult education in its Green Paper, *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning*. This was followed by a national consultative conference on adult education, which fed into a White Paper, *Learning for Life* (2000). This set out policy on lifelong learning with a particular focus on adult education. Better provision was also made for the education of people with disabilities, partly prompted by court decisions. A policy of integration of special education within mainstream education, as far as possible, has been adopted. Thus, within a decade all aspects of Irish education had been analysed, re-appraised and given new policy formulation, following a great deal of public debate and consultation among the citizenry. Ireland has also been keen to maintain international perspectives and linkages in reshaping its educational policies. Thus, in 2002 as

well as enthusiastically participating in the current OECD study, "Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers", it has been actively involved with its EU partners in the promotion of the EU's new Objectives in education and training. It is noteworthy that Objective One relates to the education and training of teachers, encompassing many aspects of the teaching career.

1.1.5 From the mid nineties government policy also gave much higher priority than hitherto to investment in research, as Ireland sought to position itself within the knowledge society. Ireland had intelligently deployed funds from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) which made significant contributions in supplementing national resources in the building up of its education and training infrastructure. This contribution was arbitrated in a more programmatic approach which has underpinned the use of Structural Funds in Ireland since 1989. Many aspects of educational provision, particularly those promoting lifelong learning and social inclusion are also included in its current National Development Plan, 1999-2006. While Ireland's impressive economic performance won for it the description "The Celtic Tiger" in the nineties, it was also the case that the gap between the rich and poor widened. A significant minority of the population remained disadvantaged and in danger of marginalisation and of being poorly positioned to cope within a fast-changing society. To counteract this situation the government established the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, reflecting an inter-sectoral approach to targeting poverty. It is succeeding in making significant inroads on the percentage in the proportion of the population classified as being in consistent poverty. Concern for the educationally disadvantaged became a higher public and political issue, with many intervention schemes established with the aim of ameliorating the problems among the pre-school and school-going population. OECD studies, as well as national research, also highlighted the relatively poor levels of functional literacy among sectors of the older adult population, who had lost out on the expansion of schooling which has been achieved in recent decades, and from which the younger age groups have benefited. Progress with these two sectors of the population – the disadvantaged and categories of adults – is regarded as an essential prerequisite in achieving the learning society.

## 1.2 Key Educational Policy Aims

1.2.1 In its White Paper, *Charting Our Education Future*, 1995, the government set out five principles to underpin its education policy — quality, equality, partnership, pluralism and accountability. These continue to be a basic framework for policy reference. The main objectives and purposes of government policy in its educational reform measures may be summarised as follows:

- Equality of provision whereby all pupils have equal opportunity, with special government support for pupils experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, forms of disability, and ethnic marginalisation. A policy of integration of all pupils in the mainstream school system applies;
- Promotion of quality within the education system by means such as on-going curricular, pedagogic and assessment reform, including the incorporation of ICT into teaching, learning and educational administration;

- Progression and retention of all pupils up to the end of post-primary schooling, or the completion of a senior training course;
- Promotion of greater teacher collaboration within schools including engaging in school development planning, the promotion of school self evaluation and in whole school evaluation processes;
- Promotion of the school as a caring institution with close links to parents and local communities;
- Development of improved levels of school leadership and management, with an accountability ethos;
- Promotion of a more sophisticated awareness of the needs of early childhood education and implications of this for the early primary school years;
- Promotion of greater awareness of the implications for schools of a lifelong learning policy.

### 1.3 Some Population Trends

1.3.1 The population recorded in the Census of 2002 was the highest recorded figure since the foundation of an independent Irish state in 1922. The decade of the nineties was particularly influential in the population rising by 2.8% between 1991 and 1996, and by a further 8% between 1996 and 2002. The population is now just under four million, at 3,917,336. While the birth rate declined in the nineteen eighties, it has been increasing both in terms of actual numbers and per 1,000 population since 1994. The number of births registered in 1994 was 47,929 (representing 13.4 per 1,000 population). It rose each subsequent year and in 2001 there were 57,882 births registered (representing 15.1 per 1,000 population).

1.3.2 Although the population is getting older, Ireland continues to have the youngest population in the European Union. In 1998, 24% of the Irish population was in the 5-19 age group, as against an average of 18% in the rest of the EU. By 2002 the Irish percentage had fallen to about 22.5%. In 2002 11.5% were under fifteen years of age, with 63.9% under sixty-four years. Projections for 2006 are that 11.8% would be under fifteen years and 67.7% under sixty four years. While it is expected that the numbers of pupils at primary level in the EU will fall by 12% over the next decade, the drop in the Irish case, according to OECD figures will be very small, if indeed any fall occurs. These trends have significant implications for teacher supply and are discussed later in this paper.

1.3.3 Traditionally, Ireland experienced high levels of emigration, but this trend has been reversed in recent years. In 1998, the number of inward migrants was twice the number of those who left the country. This trend has continued. Figures released in 2002 show that there has been a net inward migration of 150,000 since 1996. In the year up to April 2002, returning Irish nationals accounted for 38% of all inward migration. In the same year, just over a third, 35%, of all immigrants came from countries other than the United States and EU States. Thus, Ireland has a more multi-cultural and multi-ethnic population than before.

## 1.4 Religious and Cultural Trends

1.4.1 The majority of Irish people continue to indicate that they are affiliated to Christian denominations in their religious belief. According to the most recent census figures available for this data, those of 1991, 91.5% of the population was Roman Catholic, 2.86% was Protestant (2.3% Church of Ireland, 0.4% Presbyterian, 0.16% Methodist) and 0.06% was Jewish. The membership of other stated religions was 0.62%, while those who declared to have no religion constituted 0.73%. The figures from the 2002 census will be available in 2003, and are likely to show some changes in these figures, including more varied affiliations of the increased number of immigrants over recent years.

1.4.2 The Irish Constitution states that the Irish language (Gaeilge), the national language, is the first official language. The Constitution recognises English as the second official language. The reality for the large majority of the Irish population is that English is their mother tongue and the language of daily usage. Pupils are obliged to study Irish and English during the compulsory stage of Irish education (age 6 to 16). Places where Irish is used as a usual language of discourse are termed *An Ghaeltacht*, and are located mainly along the western seaboard. The 1996 census listed the population of the *Gaeltacht* as 86,039.

1.4.3 The small but increasing number of immigrant children whose mother tongue is not English or Irish, their wide residential scatter, and the variety of their first languages pose problems for the teaching of languages, including their mother tongue, in schools in Ireland. English is the main second language acquired by all immigrant children. Irish language learning, normally compulsory for children beginning primary schooling in Ireland prior to reaching the age of 11, can be waived under the terms of Circular 10/94, which allows schools to grant exemptions to pupils coming from abroad with no understanding of English or Irish. Assistance with language learning is provided for immigrant children, regardless of legal status. Integrate Ireland Language and Training (formerly the Refugee Language Support Unit), under the auspices of Dublin University (Trinity College), and supported by the Department of Education and Science, provides training and support in this context. At primary level, additional teacher posts or additional funding are made available to schools to provide assistance, through a system of withdrawal, with the learning of English. In post-primary schools the Department of Education and Science funds additional language support for immigrant children.

1.4.4 While Irish and English remain the official languages of the primary school about 400 primary schools have been state-aided to provide an orientation to another EU language, as a pilot measure. In some schools, parents pay for tuition in another EU language, to be taught outside of formal school hours.

## 1.5 Economic and Labour Market Trends

1.5.1 From the early nineties up to 2001 Ireland has been experiencing a period of unprecedented economic growth, well ahead of the OECD average. Ireland achieved an average growth rate of 8% over a sequence of years, and in some years reached 10% growth. As well as benefiting from



indigenous entrepreneurial flair and investment, it has also benefited from a high level of investment by multinational companies. There has been significant growth in the area of high technology enterprises such as information and communication technologies, chemical and pharmaceutical industries, financial services. The concentration of growth in these sectors was sustained by the high quality of the graduate workforce available. Its continued growth will place demands on the future supply of a highly qualified workforce. From an earlier period of high unemployment the country moved to a position of virtually full employment by the year 2000. Instead of an older tradition of emigration, the pattern has shifted to inward migration, and the active recruitment of foreign workers. However, the economic situation changed in 2002. The growth rate has reduced to about 3% p.a., public expenditure was much greater than planned and the returns from taxation have been less than anticipated. In line with economic difficulties being experienced internationally, external investment has slowed. The inflation rate at about 5% is much higher than the EU average. Factors such as these indicate a much tighter national economic context than that which prevailed in recent years. While commentators do not consider that the economy is likely to go into recession, nevertheless, adjustments need to be made in economic policy and planning. This is the context in which negotiations took place on a sixth national agreement between the government and the social partners, to replace the outgoing Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) which expired in spring 2003. The negotiation of a new national agreement was regarded by all the stakeholders as a formidable task. However, an eighteen month agreement, "Sustaining Progress", was negotiated, and was ratified by the main stakeholders in late March 2003. The more difficult economic situation will call for prioritisation in educational expenditure. The prioritisation needs to be underpinned by clear, cohesive policies with a strategic emphasis

1.5.2 Thus, a new climate of uncertainty prevails which could have implications for teachers' expectations of improved salaries, and for the financing of aspects of the lifelong learning agenda. Wage increases have been noticeably higher in Ireland between 1999 and 2002 compared with the EU average — in the EU wage increases averaged 2.5% over the three years, compared with an average rise of 8% during the first two years, and 9% during 2001 in Ireland. The increase in GDP for the year 2001 was 5.9%. Participation by women in the Irish labour force at 47.5% is slightly higher than the EU average of 47%. However, for women in the 25 to 54 age group labour force participation by Irish women is 66% compared with the higher rate of 72.6% for the same age group in the rest of the EU. The rate of general unemployment from mid 2001 to mid 2002 was 4.2%. During the last two decades, the education levels of young people entering the labour market have risen dramatically, compared with those of previous generations. A recent official survey noted that at present 48% of all 20 year olds entering the labour force have a third level (tertiary) qualification. It predicted that over 55% of 20 year olds will need to have such a qualification if the supply of skilled labour is to meet projected demand by 2015. However, the education levels of the older section of the population was highlighted as a cause of concern in the government's White Paper, *Learning For Life* (2000), and a range of policy measures have been designed to improve this situation.

## 1.6 Main Trends of Expenditure on Schooling

1.6.1 Actual expenditure on education increased from about 31.5 billion in 1990 to 35.5 billion in 2002. However, while actual expenditure increased substantially it has not kept pace with the very high increase in GDP, particularly in the period 1997-2001, which results in a steady decline in investment in education as a percentage of GDP. In 1999 expenditure represented 4.6% of GDP and it has declined further since then. *Education At A Glance, 2002*, noted that Ireland's expenditure per pupil in primary and secondary schooling is much lower than the OECD average, ranking 18th of 24 countries for primary education and 19th of 26 countries for secondary. For both sectors Ireland ranks lowest of the OECD countries surveyed when the expenditure is standardised at GDP per capita. One reason for the comparatively low levels of per pupil expenditure in Ireland was the higher proportion of the Irish population accounted for by children of school-going age, which, in 1998, was one-third higher than the rest of the EU. The OECD comparative data for teacher salaries show that Irish teachers are relatively well paid by international standards, ranking in 7th place of the 27 countries surveyed. In Ireland, the proportion of current educational expenditure applied to teacher salaries, at about 76%, was significantly higher than the EU average. Correspondingly, the share of the current expenditure available for qualitative inputs to the schooling system, other than the teaching force, has been markedly less. The relatively high salaries have reflected the traditional status of the teachers' position in the public mind and, probably, also helps to explain the high quality of those attracted into the teaching force. In a recent study (2002) of the productivity of Irish education, the economist, statistician and former prime minister, Dr. Garret Fitzgerald concluded:

It is thus clear that primary and second-level education is under-resourced, to the tune of something like one-third. But the evidence also suggests that the average standard reached by Irish students is at or slightly above the EU average and that the proportion of those who complete education to age 18 is slightly higher than the EU average. Thus, in terms of what might be called "educational productivity" – output in qualitative and quantitative terms related to input of resources – Ireland seems to have been performing about 50% better than the rest of the EU. (Fitzgerald, 2002, 130).

Even if this high level of productivity may be open to some challenge, it is clear that the productivity of Irish schooling has been impressive.

## 1.7 Public Perceptions of Teachers and the Schooling System

1.7.1 Traditionally, the role of teachers has been respected by the Irish public and this regard is deeply rooted in historical circumstances. Even when teachers did not benefit from good salaries there was regard for their scholarship, the nature of their work and their roles in the community. Primary teaching still attracts recruits from the top quartile of the student achievers at the school leaving certificate examinations, while competition is also very keen for entry to post-primary teaching, with graduate entry requiring honours achievements in the undergraduate degree from the great majority of applicants. Various attitudinal surveys have indicated that teaching is one of the most highly regarded

professions by the public. The significant involvement of religious personnel in the teaching career, in earlier times, may have helped to foster a favourable public perception of the career. In a recent review of recruitment trends to the teaching career, the educational correspondent of *The Irish Times* put the following headline to his report, "Teaching still a prized career: the popularity of teaching has remained constant over the past decade despite industrial conflict and a changing economy" (*The Irish Times*, 4/4/03). Traditionally, there has been a high level of public trust and confidence in the schooling system. Those who graduate successfully from the school system are highly regarded by employers, and those who perform well at the school leaving examinations to enter tertiary education achieve very well in higher education. Results from international comparative studies such as PISA (2002) in which Irish students performed very creditably in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy, as well as relevant data from the OECD's *Education At A Glance* reviews have helped to foster a positive public view of schooling.

1.7.2. Teachers are highly unionised, with 98% of primary teachers and 91% of post-primary teachers members of the teacher unions. The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) exists for primary teachers, while the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI), and the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI), cater for post-primary teachers. The unions are well organised and provide a wide range of services to members. They have strong negotiating and consultancy rights. Their approval for education reforms sometimes requires protracted negotiation.

1.7.3 While the benign scenario sketched in 1.7.1 has been the case up to recently, there are signs that it may be under some threat. It may well be that we are currently in a transitional era, and that it would be imprudent to be complacent about possible future trends. Signs of this emerged in the context of a recent bitter industrial relations dispute by the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI), who withdrew from membership of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and did not participate in the government appointed Benchmarking process set up to examine public salary relativities with the private sector. The Association expressed grave dissatisfaction with prevailing salary scales of teachers, all of whom are paid on a common salary scale with extra allowances for some qualifications and the exercise of special duties posts in schools. The dispute continued for almost three years, in the course of which relationships between the ASTI and parents and the general public became fraught. Media coverage conveyed a new asperity in public comment on the teaching profession, which is likely to leave a residue in public-teacher attitudes, at least for some time.

1.7.4 While the ASTI has been the most vocal, all teachers consider that their salaries have not kept pace with those of similarly qualified professionals in Ireland. This view has been endorsed by the Benchmarking Body's Report in July 2002, which recommended an increase of 13% for all teachers, with further increases for senior personnel in schools. In the context of the new social partnership agreement, "Sustaining Progress", the government has agreed to implement this recommendation, over a time period, subject to a number of "modernisation" conditions by teachers.

1.7.5 As has been indicated in section 1.1.3 above, a range of new policy measures poses significant challenges to the teaching profession. There are many new statutory requirements, particularly in the

Education Act (1998) and the Education (Welfare Act) (2000), which will have to be addressed. Curriculum, pedagogic and assessment reform have been an on-going concern for many years and continue as a rolling reform issue. High quality school leadership is an essential pre-condition for effective and efficient schools. However, many schools are experiencing a decline in applications for the onerous position of school principal. The desired shift from a strong tradition of individualism in teaching style towards collaborative teamwork for whole-school planning, school self-evaluation and whole-school evaluation challenges the inherited culture of many schools. Teachers are also expected to cope with the issues involved in the integration of all pupils, and to deal with the ambitious government retention plans of retaining 90% of the heterogeneous pupil clientele, up to the end of post-primary schooling. While partnership with parents and local interests has been developed, difficulties in involving parents still occur, particularly in areas of acute socio-economic disadvantage.

1.7.6 Meanwhile, the teaching profession itself has been undergoing significant change. The Teaching Council Act (2001), which is expected to lead to a Teaching Council in 2004, is a landmark measure in the history of the teaching profession. This Act incorporates significant self-governing powers for the teaching profession. Pupil-teacher ratios have been improving, though they are still high by international standards. More promotion posts and opportunities for career diversification have been introduced. Competition for entry to the teaching career is very keen. Teacher unions are well organised and have a strong say in policy issues. Teachers participate as partners on school management boards and on agencies such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). A pilot Employee Assistance Scheme for teachers is in existence and provision exists for early retirement, disability support etc. Two official reviews of teacher education have been completed recently which are likely to lead to improvements. National policy is formally in favour of a "3 Is" policy of initial, induction and in-service teacher education as a support for the teaching career.

1.7.7 Yet, despite such favourable elements, it is not surprising that in this period of major economic, cultural and educational change difficulties and tensions exist. As well as dissatisfaction over remuneration, many teachers complain of "change overload", with new approaches being required over a wide spectrum of issues. Changes in pupil culture and behaviour, particularly in teenage years, present difficulties for some teachers in relationships and discipline. The persistence of inequalities in the system, particularly in areas of serious socio-economic disadvantage is a strain on teachers. A recent (2002) survey of disadvantaged schools, conducted on behalf of the INTO, indicated that almost 10% of teachers in such schools leave each year because of the pressures in their jobs. The government and public are concerned to see the standards of under-achieving pupils raised and despite a number of government intervention support projects, teachers find that some problems are very difficult to resolve, being embedded in non-school, societal contexts. The post-primary school leaving examination, the Leaving Certificate Examination, is a highly competitive one. Students' examination grades are converted into points and the accumulated points over six subjects constitute the students' points status. This is known as the "points system", and access to tertiary education is determined by the points attained by applicants. Many teachers consider that the points system creates a "backwash" pressure on the work of schools which is difficult to reconcile with the holistic concept of education prevailing in the curriculum. Some post-primary teachers, who traditionally operated under a very light form of inspection are wary of the new policies of whole-school evaluation, and of a stronger

accountability ethic. Weak induction processes and a fragmented pattern of employment in part-time and temporary work in the early years of post-primary teaching are also an issue. A more comprehensive and structured policy for in-career development is seen to be important if teachers are to be satisfactorily supported in meeting the educational change agenda. During the consultative process for this report stakeholders reported that at present morale is low in some post-primary schools. It is also reported that an older tradition may be changing whereby many teachers no longer encourage their sons and daughters to follow in their professional paths, but to aspire to other careers in a greatly diversified job arena.

1.7.8 In summary, it can be noted that while teaching has deep, traditional roots and high regard in Irish society, it faces many new challenges in a fast-changing society when educational policy is being re-shaped to cope with the knowledge society in a lifelong learning framework. In general, Ireland can be seen to have a highly educated, well-trained, committed and caring teaching force. Ireland is in the fortunate position in undertaking a policy overview of its teaching profession while not having to react to pressing shortages or weaknesses in the quality of its teaching force, but, rather, it can approach the task from a pursuit of best practice. Many improvements have been brought about for the teaching profession. However, there would seem to be a need for wider debate and a deeper public understanding of the changing role of the teacher and a more comprehensive and better articulated policy on the teaching profession to ensure that it can fulfil its crucial role in the era ahead. Such a policy needs to include in a systemic way many of the aspects which are dealt with in the sub-sections of this report.

# CHAPTER 2

## THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE TEACHING FORCE

### 2.1 The Formation of the Schooling System

2.1.1 At the establishment of political independence in 1922, the Irish state inherited a school system of a rather unusual character. To understand the structure of the modern Irish school system it is necessary to have some awareness of the earlier historical circumstances which shaped it. Prior to the introduction of state support for primary and secondary education in the nineteenth century, Ireland had a long history of schooling, and, particularly in the case of primary education, school provision was very widespread. Through the course of the nineteenth century the English administration for Ireland decided to provide state support for the promotion of primary, secondary and technical education. The nature of this support has had a very long-lasting effect on the configuration of Irish schooling. When, in 1831, the English government decided to establish the national school system (for primary education), it had politicisation, socialisation as well as educational aims. The system was conceived as a state-aided one which proved to be both popular and very successful, gradually replacing the older pattern of schooling. The essential basis of the new system was that the state was prepared to give financial support to approved local initiatives taken to establish national schools. The local patron sought support from the newly established Commissioners of National Education in return for which the patron agreed to abide by the rules and regulations of the Commissioners. However, the ownership of the school and the local management resided in most cases with the local patron. The original intention was that the system would be multi-denominational but almost all the patrons were clergymen and the various churches succeeded in making the system a *de facto* denominational one. As time went on, the state undertook the vast amount of the expenditure of the national school system, including teacher salaries. Yet, the schools never became state schools *per se*, they continue to be state-aided schools *de jure*.

2.1.2 At post-primary level, there were two state-aided systems in place by the end of the nineteenth century, a secondary and a technical education system. Secondary schools were strictly private institutions. Under the Intermediate Act of 1878, the state devised a scheme to give financial support to secondary school managements. The mechanism allowed for payments to school managements on the basis of the success rates of pupils in the new public examinations, which were introduced under the Act. Apart from setting out syllabi and rules for the conduct of public examinations the state took no active role with regard to founding schools, managing secondary schools, payment of teachers or regulations for school standards. The secondary schools were denominational, with the exercise of a conscience clause, allowing pupils to withdraw from religious classes if they had conscientious objections. State support for vocational/technical education traces its origin to the establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction in 1899. This

technical education system operated on a different model. The schools were public schools in that they were jointly funded by the state and local authorities and they operated under democratically elected local authority committees. However, the numbers of schools and pupils remained but a small portion of schooling provision, for a long time.

2.1.3 With the achievement of political independence in 1922 there was a remarkable degree of continuity regarding the state-church interface on the ownership and management of schooling. The state did not alter in any significant way the balance of control and ownership of the school system which it inherited. Thus, the primary schools remained under the ownership and management of religious denominations in almost all cases. As regards the secondary schools, these were left as private institutions, the state took on no responsibility for the building or management of secondary schools. The government of the newly independent state concentrated on curricular rather than administrative change. Inspired by the ideology of cultural nationalism the state sought to change radically the curricular policies which had prevailed, giving priority of place to the teaching of the Irish language and the promotion of the gaelic cultural heritage. Under the newly established Department of Education (1924), the state took control of curricular policy for all schools, and the centralised public examinations for secondary schools. It also set up an incremental salary scale and superannuation scheme for secondary teachers. Under the Vocational Act of 1930 the technical school system was re-structured, and the new vocational schools operated as publicly owned and controlled schools.

2.1.4 In the early sixties, the Department of Education, in association with the OECD, commissioned a detailed statistical survey of education provision in the country. Its report, *Investment in Education* (1966), proved to be a catalyst for the restructuring and modernisation of the school system. The report also recommended that the Department should establish a development branch for planning. This was set up and contributed to changes made, but was discontinued in 1973. Also, indicative of a changing climate, the Educational Research Centre was established in 1966 with a particular brief to conduct experiential research studies on qualitative aspects of the education service. In the context of significant reforms of education in the 1960s, the state up-graded the status of vocational schools, gave the first capital grants to the private secondary school sector, and took the initiative of establishing two new kinds of post-primary school — the comprehensive and the community school. These latter schools were also more in the tradition of public schools and were mainly managed by boards representing the state, the local authority and denominational interests, to which parent and teacher representatives have been added. The state now espoused a comprehensive type curriculum for all post-primary schools. Enrolments in all post-primary schools expanded greatly.

## 2.2 The contemporary school system

2.2.1 Practically all schools now depend massively on the state for their capital and current costs including teacher salaries and are governed by state rules and regulations. They observe the state curricula and participate in the public examinations administered by the state. In the educational statistics issued by the state all publicly funded schools are categorised together. Thus, while the ownership and trusteeship of most schools is still vested in private agencies, with a smooth-working

division of powers between state and private interests, for all practical purposes the preponderant profile of the schooling system is regarded in Ireland as a public one. Almost all schools are now governed by boards of management representative of trustees, parents, teachers and the community.

2.2.2 There are a few primary schools which are strictly speaking private, in that they receive no state support and are not bound by state regulation or inspection, but they generally follow the curriculum which is prescribed for the national school system. These schools account for less than 2% of the primary school-going population. About 5% of the state-aided private (voluntary) secondary schools charge fees, but these do not receive capitation grants from the state, as do the other schools. Over recent years another category of private secondary school has emerged, which does not receive any state aid. These schools, sometimes termed “grind” schools, are particularly focussed on assisting pupils to attain high points in the state examinations with a view to entering higher education. These schools are few in number, are located in some of the larger cities, and, while some pupils attend them on a full-time basis, many pupils attend on a part-time basis. Thus, the strictly private, non-state aided school sector is extremely small in Ireland.

2.2.3 A very strong denominational tradition has existed regarding school provision in Ireland. Article 44 of the Constitution guarantees equity regarding state aid for schools under the management of different denominations and respects the property rights of religious denominations. Over recent decades, groups of parents in the Educate Together movement have succeeded in establishing 25 multi-denominational primary schools. While the Constitution upholds the right of children to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious instruction in that school, nevertheless, it is extremely difficult for non-believing parents to have their children attend a secular school. Some parents have also been dissatisfied with the shortage of schools in which the instruction is conducted through the medium of the Irish language. They have established a range of such schools at pre-school, primary and secondary levels under the organisation Gaelscoileanna, with state support.

2.2.4 Schooling is compulsory from the age of 6 to 16 years. However, about 60% of 4 year-olds and 95% of 5 year-olds attend the national (primary) schools. The Education (Welfare) Act of 2000 was devised to modernise school attendance legislation and to promote prevention measures regarding non-attendance. The Constitution recognises the inalienable right of parents for the education of their children and Article 42.2 provides that parents may be free to educate their children to a minimum standard in their homes, provided they can give guarantees about its quality. It is estimated that only about 300 pupils are educated in their homes.

### **Primary schools**

2.2.5 There are 3,157 primary (national) schools which are, in effect, state-aided parish schools having been established under diocesan patronage. In addition, there are 109 primary schools that are special schools, for children with disabilities. There are approximately 68 privately owned primary schools which do not receive state aid, but which follow the state curriculum, in general. They are attended by less than 2% of the age group. The state provides for free education in all primary schools. The typical primary school enrolls pupils by age into eight year-groups or classes, ranging from



junior infants to sixth class. The vast majority of schools are “all-through” schools, catering for pupils from infants to sixth class. Most pupils transfer to post-primary school at age 12. There are about 444,000 pupils enrolled in the primary schools. The average pupil-teacher ratio in 2000-01 was 19.2:1. Most primary schools are co-educational. Approximately 45% of the primary schools have fewer than 100 pupils, and hence three or fewer teachers. In the year 2000, approximately 57% of all classes were single grade classes. More than a quarter of all classes are consecutive grade classes or classes where two age groups are combined, for example first and second classes together. Some 16% of classes are multi-grade classes, whereby one teacher takes a sequence of class standards.

2.2.6 Throughout the nineties, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) worked on the preparation of a revised primary school curriculum. On its advice the Department of Education and Science introduced this curriculum in 1999, to be implemented on a phased basis. The three general aims of primary education as outlined in the curriculum are as follows:

- to enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual;
- to enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society;
- to prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

The curriculum is child-centred rather than subject-centred, and it allows for flexibility in timetabling and teaching methods. The curriculum comprises six main areas — Language; Mathematics; Social, Environmental and Scientific Education; Arts Education; Physical Education; Social, Personal and Health Education. A religious education programme is devised by religious authorities. The subject matter of these curricular areas, and pedagogic approaches are set out in the suite of 23 curriculum documents published by the Department of Education and Science.

2.2.7 The revised curriculum has been very warmly received and a six-year implementation plan is now in operation, with much in-service education for teachers and the assistance for schools of a full-time support team. Teachers are trained at pre-service level in group, individual and class teaching methods and the principle of subject integration is promoted in pre-service and in-service education. A wide variety of teaching methods is promoted. While there is significant variation of facilities available in schools, an increasing number can avail of television and video. Since 1999 all schools are on-line and an increasing number of schools are using computer-assisted learning. Each class teacher is responsible for the evaluation of her/his own pupils in primary schools. Teachers carry out their own assessment of pupils’ performance, either through standardised tests or their own tests based on aspects of the curriculum. There is an increasing use of standardised testing as the Department seeks objective data on pupils for national statistics, and when assessing school applications for learning support or resource teaching personnel. There is no formal examination at the end of primary school, but primary schools are requested to prepare formal report cards on pupils on transfer to post-primary school. The vast majority of schools hold formal parent-teacher meetings to discuss children’s progress and share important information. There is a range of schemes in operation to help alleviate difficulties being experienced by schools serving areas of serious socio-economic disadvantage. The primary

schools are managed by management boards; the main pattern of participation being two representatives of the trustees, two elected parents, two teachers, and two members of the community co-opted by the other six members.

**Post-primary schools**

2.2.8 There are three main categories of post-primary school:

- (i) Secondary Schools which are usually owned by religious groups or organisations;
- (ii) Vocational schools/community colleges which are owned by the local authorities and run by vocational educational committees or authorities;
- (iii) Comprehensive/community schools which were established by the State and are owned by partnership boards of trustees.

In 2000-01 the following was the number of schools and pupils in each category:

	Schools	Pupils
Secondary	419	197,376
Vocational/Community College	247	96,842
Comprehensive/Community School	85	51,166
<b>Total</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>345,384</b>

With a declining pupil population affecting post-primary schools, the Commission on School Accommodation has been helping to organise rationalisation of school provision, involving school amalgamations and seeking the agreement of small established schools to join in the planning of single, new, replacement schools.

2.2.9 While each category of school evolved from a distinctive historical context, they have a great deal in common. They follow the same state prescribed curriculum and take the same state public examinations. They are taught by similarly qualified teachers who are paid the same salary scale. The curriculum offered by all is of a comprehensive character, rather than a dual system. The vocational/community college sector would be regarded as serving a larger proportion of disadvantaged pupils than the two other categories. The 5% of secondary schools which charge fees are patronised by the more wealthy parents and many are boarding schools. When the state introduced “free” secondary education in 1967, the vast majority of secondary schools agreed to enter the free scheme. While differences occur in the socio-economic status of pupils in the different categories of school it is noteworthy that in the *OECD Education At A Glance, 2002*, reporting on the PISA study in Ireland, differences in the performance between schools account for a considerably smaller proportion of the overall variation than for the OECD average. This suggests a fairly homogeneous school system and relative success in mitigating disparities in achievement between students from different SES backgrounds. (Chart A7.1, p.83, Chart A9.1, p.97). Nevertheless, national analyses (Shiel, Cosgrove, Sofroniou and Kelly, 2001) show that certain types of school (vocational, designated disadvantaged) have sizeable negative effects on pupils’ achievement, even when SES and

other relevant variables are taken into account. Almost all schools are managed by boards of management, representative of the key stakeholders.

2.2.10 The post-primary school span is predominantly a six-year cycle, taken by ages 12 to 18. The terminology of “lower secondary” and “upper secondary” is not used in Ireland, but the terms “junior cycle” and “senior cycle” are commonly used. Apart from internal school tests, there are two key public examinations taken by students — the Junior Certificate (age 15/16) and the Leaving Certificate (age 17/18). These external examinations have traditionally been set by the Department of Education and Science, but from 2003 will be set by the newly established state Examinations Commission. A great deal of public attention is focussed on the Leaving Certificate Examination. Entry to higher education is closely linked to the points accumulated by students at this examination. Entry to courses leading to the prestige professions is very competitive. Some critics of the points system point to deleterious “backwash” effects it has on the school curricula and pedagogy as teachers seek ways of supporting the high achievement of their pupils. However, the report of a Commission on the Points System, 1999, endorsed the system as the best available, while urging reforms in the modes of assessment at the Leaving Certificate Examination. The percentage of the age cohort who complete post-primary education is about 81%. A small percentage of others take alternative courses in community training workshops and Youthreach Centres.

2.2.11 During the last decade there was a great deal of development and renewal in the curriculum of post-primary education. This was particularly so with regard to the senior cycle (15-18 years), where new curricular options, such as the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), were introduced to meet the needs of a more heterogeneous pupil clientele. This work is of a “rolling reform” character. In senior cycle the concept of a broad curriculum with pupils taking five or six subjects is maintained. The NCCA has prepared a new policy paper on senior cycle education which was launched for public discussion and formal consultation in December 2002. University representatives partake in NCCA committees and are invited to make observations on the Leaving Certificate Examination papers during the setting and marking processes. Efforts are also being made at present to see how the state public examinations can satisfactorily interface with the national framework of qualifications being prepared by the recently established National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), with the final framework due for publication in spring 2003. Such changes are allied to a range of other contemporary changes affecting schools and linked to new legislation referred to in section 1 above. They include the need to develop school plans, to engage in whole school evaluation, to operate in a more collegial way within schools, to operate within a more precise legal framework, to relate to parents in new ways. These recent and proposed changes are posing significant challenges, at a time when some teachers, at least, are feeling the effects of change overload and diminishing morale, linked to dissatisfaction with salaries.

### ***Some new developments in schooling and training***

2.2.12 Up to now, there has been no national system of pre-school education in Ireland. This was probably due to the tradition of early enrolment, from age 4, in primary schools. The DES has supported a number of pre-school projects in areas of disadvantage and for Travellers’ children. In the context of a strategy for lifelong learning, a National Forum on Early Childhood Education was

convened in 1998 and a White Paper, *Ready to Learn* was published in 1999. These signalled a greater national concern and awareness with regard to early childhood education. The NCCA has been devising curricular guidelines for this form of education and the infant sections of the revised Primary School Curriculum, published in 1999, have been influenced by recent research and debate on early childhood education. This area is also getting more attention in the education and training of primary teachers. The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, which was established in 2002, is expected to be a major support to new developments in early childhood education, the pedagogical import of which is likely to have many beneficial effects on the education of young children.

2.2.13 Also, in line with policy on lifelong learning, greater attention has been paid in recent years to the needs of pupils who drop out of the mainstream schooling pattern. Schemes, such as Youthreach and Community Training Workshops have devised education and training schemes in line with the needs of young people who have become disenchanted with, or alienated from mainstream schools. The type of programmes, the methodologies employed, and the type of ethos established in these schemes have been very beneficial in second chance education, building self esteem, skills and motivation which help such young people to establish themselves as coping members of society.

2.2.14 The expansion of further, adult and community education in general, and, in particular, by many post-primary schools, has opened up a new range of experiences for teachers. The approaches taken, the curricular innovations involved, the pedagogical styles and the modes of relationship with learners in courses alluded to in these paragraphs are frequently more varied and stimulating than some of the methods employed in traditional schools. It is likely in the years ahead that beneficial synergies of influence may develop between traditional schooling and the newer forms of education and training.

## 2.3 Division of Responsibilities

### *Financing*

2.3.1 Ireland can be characterised as having a centralised administrative structure for education. There are no regional education authorities. Local authorities have responsibilities for about one quarter of the post-primary schools — the vocational school sector — but even these operate very much within the guidelines set by national government. At present, the Department of Education and Science (DES), (formerly Department of Education), is in the process of establishing some executive agencies to undertake certain responsibilities, e.g. state examinations and special education, and so relieve the “centre” from its current overcrowded functions. The DES is also in the process of developing ten Regional Offices. The Regional Offices will function as a filter system for two-way information flows between the centralised Department and the stakeholders within the region serviced by the Regional Offices. This is in line with the Cromien Report (2000) which recommended a range of structural and operational changes for the DES. The main thrust of the Cromien Report was to off-load pressure from central administration to facilitate a greater focus on policy.

2.3.2 The financing of the school system is now almost exclusively from central government funds. The building and maintenance of schools is preponderantly funded by government. The funding of teacher salaries comes from government. Teacher education, both pre-service and in-service education is subsidised by government. Student teachers following concurrent degree courses do not have to pay fees, but most students doing the Higher Diploma in Education to enter secondary teaching are liable for fees. Teachers taking post graduate certificated in-career courses also pay fees but may benefit from tax concessions, and fee refunds are available for some courses. Teachers may be allowed paid study leave to attend some full-time courses, but they need the approval of their boards of management, and they are liable for the salary of the substitute teacher. The government also heavily subsidises the school transport service, but some parents are liable for charges. Support schemes are available for school books for necessitous children, but most parents are liable for the cost of school books and materials. The government is responsible for equipping schools. Many parents and teachers are unhappy with the government's performance in this regard. Schools may benefit from voluntary contributions from parents to assist in improving school equipment and resources, but these cannot be mandatory. There are no school fees except for about 5% of secondary schools which charge fees. In these cases, the state does not grant schools the capitation fee it makes available to other schools.

### ***Curriculum development***

2.3.3 The decisions on curricular policy are the remit of the Minister for Education and Science. The DES formally sets out the curricular framework for all schools and until recently was responsible for the conduct of the public examinations at post-primary level, which are linked to the curricula. The State Examinations Commission has been established in 2003 with responsibility for the state examinations. However, while operating within this national definition of course content, quite a number of curricular decisions are taken at post-primary school level in Ireland. As is noted by the OECD's *Education At A Glance*, schools decide on the range of subjects taught, the selection of programmes offered, the design of the programmes and the choice of textbooks (*Education At A Glance*, 2002, Chart 6.1, p.242.). The teachers at school level have a major influence on these latter aspects. It is also noteworthy that while the DES has the decision-making power on curricular content, it works closely with the statutorily established National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Under the Education Act of 1998, the NCCA has been given significant responsibilities regarding the development of curricula. The Council has a full-time directorate and staff and the Council and sub-committees are comprised of representatives of key stakeholders such as teachers, parents, school managements. Within the DES, the NCCA, and research agencies research is conducted on curricula and examination issues and a strong tradition exists for the publication of discussion documents and engagement in consultative processes on such issues. Curriculum has been a "rolling reform" issue for many years. An impressive, revised curriculum for primary schools was introduced on a phased basis in 1999. The junior cycle curriculum for post-primary schools is currently under review by the NCCA. The senior cycle curriculum has experienced much innovation in recent years, and in December 2002 the NCCA published a comprehensive discussion document on the future of the senior cycle curriculum. Following the consultative process decisions on change will reside with the Minister for Education and Science.

### ***Employment of teachers***

2.3.4 The Department of Education and Science sets the regulations for the employment of primary teachers. The Department of Education and Science and the Registration Council for Secondary Teachers specify the qualifications necessary for teacher employment in secondary schools. Teachers in community and comprehensive schools follow the same type of requirements. Qualification for vocational schools are governed by Memo V.7. However, there is a great commonality in the qualification requirements for all post-primary teachers. The teachers are employed by the management boards of the individual schools. While secondary schools are not obliged to do so, most schools publicly advertise when full-time vacancies are on offer, and sometimes for part-time vacancies. Selection is through interview boards, operating to agreed procedures. The interview panels make recommendations to the management boards, which make the appointment. Opportunities for appeal exist if candidates consider that due process was not followed. In the case of vocational schools, it is the Vocational Education Committee which employs the teacher, who is employed for the local scheme rather than for an individual school.

2.3.5 In the past, teaching reflected a rather flat career structure but, in recent times, a range of responsibility and promotion posts has been established. There are now four categories of promotion posts — Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal and Special Duties Posts. The posts of Principal, and in large schools those of Deputy Principal, are advertised and competed for in open competition. Interview boards are established and operate according to due process. The posts of Assistant Principal and Special Duties Posts are internal school promotion posts. While merit is an important consideration for promotion posts, seniority in the schools is also an important consideration. All posts need to have designated duties attached to them. Principals of primary schools with eight or more class teachers are not required to teach. Other post-holders in primary schools are required to teach full-time. Deputy Principals in post-primary schools are expected to teach, but get some reduced hours depending on size of schools. Most other post-holders teach very close to the normal contractual teaching hours per week, which vary slightly between different types of post-primary school.

### ***Teacher evaluation and teacher dismissal***

2.3.6 The evaluation of teachers by school inspectors has been a long-established tradition in primary education, dating back to the 1830s. In modern times, the pattern of teacher inspection has changed. It continues to be very individually focussed in the case of probationary teachers. In the case of established primary teachers, while provision for individual inspection and evaluation still exists, the emphasis has shifted towards whole-school evaluation which includes aspects of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as school planning, the work of boards of management and school accommodation. Procedures for appeal exist where a teacher has a grievance in relation to inspection. In line with the Education Act 1998, principal teachers also have a responsibility to ensure the quality of teaching in their schools, but the tradition of principals' formal evaluation of teachers' work is weak. In the case of post-primary schools, the evaluation of probationary teachers by inspectors occurs only rarely. Subject inspections in post-primary schools are undertaken by specialist inspectors, but, particularly in secondary schools, the evaluation of individual teachers' work has been rare in the past. With the

recent re-organisation of the inspectorate in line with its statutory responsibilities set out in the Education Act, 1998, a new inspectoral work plan has been put in place. During the school year 2001-02, 231 subject inspections took place in post-primary schools. With less responsibility now for the state examinations, which have in 2003 been allocated to a separate agency, the inspectorate also plans to be more pro-active in the future in the area of whole-school evaluation. The whole school evaluation involves an appraisal of the overall work of the school in the context of its educational circumstances. Principal teachers have a responsibility for promoting the quality of teaching in the schools but, as in the case of primary schools, there is little tradition of the evaluation of individual teachers' teaching in any formal way by principal teachers. Of course, the results of pupils in the state examinations tend to be used as an indirect indicator of teachers' work. In general, the tradition has been that once a teacher has qualified and undertaken a probation period, little formal evaluation of his/her work takes place subsequently, unless special circumstances call for it.

2.3.7 Provision exists for the dismissal of teachers for gross misconduct or major dereliction of duty. However, while teacher dismissal occurs it is a rare occurrence and legal requirements, as well as teacher union support roles make it a difficult process. Regulations concerning due process ensure that the grounds for dismissal must be very serious and be well attested by evidence. It is difficult to dismiss a teacher on the basis of alleged incompetence. Where debilitating illness occurs a teacher can retire on the basis of disability, on the presentation of satisfactory medical evidence. Sometimes teachers opt to take retirement on disability grounds in preference to formal dismissal procedures. There is also provision for early retirement when such retirement can be viewed to be of benefit to the school system. In the case of alleged crimes by a teacher such as child sex abuse, a teacher has to be suspended, pending the outcome of legal procedures. When teachers are in difficulties, opportunities are available for assistance from the Employee Assistance Scheme for Teachers which currently operates in five pilot areas. Under the recent Teaching Council legislation (2001) specific procedures are set out in relation to fitness to teach enquiries.

2.3.8 A variety of schemes are in operation to protect teacher employment in contexts such as demographic decline or school rationalisation. There is a redeployment scheme, (panel), operating for the primary sector which is aimed at facilitating teacher redeployment in the context of decline in pupil enrolments. In line with this scheme teachers have a priority right to employment when vacancies occur in schools within a thirty mile radius. There is also a redeployment scheme for lay teachers in Catholic secondary schools, but it is not currently operating to its optimum and some schools are enabled to hold on to ex-quota teachers. The report of a ministerial committee on the *Allocation of Teachers to Second Level Schools* (2001) recommended that a root and branch review of this scheme be undertaken and it called for the scheme's replacement by a scheme for all post-primary schools, with improved operating procedures.

2.3.9 In the context of the reduction of schools due to amalgamation or rationalisation, when teachers are forced to change existing employment conditions, they retain allowances they have had in their former school. Depending on circumstances, they may also be facilitated to take early retirement. The decline which has been experienced in primary pupil numbers up to recently did not lead to teacher redundancies but led to improvements in pupil-teacher ratios, and the introduction of a large

increase in the numbers of resource teachers. It is projected that enrolments in post-primary schools will decline by about 6,000 per annum until 2014, as the recent increase in the birth rate will take some time to affect the second-level system. This is likely to increase the incidence of post-primary school rationalisation. Efforts will be made to pre-empt involuntary loss of teacher employment through redeployment policies, improvements in pupil-teacher ratios and early retirement schemes.

### **School accountability**

2.3.10 The legislative framework for education which has been put in place over recent years has led to tightened procedures for school accountability. School managements are charged with the responsibility to ensure that school plans are drawn up and progress reports made available for consultation by the stakeholders. The inspectorate has initiated a policy of whole school evaluation. The school financial accounts need to be available for formal auditing. Schools are required to publish their admission policies. School management boards are required to hold parent meetings. The great majority of schools hold parent-teacher meetings and consultations in a variety of formats. Many schools hold open days for prospective parents and pupils. With a declining pool of post-primary pupils, some schools make available attractive brochures on their educational offerings and facilities. Traditionally, the performance of schools' pupils in the state examinations have played an important part in parents' evaluations of schools. The issuing of national league tables of examination results is prohibited by law but, perhaps influenced by the small scale of Irish society, parents tend to be well informed about the success patterns of different schools in the state examinations. In recent years, the media have been pressing for more public disclosure of examination results, but the DES is opposed to this and the law prohibits it.

## **2.4 Trends in Teacher Numbers**

2.4.1 In 2000-01 there were 22,850 teachers in primary schools, where the national average pupil-teacher ratio was 19.2:1. Despite a serious decline in pupil numbers from 540,572 in 1990 to 428,339 in 2000, the number of full-time teachers actually increased from 20,321 to 21,850, over the decade. What was termed "the demographic dividend" was employed to improve pupil-teacher ratios and to facilitate the provision of specialist teacher services. In 1999-00 there were 13,593 full-time equivalent teachers in secondary schools, 6,781 in vocational schools and 3,592 in community/comprehensive schools, giving an overall total of 23,966. The number of post-primary teachers also increased over the decade of the nineties and this has helped reduce the national average pupil-teacher ratio from 18.1:1 in 1990 to 15.9:1 in 2000. The improved economic conditions from the early nineties allowed for the improvements in pupil-teacher ratios and the social partnership agreements contained provision for such improvements. Despite such improvements, the pupil-teacher ratio in primary school is well beyond the OECD mean of 17.9, Ireland ranking 24th out of 27 OECD countries. The ratio at post-primary level at 15.9 is also higher than the OECD mean of 14.3, with Ireland ranking 21st highest of 26 OECD countries (OECD, *Education At A Glance*, 2002, Tables D2, D2.1, D2.2, pp.292, 293). In its report on *The Allocation of Teachers to Second Level Schools (2001)* the ministerial committee has recommended further improvements in pupil-teacher ratios, in guidance and counselling staff, in staffing of schools serving areas which are significantly disadvantaged, and in support for Deputy Principals.



2.4.2 As well as expanding the number of classroom teachers, improvements have also taken place in various categories of support staff in recent years. In 2002, in primary schools there were 1,531 learning support teachers, providing assistance to pupils with learning difficulties in the core areas of literacy and numeracy. There are 2,300 Special Needs and Resource Teachers working in the primary system supporting pupils with special educational needs. There are also 465 Resource Teachers supporting the education of Traveller children (people with a nomadic lifestyle) in 375 schools. Traveller children are also given special support by 40 visiting teachers. There are some 3,800 full-time and 1,000 part time special needs assistants working with pupils with various learning needs in the primary sector. The special needs referred to above, cover children with special needs in integrated education. There are also 108 special schools employing 1,090 teachers and 500 special classes employing 500 teachers. These schools/classes have a much reduced pupil teacher ratio and cater for children with a range of disabilities from mild to severe. A Home Tuition Service also exists for children who are too ill to attend school or who are having difficulty in being placed in a school. The expenditure on this scheme has increased from €4 million in 1998 to €19 million for 2003.

2.4.3 The Department of Education and Science controls the numbers of teachers for primary schools. In recent years, despite a significant increase of students in teacher training (e.g. from 844 in 1992/93 to 2,386 in 1999-00) shortages of qualified teachers are being experienced. Planning for the supply of primary teachers has not been a distinguished feature of the system. The introduction of career break schemes, secondment of teachers and increases in resource teachers and early retirement have made the process more complex. In a survey carried out by the teachers' union, the INTO, in October 2002, it was found that up to 40,000 primary school pupils, almost 10% of the total pupil cohort, were not being taught by a qualified primary school teacher. The union pointed out that there was a shortfall of 1,600 qualified primary teachers to fill the relevant positions (*Irish Independent*, 7/XI/02). The Minister for Education and Science does not accept that the figure is so high but he has stated that 981 teachers are not qualified (*Irish Independent*, 3/2/03). No national scheme of panels of trained substitute teachers is in place. An evaluation of a pilot scheme for primary schools is to take place shortly.

2.4.4 Since 1991 the Higher Education Authority, in consultation with the Department of Education and Science and university representatives, has monitored numbers for post-primary teacher education. Because of subject specialism in post-primary schools and the changing popularity patterns for subjects, planning of teacher supply in this sector is difficult. With regard to the Higher Diploma in Education course, a national quota of about 1,000 entrants has been applied in recent years, with sub-quotas for each of the five university education departments involved. Quotas for individual subjects are not applied. The DES regulates the numbers for entry to the concurrent courses for post-primary schools, e.g. subjects such as Physical Education, Materials Technology (Wood). The DES commissioned the HEA to carry out a survey of all post-primary schools as to their experiences in filling vacancies in the school year 2001-2002. A response rate of 96% was obtained. A total of 2,418 vacancies were identified and 92% of these vacancies were filled (not always to the satisfaction of the principal in terms of qualifications and subjects), and 8% being recorded by principals as unfilled. Only 20.5% of the total vacancies identified were for permanent wholetime posts, and only 9.5% of the posts among secondary schools were permanent wholetime. Overall, the average number of applicants per post was 6.9% but

of the total vacancies, 46.8% attracted 3 or fewer applicants. Only 40% of posts seeking Learning Support, Resource and Special Needs teachers found a suitably qualified appointee. Of the school subjects, practical subjects were consistently among the least likely to be matched. Technology, Construction Studies, Technical Graphics Metalwork, Materials Technology (Wood) and Engineering presented major problems for schools trying to fill posts. This may be due to the employment attractions for personnel with such skills in the non-school employment environment. Problems were also recorded in recruiting Guidance and Counselling teachers, Irish and Modern European languages (J. Egan, "Supply and Demand for Second Level Teachers", unpublished report of HEA, December 2002, pp.49-52). Evidence from principal teachers indicates great difficulty in matching substitute teachers with the subjects required. No panel scheme of substitute teachers in place for post-primary schools.

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

## 2.5 Involvement in Teacher Policies

2.5.1 While the Department of Education and Science (DES) in conjunction with the government has ultimate responsibility for policies on teachers, over recent years a strong consultative tradition has existed. There are a number of statutory agencies which play significant roles. The Secondary Teachers' Registration Council, representative of all the key stakeholders, safeguards standards of entry into secondary teaching. The Conciliation and Arbitration Board plays a major role with regard to teacher salaries and some conditions of work. The teacher unions are highly organised, with the vast majority of teachers being unionised. There are three teacher unions — the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) for primary teachers, the Association of Secondary Teachers (ASTI), and the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), for post-primary teachers. The unions are well organised and provide a wide range of services to their members. They have played a significant part in the general trade union movement. For instance, the current President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is the outgoing General Secretary of the INTO. The Irish teacher unions also play a prominent part in the international teacher union movement. Staff in the Education Department of Colleges of Education and Universities also make inputs to policies on the teaching career, sometimes through their main union, the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT).

2.5.2 A long established tradition exists of ready access to the DES by the teacher union leaders. The same holds true for school management bodies. Of course, policy differences and disputes occur, but an underlying good relationship tends to exist between the personnel involved. As was indicated in section 1.1 of this document, teachers have contributed greatly to the broad consultative process through the nineties on educational policy issues, including teacher policies. As well as bilateral dealings with the DES, they participated fully in consultative fora such as the National Education

Convention, the National Forum on Early Childhood Education and National Consultative Conferences on Adult Education. The teacher unions participate fully in the deliberations of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

2.5.3 Since 1987, the teacher unions have been part of the sequence of national partnership agreements on pay and conditions between the government and the social partners. The most recent such agreement was the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF), which terminated in January 2003. One union, the ASTI, withdrew from the PPF and from ICTU, considering that teacher salaries were losing out relative to similarly qualified professions and occupations in the private sector. Neither did the ASTI participate in the Benchmarking process set up in 2000, as part of the PPF to consider this issue of comparability of salaries in the public and private sectors. Its report, issued on 1 July 2002, recommended a phased increase of 13% for teachers, with higher percentages for Principals and Deputy Principals at post-primary level. This could be viewed as an endorsement of the claim that teacher salaries had declined in relativity. As part of a new agreement "Sustaining Progress" (to be ratified in late March 2003), the government has agreed to implement the recommendation, on a phased basis, and is seeking greater flexibility in work practices in return for any such award. The government is anxious to safeguard the duration of the existing school year and would wish to see in-service engagement, parent-teacher meetings, school planning days, take place without erosion of the teaching-learning time. The government is also seeking greater synchronisation of school holiday times and school break arrangements between schools. This is linked to changes in the workplace, where frequently both parents are at work, and lack of synchronisation causes difficulties.

2.5.4 Apart from the recurrent requests for improved pupil-teacher ratios, salaries etc., areas of specific dispute in recent times have included matters such as payment for teachers for pupil supervision duties outside of teaching hours, and for substituting in place of absent colleagues. The INTO and the TUI have accepted government remuneration offers for such duties. The ASTI was more reluctant, but a ballot of members in March 2003 agreed by a majority vote to accept the scheme. Other issues have included satisfactory agreement on the operation of posts of responsibility. The DES pays extra allowances to holders of these posts, but the unions have been pressing for a reduction in their normal contractual teaching hours to facilitate the fulfilment of the work involved in some of these posts.

2.5.5 One policy issue affecting the teaching profession, but less tied to financial matters, is the implementation of the Teaching Council Act of 2001. This will give the teaching profession a considerable degree of control over entry to teaching and over all facets of the education of teachers. The establishment of a Teaching Council is seen by many as a landmark in the history of the teaching profession in Ireland, and is likely to increase the morale and status of the profession. Planning for its establishment is currently taking place and it is expected to be in operation early in 2004.

2.5.6 Overall, it can be noted that the Irish school system has some unusual characteristics, particularly in relation to its public/private profile, shaped by complex historical circumstances. Its roots are very deep with high regard for schooling, long before the provision of state support, even in times of great political and economic oppression. This ingrained regard for schooling and teachers has been

a continuous tradition. The support resources and facilities tended to be fairly spartan until modern times, but the productivity of the system has been high by comparative standards. It is noteworthy also that so many children aged 4 and 5, before the age of compulsory attendance, attend the national schools, which cater for 98% of the pupils of primary school age. From the mid sixties the government pursued a policy of mass post-primary schooling, so that now about 81% of the age cohort complete post-primary education, with about a further 3% engaged in training courses. The policy of a comprehensive-type curriculum for all post-primary schools has been sustained. A variety of courses has been introduced at senior cycle to cater for pupil interests and aptitudes. However, aspirations for reform of assessment procedures at both primary and post-primary have been disappointed, and progress has been slow so far. While problems are encountered in schools serving disadvantaged areas, in general, a high level of motivation for education is encountered from pupils and their parents. The highly unionised teaching force has adopted a dual approach to issues – that of trade union concern for conditions of work and professional concerns for educational reform. A high level of support was forthcoming from teachers for the general educational reform agenda of the nineties, but less so for pupil assessment reforms. Slippage in the relativity level of their salaries vis à vis other similarly qualified professionals, combined with increased costs of living, particularly in housing costs, have given rise to dissatisfaction among teachers. There has been a consequent decline in the morale of some school staffs which may affect their enthusiasm for new work practices. On the other hand, when the Teaching Council is established in 2004 and teachers obtain the recently recommended Benchmarking award of an increase of 13% as well as the terms of a new national agreement of about 7%, and if the outcome of studies such as this OECD one on teachers, and the contemporary EU study on Educational Objective One, relating to the teaching career, are seen to give rise to improved policy initiatives for the teaching career, then the prospects could be very encouraging for a renewal of energy and motivation in the cause of educational reform.

# CHAPTER 3

## ATTRACTING COMPETENT PEOPLE INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

### 3.1 Main Policy Concerns

#### *Quality of recruits*

3.1.1 There are not major concerns in Ireland about attracting competent people to enter the teaching profession. Teaching as a career has traditionally enjoyed high social status and there is keen competitiveness for entry to all categories of teaching. Applicants for entry to primary teaching tend to come from the top quartile of the achieving students in the school Leaving Certificate Examination, and those taking the course for graduates are also of a high calibre. Over 90% of entrants to the Higher Diploma in Education for secondary teaching hold honours degrees, and high performance on the Leaving Certificate Examination is required from those taking the concurrent course. Accordingly, to date the government has not had to engage in any special measures to stimulate recruitment for the teaching career. There is scope for mature entrants, that is people other than those completing post-primary school to enter primary teaching. Increasingly, "mature" students, often with diverse working experience, are also entering post-primary teacher education. It was interesting to note that despite a good deal of publicity in 2001-02 on the disaffection of the ASTI on salary and other issues, the number of applicants for the Higher Diploma in Education course of 2002-03 in the four National University of Ireland education departments increased by 22% on the applicants for the previous academic year. Surprisingly, there has been a further increase of 30% in the applicants for 2003-04, over the year 2002-03 (Figures from the H.D.E. Central Applications Office).

#### *Feminisation*

3.1.2 There is concern about the problem, which is an international one, of the imbalance between female and male applicants for the teaching profession. At primary level, it is about 90% female to 10% male, while at post-primary level it is about 80% female and 20% male. Some research has been carried out on the attitudes of school pupils and student teachers, seeking to identify the issues which may be involved in this strong pattern of imbalance. This study "Gender Differences in Patterns of Entry to the Colleges of Education," (Drudy, Martin, Woods and Flynn), was completed in July 2002. It is the first major study of gender differences in the perception of, and attitudes to, primary teaching among school pupils and students in the colleges of education in the Republic of Ireland. The study showed that the pool of boys with the necessary qualifications is smaller than the equivalent pool of girls. Many third-level course choices seemed to be gender stereotyped and significantly more girls were attracted to teaching of all kinds. Young men were reported as perceiving that there would be relatively less

support for them from those whose opinions mattered to them for a decision to go into primary teaching, than was the case for young women. More boys than girls considered that primary teaching was best suited to women. The report also noted that parents had by far the greatest influence on students' teaching career decisions.

The authors conclude that it may be difficult for any society to bring about an early reversal of the feminisation trends in teaching. It states that these trends are firmly rooted in issues related to economic development, urbanisation, the position of women in society, cultural definitions of masculinity, the centrality and value of children and childcare. If an effort is to be made to try to reverse the trend, the report recommends a number of long-term and short-term strategies for a range of involved agencies. The range of these strategies emphasises how comprehensive the policy process would need to be and how the agencies would need to co-operate (Gender Differences in Patterns of Entry to the Colleges of Education, 2002, [unpublished], pp.i-iv, and 191-210).

### ***Modes of selection***

3.1.3 Concern is also expressed by some commentators that the mode of selection for candidates into almost all teacher education courses is predominantly based on academic performance. Interviews which used to be held by most institutions have been discontinued, except in the case of the University of Dublin. Mechanisms such as aptitude tests are not applied. The supporters of the existing scheme hold that interviews were not reliable discriminators between applicants and were very time-consuming. No satisfactory aptitudes tests were available for use. Those opposed to the current system argue that for a caring profession, academic criteria need to be supplemented by more personal suitability data. The recent review of primary teacher education recommends that consideration be given to the re-introduction of interviews in the selection of students for the B.Ed. degree (*Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century*, 2002, p.162). Interviews are employed in the selection for entry to the graduate course for primary teaching. The success rates of students who enter all the teacher education courses are very high, although a proportion of these found unsuitable are counselled out or failed in teaching practice before sitting final examinations. It would seem that the current selection system has been generally successful.

### ***Attracting new recruits***

3.1.4 Some commentators suggest that it is desirable to seek to recruit more mature students with varied work experience as an enrichment to the teaching profession. However, as yet, the salary scale provides for no special incentives for such experienced personnel, except in the case of some categories of vocational teachers. Up to five years incremental credit may be obtained by primary teachers for non-teaching experience, relevant to primary teaching and which was full-time, remunerated and satisfactory. Otherwise, when such personnel graduate they have to begin at the bottom of the teacher salary scale. Because of the current shortage of qualified teachers in primary schools, the INTO has urged the DES to expand the number of places on existing teacher education programmes. It suggests novel approaches for modular courses for graduates that could be offered by distance learning, week-end and summer courses. College authorities have some concerns about the

quality assurance of such an approach. The INTO has also urged expanding recruitment from Northern Ireland and abroad. These latter candidates should be assisted with obtaining a qualification in the Irish language through special support schemes.

### ***Job difficulties for beginning teachers***

3.1.5 With regard to the attractiveness of the career for young teachers, there is concern that the majority of them on recruitment, at post-primary level particularly, may have to spend an unduly long period in part-time employment in a variety of schools, before they secure a permanent position in a school. It is considered that this experience may be a strong disincentive, even for committed young teachers, to persist with a teaching career until permanency is achieved. In the context of an ageing teaching force, it may well be that energetic, dynamic “new blood” entrants may be deflected from teaching because of these circumstances. The demographic decline in post-primary pupil numbers in the years ahead may exacerbate this situation further. Commentators also point to the long duration of the incremental salary scale, twenty five years, as a disincentive for young teachers in contemporary social circumstances.

## **3.2 Data, Trends and Factors**

### ***Main pathway of entry to teaching career***

3.2.1 Entry to the primary teaching career is predominantly through two modes. These are entry to the three year concurrent B.Ed. course in the colleges of education, which are all affiliated to universities, or a graduate entry to a shorter eighteen month course, also located in the colleges of education. The great majority of entrants to post-primary teaching follow the consecutive teacher education model whereby they first undertake three of four year degree courses in their areas of academic subject specialisation and then apply for entry to the one year, full-time professional course of educational studies and practice — the Higher Diploma in Education. Teachers of subjects such as Construction Studies, Engineering, Physical Education, Home Economics, Art, follow a four year concurrent degree course, conducted in or validated by universities.

3.2.2 As discussed in section 2, the DES controls entry to primary teacher education and the DES in conjunction with the HEA and the Conference of the Heads of Irish Universities (CHIU) act as controlling agencies on numbers admitted to post-primary teacher education. Up to recently, these models and arrangements have worked satisfactorily. However, in recent years it is clear that a shortage of qualified teachers is in evidence in primary teaching. Arising from this, the teachers’ union, the INTO, has been pressing the government to increase the supply of qualified teachers and the DES has authorised increased intake into teacher education courses. As yet, the pressure is not so acute as to push the government into new schemes outside of the main pathways of entry. The very much improved pupil-teacher ratio in recent years, albeit still high by international comparisons, and the more generous provision of resource and special needs teachers, and schemes such as home-school liaison, may incline the government to make haste slowly, in the context of cutbacks of public service personnel as part of

the 2002-03 national budgetary strategy. On the other hand, the pressure may be such as to encourage them to make more extensive provision of conversion-type courses for a minority of graduates from other career paths. Such an admixture of staff would broaden the experience base of the teaching corps, which, in the past, has tended to have a closeted character of entry through school to teacher education and graduating for entry back into school, with little other work experience.

3.2.3 The numbers available through the two main pathways for entry into post-primary teaching are generally regarded as satisfactory. Shortages which exist in certain subjects such as Construction Studies or Engineering are linked to the attractions of a very buoyant construction industry. Teachers in such subject areas are in strong demand by this industry. With the economic downturn being experienced at present, this attraction may be becoming less strong. There is provision in all forms of teacher education for mature students, including candidates who may have some years experience in other careers, to apply for entry into teaching. A growing minority are so doing, amounting to about 15% of current student intakes. The only way of entry to the profession is by participating in the existing mainstream entry programmes.

3.2.4 It is understood that there is a significant pool of qualified teachers in existence, who for a variety of reasons are no longer teaching in the system. Despite some attempts to quantify this pool, an accurate estimate of its size has proved very elusive. Quite a number of qualified teachers return, but usually on a part-time basis, as a matter of choice. If teachers wish to re-enter there is no requirement on them to undertake any new form of training, and no courses specifically designed for their needs are available for them. If they can secure employment in a school, their earlier qualification stands for recognition purposes. With the widespread availability of a variety of in-service courses, many such teachers will undertake a refresher-type course, but this is a matter of personal choice. Some also tend to take on a certificated in-service course as a helpful means of re-acclturing themselves to a fast changing school system, but such courses may not be the most targeted to their needs. When former teachers re-enter the profession they may be permitted to re-join the incremental salary scale at the point which they had reached when they left the service. No extra inducements are offered, and with regard to responsibility posts they tend to lose out as far as seniority is concerned. If, and when, shortages in qualified teachers arise, it would seem that the pool of former teachers could be beneficially drawn upon. However, a much more sophisticated teacher data base, including statistics on this pool, would be needed for strategic supply and demand policy purposes.

### ***Trends in enrolment composition***

3.2.5 There has been no significant change in the composition of those studying to enter teaching over the past ten years, but there have been some gradual changes in the emphases. At primary level, the on-going preponderance of females in the composition has become more pronounced. The pattern in post-primary teacher education is less pronounced but is moving towards an 80:20 proportionality. While there has been a growing admixture of more mature students within the corps of teacher education students, these have not changed dramatically. The trend is welcomed and is more noticeable at post-primary level. The expansion of the graduate entry mode to primary teacher education allows for more mature-age entry, but the preponderance are in the mid-twenties age range.



Thus, overall the student teacher population can be characterised as predominantly in the early to mid-twenties. The great majority of entrants to the B.Ed. courses are aged 18, and graduate at about age 21 years. In recent years, Ireland has been experiencing an increasing number of immigrants and a greater number of people of varied ethnic origins and religious beliefs. It also has a significant indigenous ethnic minority of Traveller people. To date, however, the teacher education population is decidedly of Irish ethnic origin. Very few student teachers emerge from the ethnic minorities. In Traveller pre-schools and some primary schools which cater for Travellers some Travellers are recruited as teacher aides, but very few have hitherto qualified as teachers. Members of other ethnic minorities act as part-time teachers but, as yet, have not gone through formal teacher education courses. This is likely to change as, in the course of time, the relatively new immigrant population settles down and integrates with the general society. There are no formal barriers to members of any ethnic or religious minority entering teacher education courses. It is more a matter of time, opportunity and familiarisation within the society.

3.2.6 In earlier times, entry to post-primary teacher education, through university institutions, tended to attract the relatively better off in society, as regards lay people. Religious congregations were very much to the fore in manning the secondary schools and socio-economic status was blurred in their context. Primary teaching tended to attract bright young people from a more varied range of middle to lower middle class, in terms of socio-economic status. The course of training was just two years and was subsidised by the state. The majority of entrants came from lower professionals, small farmers and skilled craftsmen. They came predominantly from the western seaboard and southern counties, and many came from a rural, rather than an urban background. In modern times these patterns have altered. Students are no longer required to pay fees for undergraduate courses. There have been many changes in the more traditional make-up of Irish society. Teachers for all categories of schools now come from heterogeneous socio-economic backgrounds, and the urban-rural division is no longer relevant. It is still the case, that among many well-off and professional families, teaching is not promoted as a career for their children, and many of the very poor in society do not aspire to teaching careers. Within these parameters a greater mix in socio-economic status is now in evidence within the population aspiring to the career of teaching. However, in recent years, in the context of a buoyant economy involving a greater diversification of careers, with a certain glamour associated with them, a trend was in evidence that parents with rising social aspirations, including teachers, tended to advise their children to consider careers which would be more remunerative, and enjoy a greater social caché. It is still the case, however, that the teacher student population incorporates a good mixture of mid-range socio-economic parental occupations.

3.2.7 The high level in the academic achievement of entrants to teacher education has remained intact. Indeed, it could be argued that it has increased, at least at post-primary level, over the past ten years. Entrants to primary teaching need to achieve a high level of points on their Leaving Certificate Examinations to gain entry into teacher education. The *Report of the Task Force on the Physical Sciences* (2002, pp.67, 68) indicated that completion of physical science subjects (chemistry, physics, chemistry and physics combined) is low among entrants to primary teaching, which has implications for the implementation of the science components of the revised Primary School Curriculum. Entrants to the concurrent courses for post-primary teacher education also need high points. At one time, the

basic academic entry levels to post-primary teacher education were not very high. In recent years, this pattern has changed and the great majority of applicants now have to have an honours standard in their undergraduate degree to attain a place on the Higher Diploma in Education courses. This is largely due to the fact that teaching as a career still enjoys high social status and regard.

### **Student attitudes to the teaching career**

3.2.8 From the evidence which exists it would appear that the great majority of graduates from teacher education courses enter the teaching career. For many years, the HEA and the careers offices of the relevant institutions have conducted surveys of the first destination of graduates in the year following graduation. The figures for the year 2000 indicate the following pattern for Higher Diploma in Education graduates:

<b>First Destinations Year 2000</b>	
Permanent Teaching in Ireland	4.7%
Part-time, Temporary, Substitute Teaching in Ireland	74.3%
Teaching Abroad	5.0%
Further Study	4.9%
Other Work	7.6%
Not Available for Employment	2.5%
Seeking Employment	1.0%

*Source: Higher Education Authority: First Destination of Graduates, 2000*

As can be noted, the vast majority of graduates from the Higher Diploma in Education are engaged in various forms of part-time teaching, but with less than 5% having access to permanent teaching posts. This pattern of part-time employment may continue for some graduates for a number of years. This is putting a strain on their persistence in seeking a more permanent career in teaching. While there is an inadequacy of research on this issue, the view is commonly held that the teaching career is incurring a loss of such personnel, some of whom tend to seek employment in other more lucrative and more permanent employment (see Section 5.2.8. for more detail on this issue).

3.2.9 Student attitude surveys reflect a strong commitment toward the teaching career, albeit there is a strong female imbalance within the student body. There is high motivation to enter it, and most see it as a desirable permanent occupation, although not always remaining in the position of an "assistant teacher." There is more career diversification and promotion prospects in the profession than formerly. The holiday and working arrangements also appeal to some graduates' life-style aspirations, and are seen to be family-friendly features. The general view is if more permanent positions were available during the early years following graduation that there would be very little "wastage" of qualified young post-primary teachers from the career.

### **Salary trends**

3.2.10 In Ireland, all teachers at primary and post-primary schools share a common salary scale, with extra allowances for some qualifications and the exercise of positions of responsibility. There are no extra allowances for teaching in socially disadvantaged areas, remote areas, or for teaching in urban areas in which housing costs are very high. There are extra allowances for teaching through the medium of Irish and teaching on off-shore islands. The Minister for Education and Science has indicated that he is considering extra allowances for teaching in designated disadvantaged areas. There are no salary supplements for levels of performance adjudged to be of outstanding merit. The teacher unions are keen to retain uniformity of salary reward across the profession. The common salary scale ranges from E22,208 to E43,165 over an incremental span of 25 years (2002). Primary teachers with a B.Ed. degree enter at the second point of the scale, while post-primary teachers, with four years education, enter at the third point of the scale. The ratio of salary after 15 years experience to GDP per capita is about 1.25 (OECD, *Education At A Glance 2002*, Table D6.1, p.339). The salary scale in 2000 was very close to the OECD mean (not taking into account taxation schemes etc.), but the ratio to GDP per capita after 15 years was below the OECD mean. Figures from the OECD data bank show that the ratio of salary to GDP after 15 years experience in teaching declined significantly in the period 1994-99, from 2.23 to 1.39 (OECD Education Data Base). However, it should be noted that GDP increased very dramatically in recent years in Ireland.

3.2.11 Teacher unions have been very exercised about a perceived relative decline between the salary levels of teachers and employments requiring similar type qualifications. In July 2002 a government established Benchmarking Body urged an increase of 13% for teachers with a view to restoring relativities. The Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI) consider that this is too low a figure. With government policy now focussed on cutting expenditure on the public service, the matter of the payment of such an award is very much a negotiating issue. The government had given an undertaking to pay the first quarter of such a recommendation, but the amount of any other possible payment is tied up in productivity talks with an extended time duration for implementation. However, it is expected that there will be a successful outcome to these talks. Apart from allowances for some extra qualifications and the exercise of responsibility, there are no extra bonuses or financial perks available to teachers, unlike some other employments. Teachers who volunteer for the work of supervision and correction of the state examinations are paid for this work, which is conducted outside school time. Teacher unions consider that the incremental salary scale is unduly long and were disappointed that the recent Benchmarking Body did not recommend a reduction on this scale.

3.2.12 In general, the working conditions, the holiday entitlements, and the hours required to be present in schools compare very favourably with other public servants' employment. Teachers have a good deal of discretion with regard to geographical location of employment. However, having achieved a permanent position, mobility within the system is limited. When in employment, teachers have a good deal of professional autonomy in the performance of their work. In the context of changing youth culture, within a changing society, stress factors have been on the increase. Schools in severely disadvantaged circumstances tend to be more stressful work places. While many teachers display great commitment to the pupils in such schools, the burnout syndrome is more intensive, and

such schools experience a greater turnover of staff. In the context of a current teacher shortage in primary education, such schools are finding it more difficult to recruit qualified staff. While some former teachers return to teaching, particularly female teachers whose families have grown up, it is often in a part-time capacity. No studies have been done to analyse this issue as to the extent, or the motivation of those who return.

### 3.3 Policy Initiatives and Their Impact

3.3.1 Predicting and managing the supply and demand of teachers is a difficult and complex process. But one of the most striking deficiencies in the resources of the policy-maker relating to the teaching career in Ireland is the inadequacies in the data base on teachers. There are many gaps in our knowledge of different features of teacher trends and attitudes. The *Report on the Allocation of Teachers for Second-Level Schools* (2001) put it succinctly when it stated:

We note the absence of a robust data base on teachers, particularly the links between subject specialisms and deployment, and in many other important areas of school organisation and management, all of which are critical in arriving at an objective appraisal of teacher deployment strategies, and in identifying examples of good practice (p.93).

More precise data are needed on the qualifications of teachers, on the fit between their qualifications and their teaching duties, on the age range patterns, on the retention patterns in teaching, on the pool of former teachers, on the attitudes of student teachers, on the attitudes of former teachers, on male perspectives on the teaching profession, on the needs of teachers at different stages of the teaching career, on teacher attitudes to varying forms of teacher in-service education, on attitudes of teachers to engaging in formal teacher induction, on the views of teachers on qualification allowances, on the attitudes of teacher unions to incentives for teacher retention in difficult teaching contexts, on the views of school management groups regarding aspects of the deployment of teachers, on exploring ways to improve teacher deployment arrangements within a changing demographic scenario. The data arising from such studies and explorations would provide policy-makers with vitally important material for enlightened policy on the teaching profession in the era ahead, which may be less stable or favourable than in the past. A complacent view that future trends in the teaching career will follow the patterns of the past could be a grave mistake. Even if the traditional pattern does prevail, the policy-makers need more comprehensive and sophisticated data on the teaching force for enlightened decision-making, in any case.

3.3.2 Because Ireland has not traditionally had a problem of teacher shortages, the state has not considered it necessary to undertake special campaigns to promote the attractiveness of the teaching profession, other than by general improvements in pay and conditions. There are many more applicants for teaching at present than can be accommodated on courses. Nevertheless, a shortage of qualified teachers has emerged in the primary sector and this may presage future trends. To alleviate this situation the government has increased the number of students in training through the two existing modes of entry — the B.Ed. degree course and the graduate course of eighteen months duration. The

teachers' union is pressing for a more varied policy response and the active engagement with modular graduate conversion courses, increasing recruitment from Northern Ireland and encouraging former teachers to return. In recent years, more flexibility exists regarding teacher mobility from Northern Ireland, where there is a surplus of teachers. Competence in the Irish language is an essential prerequisite for recognition as a permanent teacher in primary schools. A teacher without a sufficient standard in Irish can take up a permanent post, but needs to pass the test within five years or the entitlement to the permanent position is lost (Circular 25/00). Special courses are available for such teachers and allowances are available to them to spend time in Irish-speaking districts. It would seem highly desirable that greater efforts be made to draw upon the surplus pool of primary teachers in Northern Ireland to enter teaching in the Irish Republic. More formal consideration should also be given to new forms of graduate conversion courses and to tapping into a personnel pool with varied work experience. Irish language medium schools, *gaelscoileanna*, have also been experiencing difficulties in recruiting teachers and substitute teachers with sufficient competence in the Irish language, and as Irish is the first official language, this is a serious policy concern.

3.3.3 Through a variety of policy documents in the nineties the government emphasised the importance of the teachers' role, indicated its intention of supporting it, and affirmed its confidence in the quality of the teaching force. However, it has not engaged in any publicity or image building exercises in relation to the teaching career, probably adjudging that circumstances did not warrant it. If the teaching profession continues to attract high quality and well motivated candidates in sufficient numbers, it is probably not viewed as a priority to engage in extra stimulating measures. The time seems ripe for a proactive image building process in support of the teaching career, which could be linked to the establishment of the Teaching Council. The government has not seen it necessary to engage in campaigns to attract teachers from other countries. However, there is a sizeable and consistent pattern of teachers with qualifications gained in other countries seeking acceptance by the Irish authorities. Some of these are Irish people who have gained their professional qualifications abroad, and wish to return. Others are of varied ethnic origin. While insisting as far as possible on the maintenance of equivalency in standards, the Irish authorities co-operate in processing such applications and, of course, they are obliged by law to do so in the case of EU citizens. With an increasingly diverse immigrant population, some teachers with language skills are employed usually on a part-time basis. There is a need for a more focussed policy approach in order to be able to avail of the skills of such personnel to serve the needs of immigrant pupils with diverse language needs.

3.3.4 As regards the imbalanced female composition of the teaching force, the recommendations of the recent research study, "Gender Differences in Patterns of Entry to Colleges of Education," need to be reflected on. There is no "quick fix" solution to this issue and it may prove fairly intractable to alter the trend, but it is an issue of importance. The image of the job, the rewards, the career structure, the availability of appropriate employment opportunities form part of the elements which need to be addressed in seeking an improvement in the situation.

3.3.5 It seems incontrovertible that the minuscule number of permanent teaching positions available to young post-primary teachers is proving to be a major disincentive to making a commitment to a career in teaching. Despite this situation it is quite remarkable that so many degree holders still apply

to do the Higher Diploma in Education. While there is a lack of research-based evidence, evidence from the consultative process suggests that after a number of years of temporary employment, in a variety of school contexts which makes it difficult for them to establish themselves professionally, disenchantment sets in, and many exit the profession. As well as the uncertain pattern of their employment in different kinds of school, they also lack an induction service which could support them in the early stages of their careers. These circumstances are not propitious for laying good, professional career foundations. The issue needs expert examination and should be linked to a review of the policy of career breaks and secondment arrangements. The recommendations of a recent research study on the secondment of teachers highlight the need for a serious policy appraisal of this system for the good of the seconded teachers, the school from which they are seconded and the system to which they are seconded (D. Tuohy, A. Lodge, "The Secondment of Teachers," unpublished research study, 2002, pp.69-73).

3.3.6 Teacher unions and some media commentators consider that a twenty-five year incremental scale for the teachers is an out-dated model, and does nothing today to increase the image or attractiveness of the job for young people. Of course, this is a politico-financial issue which is a matter for industrial relations negotiations.

3.3.7 The government policy on equality and social inclusion poses significant challenges for many schools. The pupil populations of many schools now contain large proportions of disadvantaged pupils and of ethnic minorities. While official statistics are not available, the consultative process suggested that it is rare for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to become teachers. It would seem desirable to seek to encourage such students to aspire to a teaching career and to support them in the process. Steps could be taken to enhance the career of teaching in such pupils' eyes, and to support them in seeking to achieve the goal. An action plan arising from a recent national forum, *Primary Education: Ending Disadvantage* recommended that "... existing entry requirements to Colleges of Education should be amended in order to attract students from disadvantaged, working class, and minority backgrounds into primary teaching. This will require the creation of Direct Entry Programmes into Colleges of Education that will set aside an appropriate percentage of places for students from the aforementioned backgrounds" (A.L. Gilligan [ed] Proceedings and Action Plan of National Forum, 2002, p.170). A scheme such as this currently exists which gives preferential access to aspiring student teachers from Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) districts, to aid in the provision of native Irish speakers to the teaching profession. Up to 10% of places in Colleges of Education may be reserved for applicants from the Gaeltacht, who apply to the Central Applications Office with a designated course code. At present, the access officers of the universities and the NUI Higher Diploma Applications Centre are exploring the possibility of a quota of places on that course for graduates who have come through an Access Programme in third-level institutions.

3.3.8 While data on subject teacher shortages in post-primary schools are imprecise, very useful work has been done by the pioneering study of McCullagh (1997) and the recent (2002) study by Egan and O'Connor on supply and demand for second level teachers, which should be sustained. It might be a useful policy to explore the possibility of establishing some subject quotas in areas of apparent shortage. While there is not a shortage of science graduates going forward for teacher education,

though there is a shortage of science teaching positions, the *Report of the Task Force on the Physical Sciences* (2002) recommended “that there should be a separate entry quota for science graduates into the Higher Diploma in Education programmes in the universities” (p.75). More detailed work needs to be done in the area of subject shortages, but it would seem useful to establish some subject quotas within the overall admission quota. It would also be a productive policy approach to encourage the pooling of teaching resources between schools, particularly in the context of the projected decline in post-primary pupil numbers.

3.3.9 While the issue is complex and potentially costly, it is desirable that a study should be undertaken on the feasibility of establishing satisfactory panels of substitute teachers which schools could draw upon when serious needs arise. The associations of principal teachers indicate that the problem of acquiring suitable substitute teachers is a major, on-going one. The planned evaluation of the existing substitute panel scheme for primary schools should proceed forthwith, as part of a broader review with the relevant education partners.

# CHAPTER 4

## EDUCATING, DEVELOPING AND CERTIFYING TEACHERS

### 4.1 Identification of the Main Policy Concerns

4.1.1 There are no major publicly expressed concerns about teacher education, development or certification. In general, the various stakeholders express confidence in the quality of teacher education and the opportunities for teacher development. However, in the context of the many changes in educational policy over the last decade, it was recognised that a review of teacher education should be conducted to help ensure that course content, methodologies and procedures were in line with contemporary schooling needs. Reviews of both primary and post-primary teacher education have been conducted since 1998.

4.1.2 Discussions at the National Education Convention in 1993 indicated a high valuation of the professional skills and caring tradition of the Irish teaching force. There was strong support for the government's stated intention of promoting the teaching career as a continuum involving initial, induction and in-career teacher education. The stakeholders also expressed a strong preference for the retention of both the concurrent and consecutive models of teacher formation. While it was acknowledged by the stakeholders that the existing pre-service teacher education courses had adapted flexibly to changing needs it was urged that this needed to be sustained on a continuous basis, and with a clear sense of direction (NEC, 1993, pp.85, 86). The government's *White Paper* in 1995, indicated its intention of instituting a review of post-primary teacher education. In 1998 reviews for both post-primary and primary teacher education were initiated. The report of the primary review body, *Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century*, was published in 2002. The report on the post-primary sector was presented to the Department of Education and Science (DES), but has not been publicly launched yet. The DES also commissioned a research report, "Policy and Practice of Professional Development for Primary and Post-Primary Teachers: A Critical Analysis," (Sugrue, Morgan, Devine, Raftery), in 2000, which was presented to the DES in June 2001, and remains unpublished. These documents should provide advice and recommendations to guide teacher education policy in the years ahead, and should be linked with the role of the Teaching Council for which planning is well afoot. The last major changes in the framework of teacher education date from the early seventies. Thus, while the structures devised then served the system well, it is timely that a modernisation process is now put in place so that teacher education can better serve the needs of a fast-changing system.



## 4.2 Data, Trends and Factors

### **Qualification requirements**

4.2.1 To be recognised as a qualified primary teacher, a teacher needs either to have achieved the B.Ed. degree awarded by a university, followed by one year of successful probation, or, as a graduate, to be successful in an eighteen month teacher education programme available to graduates, conducted in a college of education, followed by a year of successful probation. Qualifications from foreign applicants are assessed for their equivalence to these qualifications. There are two main routes for recognition as a post-primary teacher. One route is to be a university graduate who has also successfully achieved a Higher Diploma in Education professional course, as well as one year of successful probation. The other route involves an individual undergoing a four-year concurrent university teacher education course, followed by one year's successful probation. The one year's probation can be made up from an accumulation of part-time teaching. While it is possible for a vocational school teacher to be employed without undertaking a university-based course in teacher education, this occurs only very rarely nowadays. Of course, teachers holding diploma qualifications from prior to the establishment of degree requirements, are recognised as qualified teachers within the school system. Foreign teachers seeking recognition for post-primary teaching in Ireland need to present equivalent qualifications for post-primary teaching.

4.2.2 There have been no major changes in the requirements for entry to the profession for a long period of time. While the reviews of teacher education suggest some changes in course content and duration of teacher education programmes, they do not put forward concrete proposals for significant change on entry requirements for the profession. However, the review body on post-primary teacher education, in general terms, suggests a more flexible approach to entry, with more generous recognition of appropriate prior experiential learning as a criterion for access. To date, the DES has given no indication of a forthcoming change in existing policy.

### **The structure of initial teacher education**

#### **Institutions**

4.2.3 There are five colleges of education with responsibilities for the initial education of primary teachers, each of which is affiliated to a university. The colleges are denominational in character and privately owned. In the context of a pluralist society, with increasingly diverse religious belief, flexibility is required and is attempted to accommodate students' attitudes within denominational institutions. They are funded by grants from the DES or the HEA. Teachers for post-primary schools are trained in thirteen separate institutions. More than 80% of students follow the consecutive course model in five universities. Student teachers of subjects such as Construction Studies, Metalwork/Engineering, Physical Education, Home Economics, Art, Religion usually undertake the four-year concurrent degree model. All teacher education courses are now validated by the universities, with the exception of qualifications for Montessori teaching, which are validated by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council

(HETAC), or by the Association Montessori International (AMI). The Montessori qualifications are only recognised for restricted purposes, such as special education, to teach in national schools. Students are eligible for free fees in undergraduate courses, but, depending on income, may be liable for fees for post-graduate courses.

### **Entry**

4.2.4 Since 1992 application for entry to the Colleges of Education to train as primary teachers has been made through the Central Applications Office (CAO) for entry to third level education. Grades obtained in the Leaving Certificate Examination are converted to points and competition for places in four of the Colleges is treated as a single contest. The exception is the Church of Ireland College of Education which admits students from the Church of Ireland and other protestant religious traditions. A similar but separate competition is held for this College. Irish, English and Mathematics are compulsory subjects and three other subjects must be included for the computing of the points. Proficiency in Oral Irish in the Leaving Certificate Examination is also required. The academic status of candidates, as measured by Leaving Certificate performance remains high from year to year and competition for places is very keen. The Department of Education and Science controls the number of entrants to Colleges of Education. Entry to the eighteen-month graduate course is on the basis of academic achievement, interview, and oral examination in Irish, conducted by the colleges. Entry requirements for post-primary teachers varies in relation to whether it is a consecutive or concurrent course, and to the nature of the teacher qualification required. For the great majority of those who enter consecutive teacher education courses the Higher Diploma in Education (NUI) Application Centre acts as a centralised selecting system for candidates for the four National University of Ireland constituent universities. Dublin University (Trinity College Dublin) operates its own entry system which includes an interview for short-listed applicants. The two main criteria for entry to the NUI institutions involve the standard undergraduate and other academic achievement, as well as credit for minimum levels of earlier teaching experience, if relevant. Applicants for the concurrent courses are processed through the Central Applications Office (CAO), and, depending on subjects, may require the presentation of portfolios or engagement in selection tests.

4.2.5 It is noteworthy that the number of students entering initial teacher education programmes for primary education has increased from 695 in 1995 to 1,659 by the year 2001. In 1995, men formed 16% of the smaller total, while in 2001 this proportion was down to 10%. The numbers entering initial training for post-primary teaching increased over the same period from 1,019 to 1,279, with the proportion of men declining from 32% to 26%. It is also interesting to note that the proportion of those graduating from teacher education courses and applying for teaching positions has remained fairly steady over the years. In 1995, 95.5% of graduates from primary teacher education applied for teaching positions, while in the year 2000 the proportion was 97.7%, involving 98.1% of women and 94.9% of men. The pattern for graduates from post-primary teacher education was different. In 1995, 78.4% of such graduates applied for teaching positions, rising to 80.1% in the year 2000, with a close to equal balance between the proportion of men and women applying (Statistics supplied by DES and HEA).

### ***Length of courses and in-school experience***

4.2.6 Most B.Ed. courses are of three years duration with honours attainable. Trinity College has an optional fourth year to attain an honours award. The graduate course for primary teachers is of eighteen months duration. For post-primary teachers, the length of both the concurrent and the consecutive models is a minimum of four years. The practice of teaching in schools under supervised teaching conditions is a long established component of teacher education programmes. Nowadays, increasing importance is being laid on the school as a "site" for helping students to understand the dynamics of classroom teaching and the principles underlying it. Student school-based experience usually takes the form of continuous participation for days throughout the school year, or block placement whereby trainees are located in schools on a full-time basis for an extended period of weeks, periodically during the course. The school-based experience generally amounts to about ten weeks over the course. Block placement tends to be more characteristic of the concurrent course model, which also allows more variety in school-based experience than the consecutive model. There is also a move away from just focussing on teaching practice during school placement towards broader features of school experience including supervision, planning sessions, extra-curricular activities. The duration of school based experience in the consecutive Higher Diploma in Education one year course, is about 60 days. The duration of teaching practice in concurrent courses tends to be longer, and the greater time available allows for a variety of school contexts. The acceptance of student teachers on placement is at the discretion of the school authorities. In the case of the Higher Diploma in Education students, they are required to make their own teaching practice arrangements with schools. The increased emphasis on school-based experience has highlighted the need for more overt forms of partnership between schools and the teacher education institutions. Supervisors from the institutions visit students in the schools on a periodic basis to guide and evaluate performance. While no structured or paid system of mentoring by school personnel is in existence many teachers provide co-operative assistance to the student teachers on a voluntary basis, as a professional goodwill measure. Two recent reviews of teacher education recommend closer partnership between teacher education institutions and schools, but national policy needs to support schools and mentor teachers more so that they are facilitated to engage more fully in such a partnership.

### ***Graduating requirements***

4.2.7 Education courses are regarded as professional programmes in which practical performance is crucial. Hence, as a precondition of graduation success in the practice of teaching is essential. In most cases, to achieve an overall honours award in the teacher education course, an honours grade in teaching practice is also required. Honours qualifications are significant with regard to employment prospects, and also due to the fact that the financial allowance for honours is relatively significant over the duration of a teaching career. As entry to the courses is highly competitive, the quality of entrants is high and their motivation is strong. It is, perhaps, not surprising that high levels of performance are registered by students on most courses, both in the practical and theoretical components.

### ***Influence of stakeholders***

4.2.8 The DES has the responsibility for the recognition of primary teacher qualifications and for those of vocational teachers and for teachers in community and comprehensive schools. The Registration Council for Secondary Teachers is a statutory body representative of the DES, school management bodies, teacher education institutions, teacher unions and other stakeholders. It lays down the criteria for the recognition of secondary teacher education courses. It also adjudicates on teacher applications for recognition from abroad. Of course, the universities retain a good deal of academic autonomy in the detailed design of their courses. Traditionally, the DES had a strong role in the design of courses for primary teacher education. While it continues to have an input, particularly on the practical teaching side, the universities and the colleges of education are now mainly responsible for course design.

4.2.9 There is a strong tradition of close liaison between school managements, teacher unions and the DES on all matters affecting teaching. All these bodies can, and do make representations on aspects of teacher education to which teacher education institutions are usually responsive. A Standing Committee of the Heads of Education and the Teacher Unions exists which discuss issues of mutual concern on teacher education issues. They have hosted joint seminars and issued a number of joint publications on aspects of teacher education and the teaching career. Staff from teacher education departments contribute to conferences organised by teacher unions, and a positive tradition of dialogue and exchange of views has existed. While such linkages are beneficial, they tend to be informal. It is now the intention of the government to establish a Teaching Council in the near future, according to legislation passed in 2001. Under the terms of the legislation the Teaching Council will have extensive powers regarding the recognition of teacher education courses, as well as other issues affecting the profession. While teachers will be the majority on the Council, there is also provision for representation of school managements, parents, industry, and the training institutions. When it is established it is likely to provide a major forum for debate and reflection on teacher issues.

### ***Arrangements for career transfer into teaching***

4.2.10 There are no special education or training provisions for established professionals from other occupations who would like to become teachers. All such personnel are expected to avail of the existing arrangements. If the individual seeking a career change is a graduate, then if he/she wishes to become a primary teacher the person can apply for the graduate course of eighteen month duration. If the graduate seeks employment as a post-primary teacher and the degree is one recognised by the Registration Council as appropriate for teaching, then the person can apply for entry to the one year, full-time professional course — the Higher Diploma in Education. If they are non-graduates they need to apply for entry to the longer concurrent courses, or undergo the full consecutive course of degree followed by the Higher Diploma in Education. Apart from some vocational teachers and a category of people whose non-teaching experience is deemed relevant to primary teaching, no credits for work experience gained in other professions apply, and when qualified as teachers such personnel are required to start at the beginning of the incremental salary scale. Despite such disincentives, the graduate course for primary teachers is over-subscribed and about 10-15% of Higher Diploma in

Education classes incorporate personnel who are transferring from other careers. Students following the concurrent courses in specialist subjects such as Home Economics, Art, Craft subjects, sometimes have work experience.

4.2.11 For former teachers who wish to return to teaching, there is no extra training requirement sought. They can be re-employed directly once they obtain a teaching post. On a voluntary basis they may choose to participate in a variety of short-term continuing professional development courses or in a longer-term, certificated in-service course in their area of interest. For existing teachers who wish to retrain in areas of shortage, opportunities do exist, but they are not always readily apparent. If it is in a new subject area, the focus is on establishing a mastery of subject content, e.g. history, mathematics. Opportunities for this exist through the Open University, through OSCAIL (The National Distance Learning Centre), through modular part-time degree courses, and through various diplomas provided by the universities. If the change is to a more specialist area of educational studies, e.g. guidance and counselling, special education, civic, social and political education, then certificated courses in such fields of study can be undertaken. It is also the case that in secondary schools teachers may teach subjects other than those studied in their degrees, which allows flexibility to teachers to upgrade their knowledge through self-learning and shorter continuing professional development courses. If classroom assistants wish to upgrade their qualifications they need to undertake the formal courses which exist for initial teacher education. Probably, the reason why more facilitatory provision for such categories of people has not been given priority attention hitherto is the over-supply of high quality candidates for initial teacher education. To date there has been no real public pressure for change. However, in a changing environment, with new thinking on lifelong learning and with an awareness of the potential richness which people from a wider work experience background could bring to teaching, it seems desirable that a facilitatory qualification framework should be put in place in the years ahead.

### **Induction**

4.2.12 Government policy has accepted the importance of an induction programme for the early years of the teaching career, but, to date, no national scheme has been put in place, although a pilot scheme was initiated in the autumn of 2002. Both primary and post-primary teachers are required to fulfil a year's satisfactory probation service on graduation to achieve state recognition for incremental salary purposes. Primary teachers are assisted in that process by the inspectorate, but this does not happen at post-primary level. The purposes of induction are different from those of probation. On appointment to a school, they are expected to fulfil the ordinary teaching contract requirements, and undertake the full responsibilities of an experienced teacher. There is no provision for a reduced timetable, for mentoring support or for support from the training institution. The colloquial phrase is often used, "They are thrown into the deep end, to sink or swim," and it is not an inaccurate phrase. The administration in some schools provides informal guidance or support, but this is a matter of their goodwill. It is not a formal requirement. Following a proposal from the Heads of Education and the Teacher Unions, the DES agreed to finance a pilot programme of induction in 2002-03, both for primary and post-primary teachers. It is hoped that this pilot scheme will pave the way for the implementation of declared government policy, which is supported by all stake-holders, but which needs appropriate financing and innovative planning to be successfully realised. The legislation for the planned Teaching

Council allocates responsibilities to the Council for promoting teacher induction, which could lead to much professional improvement in this area.

4.2.13 The difficulty may be further compounded in that only a small percentage of post-primary teacher graduates find permanent employment on graduation. It is commonly the case that they will spend their early years of teaching in a series of temporary positions, in a variety of schools. For some, this challenging experience may be beneficial, but for many it increases the pressures on them as they do not have the benefit of a time period to establish themselves in a stable school context, to get to know the school climate and dynamics, and to establish supportive professional relationships with fellow staff members. To apprehensions and difficulties of finding one's "professional feet" is added the insecurity of employment patterns and the lack of continuity of professional context.

#### ***Professional development courses***

4.2.14 A variety of terms have come to be used for professional development courses for teachers, e.g. in-career development, continuing professional development, in-service education and training (INSET). For the purpose of this report, the most commonly used term INSET and continuing professional development are used interchangeably.

#### ***Administration/Financing***

4.2.15 The mid-nineties can be regarded as a landmark in the historical development of continuing professional development in terms of acceptance by national government of its importance, the putting in place of a Unit to co-ordinate and promote it and the increased investment devoted to it. This priority was reflected in the inclusion, for the first time, of multi-annual funding for in-career development aided by the European Social Fund in the Community Support Framework 1994-'99. The In-career Development Unit (ICDU) established within the Department of Education and Science in 1994 is the main policy, co-ordinating and decision-making body regarding state supported in-service provision. The ICDU is responsible for initiating and managing an on-going programme of in-service training and professional development for teachers and other stakeholders in education. The programme provides a range of supports and training to underpin key curricular and other reforms in the education system. The Unit liaises with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, whose remit includes advising the Minister on teacher in-career development needs. The Unit, liaising with Education Centres, co-ordinates the provision of continuing professional development for primary and post-primary teachers at local and national level and, in doing so, welcomes the involvement of teacher and managerial bodies, and others, in the delivery of in-career development education. The ICDU has a special relationship with the thirty regional Education Centres, (formerly Teacher Centres), which were expanded and developed in the nineties. It is through these Centres that most of the work of the in-service training is organised at local level. A recent report on the Education Centres recommends a reduction in number and some changes in operation, as part of a new strategic policy (CMOD, 2003).

4.2.16 In 2001, six curriculum support teams were organised as the Second Level Support Service (SLSS) and operate under the control of the ICDU. The team involved with the Primary Curriculum

Support Programme (PCSP) also operates under the control of the ICDU, and is led by a National Co-ordinator. The support teams are made up of seconded teachers who have had a good record in curricular, pedagogic or leadership issues at school level, and who often hold postgraduate in-career development qualifications. They usually operate from the organisational base of an Education Centre. They work closely with school staffs, usually in a school-based context, assisting them in the implementation of curricular innovations or new school planning processes. The support teams have good credibility with their peers, and the support team idea seems to be an effective one in furthering the aims of this form of continuing professional development. The work of the PCSP is currently undergoing a formal external evaluation, the outcome of which should be helpful to future policy. The National Council for Technology in Education (NCTE) works in close liaison with ICDU, as does the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE).

4.2.17 When other providers such as teacher unions, management groups, vocational education committees, subject associations depend on state funding, their continuing professional development activities are monitored by the ICDU. When agencies raise independent resources they are free to decide on their own continuing professional development initiatives. Most of the certificated continuing professional development courses provided by the universities and colleges of education come under the decision-making remit of these institutions. For other third-level programmes for which state funds are available, joint decision-making processes or joint steering committees with ICDU come into operation.

### **Providers**

4.2.18 In the context of great changes affecting the education system throughout the nineties, including curricular, assessment, methodological, management and administration, integration of pupils with disabilities or those experiencing grave socio-economic disadvantage, relationships with parents, school development planning etc. – a great repertoire of continuing professional development programmes – short, medium-term and long-term has become available from a wide variety of providers. The universities and colleges of education have been providing a great range of continuing professional development certificated courses, mainly on a part-time and fee paying basis. Some universities conduct continuing professional development courses in outreach centres such as Education Centres. Staff have also been assisting organisations and schools on continuing professional development activities. Some significant long-duration research and development programmes on continuing professional development have been conducted by some universities. Research training, including action research, features in many of the university courses, and many of the graduates from such courses become facilitators of continuing professional development themselves.

4.2.19 The most recent analysis of overall numbers participating on award-bearing continuing professional development courses in the universities and colleges of education relates to 1999-00. This put the number of participating teachers in such courses in the seven universities and the two largest colleges of education at 1,635 (Morgan, Sugrue, Devine and Raftery (2001). This does not include participants in other certificated courses with the Open University or other colleges. Indications are that the numbers have increased since then. Over a period of years, a teacher input of this scale, with

in-depth continuing professional development experience, is a major asset to the system. In the same study a survey of teachers indicated that some 24% of primary teachers and 23% of post-primary teachers surveyed had taken an award-bearing continuing professional development course in the three years prior to the survey (*Ibid* p.104). The survey also indicated very high levels of satisfaction with various dimensions of the courses taken. There is a wide variety of such courses on offer and teachers can choose from about 80 courses made available by the higher education institutions.

4.2.20 A range of other agencies offer continuing professional development programmes of various types largely funded by the DES. These include teacher unions and school management/trustee bodies such as the Joint Managerial Body (JMB), the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA), the Association of Comprehensive and Community Schools (ACS), National organisations of school principals – the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN). At post-primary level subject associations have been active in continuing professional development activities for their members, e.g. Geography, Science, Mathematics Teachers' Association. The continuing professional development provided by these groups tends to be limited in duration to evening, whole-day, week-end events, or week-long summer schools.

4.2.21 National agencies such as the National Council for Technology in Education (NCTE) and the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) also engage in continuing professional development provision. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has important advisory responsibilities regarding continuing professional development, and it sometimes provides continuing professional development events itself.

### ***Types of continuing professional development***

4.2.22 There is a vast range of curriculum variation in the continuing professional development courses provided, in line with the needs of a fast changing education system. It may be best to categorise these under a few broad headings. School curriculum reform has been a major, on-going issue in Irish education and, accordingly, a great deal of state-supported continuing professional development is directed towards this. At primary level, the Primary School Curriculum of 1999, is presenting a major challenge in implementation for Irish primary teachers. This is a child-centred curriculum, offering a wide range of subjects and encouraging a very inter-active pedagogic style. A suite of 23 very well illustrated books contain the curricular content and the guidelines for teachers. An implementation programme, phased over a period of six years is being assisted by a task force of seconded teachers, the Primary Curriculum Support Programme. At post-primary level there have been six support teams assisting in the implementation of new or changed curricula, now organised as the SLSS. Up-dating of individual subjects is also being supported by continuing professional development provision, as in the case of new syllabi in Chemistry and Physics.

4.2.23 The incorporation of ICT in teaching, learning and administration of schools has been a significant government concern over recent years. Significant investment has been made in equipping schools for ICT purposes, and a range of short, medium and long-term continuing professional development courses have been made available to teachers by a variety of providers. A notable



continuing professional development programme in ICT was the School Integration Project (SIP) which was organised in 228 schools and 48 clusters, primary and post-primary, under the aegis of the NCTE. It is recognised that without adequate investment in teacher professional development, effective ICT integration into schools will not succeed. Some commentators consider that there is a need for more sustained and more sophisticated investment in ICT as applied to education.

4.2.24 School leadership is another area which has been very much targeted for in-service support. It is realised that school leaders face increasingly complex challenges and require assistance and guidance from continuing professional development provision. Pilot programmes took place in spring 2003, and a more structured course is being planned for the 2003-04 school year. Whole-school planning is also a national policy concern and guidance on good practice planning procedures have been much in evidence. Of special significance in this context was the institution of the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) in 1999. The aims of the initiative are:

- To support schools in furthering the process of school development planning (SDP) in order to promote school improvement and effectiveness.
- To promote collaborative SDP as a means of identifying pupils' needs and responding appropriately to them.
- To build the capacity of schools to implement development planning as a means of quality enhancement.

The initiative has two branches — Primary (SDPS) and Post-primary (SDPI). Each has a Support Team, an Internal Management Committee and a Representative Consultative Group. There is also a Joint Committee that addresses issues common to both branches. The Support services provide consultancy to schools, provide regional seminars and workshops, facilitation services, training and support, resource materials and grant aid for school development planning. Other areas receiving a good deal of continuing professional development provision are courses in compensatory education and learning support, school guidance and counselling, pastoral care and health promotion, legal issues in education. Concerns on promoting the quality of teaching and learning, including the implications of multiple intelligences theory are reflected in continuing professional development provision.

### **Methods**

4.2.25 An earlier model of exposition-style lectures to large audiences of teachers has been largely abandoned. It is well realised that sophisticated and varied methodology is required for meaningful continuing professional development. A great deal of training of trainers has occurred so that now there is a large pool of skilled and competent presenters. Many of these are skilled teachers who have been trained to engage effectively as facilitators with their peers. The growth of competence and confidence through this process has been a valuable input to the teaching profession. A good deal of continuing professional development is now school-based or cluster-based, where this is appropriate. Teachers themselves have input into course content and frequently into course design. This has the advantage of giving a local, bottom-up focus to the issues. Presenters are usually well-skilled in presentation skills and experienced in the utilisation of education technology. A lot of reliance is placed

on small-group work, skills experimentation, the identifying of areas for attention, leading to follow-through projects. Course participants are very much encouraged to engage with the issues by questions, discussions, exchange of experience and engaging in problem solving. Most courses in universities and colleges have limits on numbers admitted. This is to encourage participants to engage constructively, to debate issues, to exchange experiences, as well as to gain “hands-on” experience where this is appropriate. Small groups also facilitate training in research skills and allow for more satisfactory individual feedback on projects/assignments.

### ***Evaluation, certification, career impact***

4.2.26 Evaluation instruments form part of all ICDU supported courses. Participants fill out a formal evaluation form and the completed forms are monitored by the administrative centre, usually Education Centres, and then by the ICDU. In the case of some courses, inspectors evaluate the work. Most of the short continuing professional development courses do not yield any credits or certification, other than confirmation of attendance. The formal university and college courses do have certification and/or credits attached, which go forward for qualifications. In the great majority of cases, course participants fill out evaluation forms. Course design and standards have to be approved by the authoritative bodies in the institution. The examination of work of students is marked according to approved marks and standards and is monitored by external examiners. Education departments providing continuing professional development courses are also subject to other quality assurance measures of the institution.

4.2.27 The duration of courses varies a great deal linked to the theme, purpose and outcomes of the continuing professional development course. Many courses are of relatively short duration, one day — three day — week long. Others are conducted over a longer period, and can sometimes be punctuated over time. Many courses have no formal credits or certification attached to them. Their purpose is to update, re-skill, re-energise teachers. Other initiatives such as SDPI are targeted at school planning development, aimed at the reculturation of schools. Increasingly, there is an emphasis on school-based continuing professional development, and the cultivation of a cluster approach between staff in local schools. It is also the case that arising from participation in continuing professional development new skills and competencies are developed which make participants eligible for employment in other capacities. At present, a scheme exists where large numbers of skilled teachers are seconded to initial teacher education or continuing professional development, or curriculum development projects. This has allowed for more career diversification. For those who graduate from certificated continuing professional development courses in the universities a variety of job opportunities may open up. Many go forward through promotion to obtain leadership positions in schools, while others may be recruited into the inspectorate or teacher training institutions. In the case of holders of Masters degrees, financial allowances are payable throughout their teaching careers. Continuing professional development as an integral, normal feature of an education system requires a pool of talent emerging from continuing professional development experiences to sustain and carry on the work. In this sense, there is a benign circularity about the process, and quality is of the essence if a good general continuing professional development system is to prevail.

4.2.28 Participation in continuing professional development activities is on a voluntary basis, but, increasingly, the majority of teachers regard it as a normal professional requirement. Nevertheless, there is an absence of authoritative data on the extent of teacher participation in continuing professional development courses. There may well be some clusters of teachers who have very limited, or no experience of participation in continuing professional development. For instance, a study with a particular focus on Mathematics teaching in the primary school found that fewer than one-third of pupils in fourth class were taught by teachers who had attended any continuing professional development courses since completion of initial teacher education (Shiel and Kelly, 2001). Another recent study on the Transition Year Programme found “a short-fall in participation in in-service (for the programme) among those teaching the programme” (Emer Smyth, Delma Byrne, Carmel Hannon, ESRI, 2002). While there are advantages with a voluntary system of teacher engagement with continuing professional development, it needs to be accompanied with national surveys of the extent and pattern of participation which, in turn, can help to guide national policy on what needs to be done to help ensure teacher development, at a period of extensive educational change. It is also desirable that more published data, in aggregate form, should be available on the evaluation of the continuing professional development which is provided and on perspectives on its effectiveness in relation to the particular form of continuing professional development involved. In recent years, more provision of continuing professional development takes place during school hours, but it is still the case that the majority of continuing professional development is taken outside school hours. If the in-service education takes place outside the school, but within school hours teacher substitution is available for post-primary teachers, and for primary teachers on special educational needs. Teachers are paid travelling expenses, when they need to travel to ICPU funded courses. While financial allowances exist for Masters Degree courses in continuing professional development, there is no other financial link between teacher participation in continuing professional development and salary. Neither is such participation linked in any way with the maintenance of certification to teach. Thus, the overall policy approach is one of appealing to the voluntary, professional interest of the teachers. Teachers undertaking the more formal, certificated courses are sometimes oriented to career promotion. In general, it would seem that this policy approach has been largely effective. There is wide acceptance of the integral role which continuing professional development plays in professional development in contemporary schooling and there is evidence of professional empowerment emerging in teachers who engage as deliverers and participants in continuing professional development activities.

### 4.3 Policy Initiatives and Their Impact

4.3.1 In 1998 the DES set up two Working Groups, representative of the stakeholders to review primary and post-primary teacher education and to make recommendations thereon. No such reviews had taken place since the early seventies, and it was regarded as timely to carry out reviews in the context of the many policy changes and circumstantial changes affecting contemporary schooling. Thus, the DES was seeking the advice of expert groups before initiating significant changes.

### **Primary teacher education**

4.3.2 The review of the primary Working Group, *Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century*, was published in spring 2002. It recommended that the B.Ed. degree course should be extended to four years in all colleges and that the eighteen month course for graduates be extended to two years. The main conclusion of the Working Group was “that teacher education needs to be reconceptualised and programmes radically restructured in the context of the framework and recommendations presented in the Report” (*Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century*, 2001, p.154). Within a four year framework for all colleges, the colleges are invited by the Working Group to redesign all the course content, with the fourth year devoted solely to Education Studies. The Report urges a reduction in the time spent at formal lectures in favour of more small group work and personal study. In particular, the Report urges significant attention to the requirements of the Primary School Curriculum, introduced in 1999, and now going through a process of implementation.

4.3.3 While the basic curricular framework of Education Studies, with the three elements of theory, methodology and practice, is retained, as well as the study of academic subjects, it is recommended that each element be re-evaluated and re-energised so that they all help fulfil the objective “of preparing teachers who are competent, caring, committed, reflective and have a keen sense of their professional responsibilities.” The Report also urges that the consecutive course for graduates should be institutionalised as a permanent feature of the system. Up to now, it has operated on an ad hoc basis, which makes long-term planning of staff and resources very difficult. The Report states that consideration should be given to the reintroduction of interviews in the selection of students for B.Ed. programmes. The report also urged that induction procedures be developed for beginning teachers and that greater incentives should be provided for teachers to engage in certificated in-service courses. As yet, the DES has made no formal response to the report’s recommendations, although some colleges of education have worked on their plans in line with the recommendations. One of the key problems for the DES is agreeing to a four-year framework at a time of shortages of qualified teachers in primary schools. There are also financial implications at a time when cutbacks on higher education expenditure are taking place. Nevertheless, the colleges of education and the teacher union are keen that the DES should act on the recommendations. The concept of the four-year course was also supported by all stakeholders at the National Education Convention in 1993. There is a widely-held view that it is more than timely that action is taken to allow the restructuring and necessary modernisation of primary teacher education to take place.

### **Post-primary teacher education**

4.3.4 Among the overall perspectives of the report of the Expert Advisory Group on Post-Primary Teacher Education (2002) is an endorsement of both modes of teacher education — the concurrent and consecutive models, as well as of the “3Is” concept of initial, induction and in-service teacher education complementing each other, in support of the teaching career seen as a continuum. The report does not recommend an extension of course duration, but recommends investment in induction support in the initial years of teaching. Closer partnerships with practising schools are proposed. It is recommended that existing courses are brought fully in tune with the changing school environment and

that subject methodology areas are strengthened. The report also calls for improved data sources for the planning of teacher supply and more flexibility on teacher recruitment and for special orientation programmes to be provided for returnees to teaching and for mature students who are changing career paths into teaching. The report urged improved resourcing of university education departments, with a higher proportion of full-time staffing (Report of Expert Advisory Group on Post-Primary Teacher Education, 2002, unpublished).

### ***Perspectives on continuing professional development***

4.3.5 A research report on continuing professional development was commissioned by the DES in 2000, and among its recommendations were:

- Strategic thinking and implementation strategies (for the professional learning of teachers) need to foster partnerships rather than competition to provide more comprehensive, sustainable and continuous professional learning opportunities in ways that build on all available infrastructure and human resources.
- Strategic thinking needs to look beyond delivery to issues of building capacity and maximising existing capacities and structures so that planning for quality professional learning reflects a partnership approach (Policy and Practice of Professional Development for Teachers: A Critical Analysis, 2001, unpublished, p.121).

The report considers the ICDUs policy approach is too narrow and the reliance on seconded teachers a too ad hoc response. The report stated that teachers considered that there should be greater differentiation of course provision that is linked to the needs of teachers at different stages of their careers. The report also supports teachers' concerns that accreditation be available for more forms of continuing professional development engagement. The report concluded that while much continuing professional development has been of high quality and well regarded, it is now time to upscale the enterprise and institutionalise continuing professional development to make it more strategic and comprehensive, while continuing to be sensitive to system and individual needs.

4.3.6 In 2002 the DES convened a representative national advisory committee on continuing professional development for post-primary teachers. The advisory committee is seeking to establish a comprehensive policy on continuing professional development, whereby the contributions of all providers are recognised and supported. The committee aims at establishing a national co-ordinating framework, with the design and content of curriculum-oriented continuing professional development agreed at national level, combined with local delivery processes. Among other issues being examined are the voluntary versus the compulsory model, arrangements for teacher substitution when on continuing professional development courses, and improved arrangements for the certification of continuing professional development courses undertaken. School managements and principals are very concerned that opportunities for teacher continuing professional development do not further erode the teaching-learning year for pupils. The advisory committee also recognises that what has been happening involves a culture shift whereby teachers need to accept that in-career development is a *sine qua non* for teachers today, and that an older tradition of teacher individualism needs to give way to a

more collaborative, teamwork approach, with a pro-active rather than a reactive response to change. Some recent forms of continuing professional development such as that involved in promoting programmes such as the Leaving Certificate Applied, Transition Year and processes such as whole school planning have been developing collaborative work by teachers.

4.3.7 In 2001, the DES commissioned the Centre for Management Organisation Development (CMOD) to carry out a review of the Education Centres under a number of headings. Its Report (2003) pointed to inadequacies in the operation of the Centres and of policy regarding them within the DES. It stated, "It became evident to the CMOD team that there was no clear policy in relation to Education Centres in DES and that strategic planning in relation to Centres was undeveloped ("CMOD, Review of Education Centres," 2003, unpublished, p.22). The review also recommended the closure of most of the nine part-time Centres and three of the twenty-one full-time Centres. It is not clear what action the DES will take in response to these viewpoints, but it is likely that the overall operation of in-service education for teachers will receive closer policy attention in the years ahead.

4.3.8 Issues which have been raised in debates concerning teacher participation in continuing professional development courses, teacher participation in oral and practical examining for the state examinations, time for teachers to engage in whole school planning in a collaborative way, and time for teachers to engage in parent-teacher meetings raise the matter as to whether the inherited, traditional teacher contractual arrangements are any longer satisfactory for the evolving circumstances of contemporary schooling. While many Irish teachers are generous with the time and skills they devote to extra-curricular activities, there is no obligation on them to be in school for more than the minimum teaching days of the school year, or to engage in any school-based activities other than their contracted teaching hours. Accordingly, school managements and school leaders have to rely on the goodwill of the classroom teachers if they are to undertake such activities as school development planning, which is a statutory obligation, outside teaching hours. As another instance of difficulties, public examination orals and practicals take place during the days designated as part of the school teaching year. When staff are released to conduct such examinations in other schools many problems arise in ensuring satisfactory substitution for them. In the light of such considerations, the inherited teacher contractual arrangements can seem like a form of straitjacket. Many of the recent educational policy developments imply greater time availability from teachers for other than teaching duties. However, there has not been a successful re-negotiation of teachers' contractual requirements to match the changed situation. Such a re-negotiation can be a sensitive, complex and costly process, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that such a re-negotiation needs to be a fundamental policy issue in re-structuring the teaching career to meet new demands upon it.

#### ***Induction and career transfer issues***

4.3.9 The lack of national programmes for teacher induction is generally recognised as a weakness in the system. Both the Green Paper of 1992 and the White Paper of 1995 declared that it was government policy to introduce such a programme. In the past, induction has sometimes been confused with probation. While related, these processes serve different purposes. Now that a pilot scheme has been introduced in the school year 2002-03, it is hoped that it can be built on and that

those beginning their teaching careers in the years ahead will be able to benefit from support and guidance as they lay the foundations for their professional careers.

4.3.10 Policy for the future should also give greater consideration to attracting personnel from other careers who have a keen interest in teaching. The teaching career, and the pupils, could be greatly enriched by the addition of teachers with a range of other career experiences. More flexible forms of training, including modular and distance education methods could assist such candidates. Some accreditation for previous work experience should be provided and the salary structure should make some accommodation for their previous career achievements.

4.3.11 Another category of people to which policy could give more attention is the qualified teachers who have left the profession, for whatever reason, for a period of years and who wish to return. To attract them back the process of return should be facilitated more than it is. In view of the speed of educational change, it would also seem appropriate that when such people re-enter after an absence of say 5 or 7 years they should be required to undertake a continuing professional development course, suited to their needs.

### **Conclusion**

4.3.12 As can be noted, there have not been significant policy interventions on pre-service teacher education for a long period. This may be due to the fact that the teacher education courses have been kept under review and up-dated on a fairly regular basis by the course providers. Most of those involved in the delivery of teacher education programmes have themselves been teachers and have engaged in post-graduate studies and research on educational studies. They have also maintained close links with teachers and classrooms and have engaged in a great deal of in-service work with experienced teachers. Furthermore, most of the part-time staff are teachers with distinguished professional experience. However, periodically, restructuring and modernisation is needed which is not always solely within the remit of the providers of teacher education courses. This requires the stimulation of government policy and agreement to provide financing for recommended changes such as the four-year B.Ed. course, or a national system of teacher induction. The reports of review bodies, discussed above, provide valuable guidance for the way forward. Ireland's current engagement in this OECD study and in Associated Objective One of the EU education objectives, "The Education and Training of Teachers," may also act as a catalyst for action. What is on the agenda is development, rather than root-and-branch reform. There is a preparedness by the institutions and the teaching profession for reform and improvement, as is evident in submissions from the teacher education institutions and the teacher unions.

4.3.13 The impending establishment of the Teaching Council, which has significant powers in relation to all aspects of teacher education, should prove to be a valuable agency in helping to implement proposed changes. The expectation is that the establishment of the Council will assist in giving more status to the teaching profession and foster a sense of ownership regarding high professional standards. The responsibilities designated for the planned Council are more extensive than those of similar bodies in other countries.

4.3.14 Among priorities for policy development in educating, developing and certifying teachers are:

- the extension of the pre-service teacher education courses,
- the restructuring of some course content to give a greater sense of integration and foster a reflective practitioner approach,
- closer links with school personnel on teaching practice,
- the establishment of a national induction system with appropriate financing for necessary reduction in teaching hours and the support of school mentors,
- a more strategic policy agency which would more overtly develop a coherent partnership between all relevant agencies for continuing professional development,
- more direct financial support or recognition for teachers undergoing certificated in-service courses,
- more flexible support structures whereby other career personnel might be attracted to teaching.

Action on these issues would greatly enhance the teaching profession's preparedness for the challenges which lie ahead, and position it well to build for the future on the solid foundations which exist. There would be strong support among stakeholders for such policy options. Many of the issues involved have been widely discussed, and the initiatives would be seen to be timely and appropriate. The main difficulty would appear to be the provision of the necessary financial resources to bring them about, rather than any sectoral opposition. A strategic development plan in relation to the teaching career, setting out priorities over an agreed time span, would be a judicious way forward.



# CHAPTER 5

## RECRUITING, SELECTING AND ASSIGNING TEACHERS

### 5.1 Identification of the Main Policy Concerns

5.1.1 There have not been major policy concerns regarding the recruitment, selecting and assigning of teachers. There are more well qualified applicants for teacher education places than the places available. The problem is not a shortage of qualified applicants, but of teacher education places at present to cope with a shortage of qualified teachers at primary level, linked to various changes in teacher employment. There is also a high level of competition for the job vacancies which become available. This is particularly the case for the very limited number of permanent post-primary teaching positions advertised annually. Most job vacancies come under the category temporary employment, in its many variations. Teachers are not civil servants appointed to their posts by a government agency. They are employed by school managements. The school management authorities operate within criteria set by the DES for staff numbers. Selection for permanent positions and most temporary positions when advertised, is by interview, which is operated according to due process. It is the school management board which decides the job description and school managements, particularly in secondary schools, have considerable discretion in deployment of staff internally in the school.

5.1.2 Despite the pattern of employment at local level by individual school managements, to date there has not been a significant difficulty in securing teachers for all schools throughout the country, whether urban or rural. Nevertheless, signs are emerging that this situation may be changing. During the consultative process, the INTO stated that some schools have been finding it difficult in recent years to obtain qualified primary teachers. This is, no doubt, linked to the overall shortage of such teachers which has emerged, but it may also be linked to changing social conditions. A recent report, the *Action Plan of the National Forum on Primary Education: Ending Disadvantage (2002)*, also highlighted the high turnover of staff in schools in areas of serious disadvantage. It called for teachers to be given "incentives" to work in disadvantaged areas. Also in post-primary schools in disadvantaged areas, problems of indiscipline and destructive teenage subcultures take a toll on teachers' energies and motivation, with the burn-out syndrome manifesting itself. While such schools benefit from a number of support schemes, there is no policy, as yet, to recompense such teachers in any way different from colleagues teaching in more favourable environments. It may well be that pressure will come to bear on the DES to adopt some special incentive scheme for teachers facing significant challenges in very socio-economically deprived circumstances. However, it can be concluded that up to now the system of teacher selection has worked satisfactorily. To a very large extent schools, regardless of geographic or socio-economic location, have been able to secure their teacher staff entitlement. As it operates, the system relieves the central administration of much bureaucratic work which would be

involved were it assigning teachers to schools. Teachers and schools are allowed a lot of discretion to make their own arrangements on employment. School managements have been very keen to retain their rights in choosing their own staffs. Many Irish teachers would be surprised to learn that in some fellow EU countries teachers are allocated to schools by the central administration. None of the main stakeholders has been expressing concern on the employment arrangements in Ireland, which through tradition and habituation are taken as a norm.

## 5.2 Data, Trends and Factors

### *Teacher appointments*

5.2.1 It is the D.E.S. which determines the number of teachers which a school can employ, linked to pupil teacher ratios. Within these parameters, once a school has a teacher vacancy, the school management usually advertises the position publicly. This does not happen in the case of all positions due to rights of teachers on a redeployment panel, rights of suitable teachers holding part-time positions and more economical means of obtaining the services of part-time teachers. Applications and curriculum-vitae are submitted after advertisement. A selection committee is appointed by the school board of management. Short-listing of candidates occurs, according to agreed criteria. The interview process is conducted according to due process guidelines. The selection committee makes a recommendation to the board of management. The board makes the appointment in accordance with the order of merit recommended by the committee. If it wishes to deviate from this order of merit, it must submit its reasons for doing so for determination by the Minister for Education and Science.

5.2.2 Whenever an appointment is made, unsuccessful candidates have a variety of mechanisms through which they can appeal the decision of the board of management. Appeals can be made to the Equality Authority, the Employment Appeals Tribunal, or directly to the Minister for Education and Science.

5.2.3 Recruitment policies and procedures generally are governed by national and EU legislation: The Employment Equality Act of 1998; Articles 48 and 49 of the Treaty of Rome; European Communities (Aliens) Regulations, 1977; Education Act of 1998; The Protection of Employees (Part-time Work) Act, 2001; Qualifications Education and Training Act, 1999. The Department of Education and Science issues circulars in relation to best practice on appointments.

5.2.4 During the consultative process representatives of boards of management and of principals' associations have complained about the limited numbers of high quality candidates coming forward for positions as school principal, and instances of re-advertisement have become more common. This trend is taken as reflecting a concern that the role of principal is now a very onerous one in many schools. While school principals get an allowance over and above their teacher salaries, linked to the points accruing to the number of pupils enrolled, some teachers do not consider this sufficient recompense for the greater range of responsibility which the post of principal now entails. Of course, issues other than monetary recompense are also involved. The Benchmarking Body in July 2002

recommended extra increases, above those recommended for teachers, for principals and deputy-principals in post-primary schools, where the weighting per pupil for such positions is higher. The INTO is anxious that primary school principals also benefit from a similar increase, but this would require new negotiation.

### **Teacher probation**

5.2.5 All teachers are required to serve a probationary period of one year. This can be accumulated from periods of approved part-time service. During the probationary period at primary level, all teachers are visited, assisted and evaluated by school inspectors. This rarely happens at post-primary level. The principal teacher in secondary schools testifies to the Secondary Teachers' Registration Council that the probation has been satisfactorily completed. With the restructuring of the inspectorate and the increase in subject inspections at post-primary level, it is likely that the evaluation of probationary service will be more formalised in the future. It is also expected that beginning teachers may benefit from some induction support in the years ahead. The pilot programmes on teacher induction, being conducted at present, may pave the way for improved induction for all teachers. The Teaching Council, when established, will have responsibility in the areas of teacher probation and induction.

### **Teachers' first appointments**

5.2.6 There is a significant difference in the pattern of first appointments between primary and post-primary teachers. As has been stated, the shortage of qualified primary teachers provides a very favourable context for newly qualified primary teachers to gain permanent positions, *albeit* it may not be in their geographic location of first choice. On the other hand, there are very few permanent positions available to post-primary teachers on qualification. The series of reports on the first destination of Higher Diploma in Education graduates, in the first year of graduation, indicates that usually only about 5% secure permanent positions, with a high percentage securing part-time or temporary teaching positions. The following Table, relating to such graduates, gives the pattern for the five year period 1996 to 2000, the last year for which data are available.

<b>First Destination</b>	%	%	%	%	%
	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
Permanent Teaching in Ireland	3.8	3.0	6.1	5.1	4.7
Part-time, Temporary or Substitute Teaching in Ireland	56.9	56.2	51.4	61.2	74.3
Teaching Abroad	8.9	8.9	6.4	7.0	5.0
Other Work	12.0	19.5	21.2	11.1	7.6
Further Study in Other Training	10.4	6.7	6.1	9.5	4.9
Not Available for Employment	2.8	2.0	2.6	2.7	2.4
Seeking Employment	5.1	3.7	6.1	3.4	1.0

Source: *First Destination of Graduates, HEA, 2000*

Taking the latest year 2000, it can be noted that 88.9% were in some form of teaching or further study. As the competencies developed in students' primary degree and in the Higher Diploma in Education are very transferable, it is not surprising that a significant percentage engage in other work, particularly, with the small number of permanent teaching jobs available. As was noted in section 4 of this report, the temporary employment pattern tends to involve an uncertain and difficult career start for such teachers. It is noteworthy that only 1% were "seeking employment", which reflects a small cohort of newly qualified teachers available for substitute or part-time work.

5.2.7 The situation for post-primary teachers who are educated and trained through the concurrent model tends to follow a somewhat similar pattern. In the year 2000, 9.5% were in permanent employment, 56.3% in various forms of part-time teaching, and 3.2% were teaching abroad. This gave a total of 69% in teaching. Interestingly, a high percentage, at 16.7%, were engaged in "further study or training". In some subject areas such as Construction Studies (Wood) and Engineering, for which there is a shortage of qualified teachers, the availability of permanent positions is good. The problem is attracting such teachers into the service when more lucrative positions in relation to their skills can be available in non school work contexts.

5.2.8 The small number of permanent post-primary positions available for newly qualified graduates has a complex causation. It is accepted that the effects of expanded career breaks and secondments, while making jobs available on a part-time basis, hold up permanent appointments. There is also a declining post-primary pupil population. The large number of teachers employed during the expansion of the system in the late sixties and seventies are still largely in position. The retirement of this "bulge" in recruitment will not set in for some more years. According to existing regulations teachers holding down certain positions have prior rights when a new permanent position opens up. Thus, teachers who are employed in schools above the quota, have prior redeployment rights if a permanent position becomes available in their subject areas. Those engaged by a school for more than a year in a temporary capacity also have a prior right to a teaching job, if it occurs in their area of subject competence. It is in this way that many of the recently qualified graduates, initially employed in temporary capacities, acquire permanent positions. It is also the case that in vocational and comprehensive/community schools only 95% of their teacher entitlement can be employed as permanent teachers. This is intended to give more flexibility to school managements in serving the teaching needs of the school. While newly qualified graduate teachers would naturally prefer to have access to more permanent positions on graduation, it has not been an issue of public protest. This may be affected by the greatly improved conditions for temporary teachers, and to a youth culture which is less concerned with secure, permanent employment than earlier generations.

5.2.9 The early employment prospects for primary teachers are better, and a higher proportion of permanent positions are available. For instance, in the year 2000, 57.6% of B.Ed. graduates got permanent positions in their first year following graduation, and 39.5% got various forms of temporary or part-time employment in education. This amounted to 97.1% engaged in teaching in Ireland. Those who entered primary teaching through the Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Teaching route did even better in 2000, with 72.2% securing permanent employment and a further 24.7% obtaining some form of part-time teaching, during their first year following qualification.

### ***Basis of employment***

5.2.10 There is no formal obstacle to a teacher obtaining a permanent position following qualification. If the teacher is fortunate to gain such a position, he/she usually retains tenure following probation. However, as has been noted above, there is a scarcity of permanent positions, particularly for post-primary teachers. Thus, many of them are given term contracts which can sometimes cover long time periods. These time periods frequently relate to maternity leave, career breaks and the secondment of teachers. While some advantages exist in this pattern in that young teachers may get teaching experience in a variety of schools, and school managements have the opportunity of appraising staff on temporary service, there are also disadvantages for the teachers involved. Furthermore, school pupils may experience a good deal of teacher changeover, and a lack of consistency in teacher-pupil relationships. Once teachers achieve permanency, teacher mobility between schools is limited. This is linked to the relationship between length of time in a school and obtaining posts of responsibility therein. When teachers change schools they tend to lose out regarding these aspects. At present, there are no plans to change these patterns of employment

### ***Assignment of teachers***

5.2.11 In Ireland, teachers are not assigned by a central agency to schools. As explained in 5.1.1, teachers apply for positions to schools, at their own discretion. The school management board, as the appointing body, makes the arrangements for appointment. Thus, a great deal of freedom exists for the teachers and the schools regarding appointment. The Department of Education and Science sets out the general regulations regarding the quota of teachers which schools can employ and guidelines on appointment procedures. It does not exercise a direct role on the deployment of teachers among schools. To date, this has not resulted in a significant problem and schools in all parts of the country have, in general, been able to fulfil their staffing needs. It has been reported that some primary schools in rural areas have been experiencing some difficulties in recruiting qualified staff, linked to the current shortage of such staff. Schools in disadvantaged areas also experience a high level of teacher turnover. Apart from instances such as these, the supply of teachers to schools throughout the country has not presented problems.

5.2.12 The current system in which learning support and resource teachers are appointed to individual schools or clusters is less than satisfactory as the level of need in a school/cluster can change from year to year. From the point of view of meeting the needs of children with special educational needs, it was suggested in the consultative process that a regional basis for the deployment of such specialist teachers would likely lead to better targeting.

5.2.13 There are some post-primary schools with teachers above quota due to features such as pupil decline, or non take-up of certain subjects. A teacher redeployment scheme exists for lay teachers in Catholic secondary schools, but does not work very efficiently at present. Vocational teachers are appointed to the vocational scheme rather than to individual schools, which allows for some flexibility on teacher redeployment. Such teachers may also be employed in non-formal school settings such as Training Centres, Youthreach Centres and Post-Leaving Certificate courses. There is no redeployment

scheme available at present for community and comprehensive schools. The *Report on the Allocation of Teachers to Second-Level Schools* (2001) recommended the establishment of a common scheme of redeployment between the different categories of school, to be run on efficient lines. The DES, teacher unions and school managements have, as yet, taken no action on this recommendation. However, with the expected pupil decline in enrolment in post-primary schools, and the consequences for staffing which will arise, a comprehensive and serious approach to the teacher redeployment issue cannot be avoided, and the sooner the issue is faced up to the better for the system. At primary school level, a "panel" system is in operation which secures tenure for teachers. In the event of a teacher becoming over quota to requirements, there is a system in operation which gives such a teacher a prior claim to a vacancy which occurs within a thirty mile radius of the teacher's existing school. This system has been a long time in operation and works satisfactorily.

### 5.3 Policy Initiatives and Their Impact

5.3.1 No new policies have been introduced in recent times in terms of the requirements to enter the teaching career. The existing regulations have been established for a long time and there is no pressure to remove them. The teacher education requirements for entry are regarded by all the stakeholders as important indicators for teacher quality. The concept of "licensed" teacher does not find favour in Ireland. The achievement of an all graduate, qualified, teaching profession in the seventies is regarded by the stakeholders as something to be safeguarded.

5.3.2 Significant improvements have been made in the provision of various categories of support staff to schools in recent years. These comprise resource teachers, special resource teachers, and special needs assistants, as outlined in section 2.4.2. There is some concern that some of these teachers need extra training. Thus, recently, one college established a new Higher Diploma in Education course for special needs assistants. In general, the course places available for such support staff are insufficient to match current needs. The INTO, in particular, is pressing for more training for Resource Teachers. This issue of additional specialist training for teachers working with pupils with various disabilities and special educational needs is not one that can be ignored.

5.3.3 As the issues of teacher recruitment, selection and assignment procedures have been largely uncontentious, and have been working satisfactorily, they have not been a concern for policy changes. There are no plans at present to take new policy initiatives in these areas.

5.3.4 The highest priority for future policy regarding recruitment/selection is to ensure the continuance of the high quality of entrants to the profession. The procedural guidelines for selection are up-dated periodically, and the circular of 1999 is currently undergoing review. School managements and vocational committee authorities will jealously guard their traditional rights on teacher selection.

5.3.5 There are a number of areas which should get more policy attention in the future. One such area is the fragmentary nature of the early appointment pattern, particularly for newly qualified post-primary teachers, which has been discussed earlier. Another is the theme of redeployment of

established teachers. With the significant decline of pupils of post-primary school age projected for the next ten years, a great deal of flexibility and clearly established procedure will be required to manage the teaching force. Difficult as it may be to achieve, a general redeployment policy for all categories of school, operated in an effective way, is a necessary initiative for the period ahead. Such a policy might also deal with teacher mobility, both within the profession, and into and out of the profession (e.g. facilitate easier access to and from the teaching profession). It also seems likely that some initiatives may be taken to give incentives to teachers to take up positions in schools serving highly disadvantaged areas. This matter is discussed further in section 6 of this document. More extensive training for support staff such as resource teachers and special needs assistants is also likely to be on the future policy agenda, as a qualitative input to the schooling system.

# CHAPTER 6

## RETAINING EFFECTIVE TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS

### 6.1 Identification of the Main Policy Concerns

#### 6.1.1 Retention as an issue in contemporary teaching

6.1.1.1 Retaining effective teachers in schools needs to be a basic policy concern in any country. In Ireland, there is a general awareness of the factors affecting teacher retention, as set out in this section. However, the Irish experience manifests characteristics somewhat different from those being experienced by many other countries. Section 6.1 has three main elements — 6.1.1 outlines some of the factors impinging on teacher retention, 6.1.2 outlines some current aspects of teacher retention in Ireland, and 6.1.3 gives an overview of aspects which may explain why the Irish experience differs from other patterns, and why, as yet, teacher retention is not a pressing policy concern in Ireland.

6.1.1.2 Teacher attitudes regarding their job satisfaction and perseverance within the profession are affected by a variety of factors. These include features such as salary, status of the profession, conditions of work, scope to exercise professionalism, opportunity for continuing professional development, student culture, modes of teacher evaluation and accountability, quality of parental support, extent of paperwork, intra school relationships, teaching resources. Where a number of these elements are seen by teachers as unsatisfactory and a cause of stress, teachers tend to leave teaching, or to consider leaving it. (Tye and O'Brien "Why Are Experienced Teachers Leaving the Profession?", *Phi Delta Kappan*, Sept. 2002, pp.24-32). As the role of the school has changed, within a fast-changing society, teaching is proving to be a more demanding job than it was formerly. More and more demands are being placed on teachers. Yet teachers in many countries consider their work to be less publicly affirmed, note slippage in their salary levels relative to comparably qualified personnel and believe their profession to have lost status. Among reasons for low morale listed in a recent study of the job satisfaction and career motivation of teachers in Australia, New Zealand, England and the United States were:

A lack of trust in the professionalism of teachers and anxiety about national educational standards have led to a policing mentality among administrators.... The introduction of many more reporting and documenting requirements, as well as the standardisation of many aspects of teaching, contributes both to the much noted increase in overall work-load and to the erosion of the pleasures of the job... (such as) flexibility challenge, creativity, working with and for people. (Scott, Stone, Dinham, "International Patterns of Teacher Discontent" *International Policy Analysis Archives*, Vol.9, No.28, 2001, pp.9, 10).



6.1.1.3 One of the daunting challenges facing the teaching career in the twenty first century is sustaining energy, enthusiasm and motivation to match the needs of continually changing cohorts of young people. These young people are emerging from societal contexts experiencing accelerated socio-economic and technological change. For the first time in history in developed countries, universal schooling is compulsory well into the teenage years, and, for practical purposes, young people need to stay in formal schooling to ensure access to appropriate career opportunities. The problem of the “generation gap” is not a new one in schooling, but the circumstances of schooling in contemporary society add a particular emphasis to it. The sub-cultures of young people today are at a far remove from those experienced by their teachers, particularly those who have passed the age of fifty. In many countries the teaching force has been an ageing one. This, coupled with the developing feminisation imbalance, can lead to problems of role models and of mutual understanding, particularly for male pupils.

6.1.1.4 With a career span of forty or more years, it is not surprising that the phenomenon of “burn-out” has been experienced by a minority of teachers. This can be due to the stresses and pressures of the job, but is sometimes linked to difficulties being experienced by teachers in their personal lives. Because of the very intense interpersonal character of the teaching-learning relationship, it is important that a variety of supports are available to teachers experiencing such difficulties. Even in the absence of the burn-out syndrome, it is the case that the in-career development needs of teachers change over the career cycle. Both the modes of in-service education and its spirit need to bear this in mind. One of the key aspirations for the school of the future is that it becomes a learning community. To achieve this, it is very important that great attention be paid to nurturing the quality of interpersonal relationships within the school community and to nurturing a tradition of self appraisal therein. The affirmation of the valuable work of teachers is a vital part in the climate of relationships, which sustains teacher morale.

### **6.1.2 Aspects of teacher retention in Ireland**

6.1.2.1 The issue of retaining effective teachers in schools is not a major issue of public concern in Ireland at present. The tradition has been that once teachers secured teaching positions, particularly permanent positions, the great majority viewed teaching as a lifetime career. This tradition may be changing. The recent period of high economic buoyancy allowed for a much greater variety of job opportunities for well qualified graduates outside of teaching. In this context it may well be that graduates in fields such as the sciences, engineering, construction studies, information technology, who entered teaching initially were attracted out by more lucrative salary opportunities in other occupations. The introduction of career breaks for up to five years release from teaching has facilitated teachers in exploring other career paths, and some of those who take such breaks do not return to teaching. Many of those who leave for such reasons tend to be entrepreneurial and risk-takers.

6.1.2.2 At the other end of the spectrum, it is interesting to note that when, in 1996-97, the teacher unions succeeded in obtaining the right to early retirement for teachers, under certain conditions, the number of teachers applying under the scheme proved to be much less than the quota available. There is no evidence of a major outflow from the teaching career, as has occurred in some countries.

However, one of the main problems in clarifying the extent of the exit from the teaching career is the lack of detailed comprehensive data on trends and patterns of such movement. There is a great dearth of authoritative data on teacher retention. The lack of official concern hitherto on the issue may be explained by the continuing over-supply of high quality candidates for initial teacher education and the high level of motivation and commitment of those who enter the career.

### **6.1.3 An overview of relevant factors supporting retention patterns**

6.1.3.1 As was outlined in section 6.1.1, international studies highlight a range of factors which affect teacher retention. When the Irish experience is viewed against a range of these factors, it would appear that many of them operate in a benign way, which acts as a bulwark supporting teacher retention. In the first instance, there is a high degree of confidence by government and the business community in the teaching workforce and in the quality of their work. Indeed, in official policy documents, the government is on record as acknowledging and affirming the work of teachers and the many-sided character of their contributions to community life. The work of teachers enjoys high public status; it is regarded by parents as very important and there is a public acceptance that the work of teachers, within a holistic approach to education, extends well beyond the direct business of teaching school subjects. The caring dimension of the teacher's role with regard to the welfare of young people is well recognised. While newer forms of evaluation of the system are being implemented by the inspectorate, they are developed on best practice principles rather than on a policing or inquisitorial basis. Neither are schools pitted against each other in published league tables of results; these have in fact been outlawed in educational legislation. There is a tighter context of accountability and the rights of students and parents have been more clearly defined. This does lead to more paperwork, but not to the oppressive degree reported by teachers in some other countries.

6.1.3.2 As has been noted already in chapter 4 of the Background Paper, the job of teaching continues to appeal to much larger cohorts of high achievers in the school leaving examination and in undergraduate degrees than can be accommodated on courses. The high motivation of such applicants is also evidenced by the fact that, on first failing to get accepted, many will seek to improve their credentials and seek entry over a sequence of years, frequently being successful in their quest after a third or fourth attempt. Such an experience highlights the value of a place on a teacher education course, and such successful applicants are not likely to walk away easily from a career path for which they competed so earnestly. The lack of a comprehensive induction system at present, and the very low availability of permanent positions, on qualification, for post-primary teachers are weaknesses at present. The combination of both of these factors is likely to be operating as a discouragement to many young, energetic teachers to stay in teaching. While accurate statistics are not available on this trend, this issue ought to be a matter of concern for public policy. It is hoped that the pilot induction schemes will provide guidance on the induction issue.

6.1.3.3 Over the last eight years there have been significant improvements made in the nature and extent of provision of in-service education for teachers. While there is a need for a more comprehensive, strategic plan on INSET, much of what is provided is on best-practice principles. As is discussed in paragraphs 4.2.1.3 to 4.2.2.7, the variety of provision meets the needs of many teachers,

and teachers themselves are very frequently involved in the delivery of INSET. Many teachers testify to the re-energising aspects of the process and the re-kindling of their enthusiasm for teaching, which is highly relevant to decisions to stay in teaching. However, as well as better strategic and partnership planning of INSET there is a need for greater awareness of the continuing professional development needs of teachers at different stages of their career cycle, and for more structured, attitudinal surveys of teachers' concerns in this context (Hanafin and Hyland 1995 and Sugrue, Morgan, Devine and Raftery, 2001).

6.1.3.4 International studies have indicated that where teachers experience an erosion of their discretionary, professional space to make decisions, this contributes to low morale. Commentators point to tendencies in some countries for a strong, top-down specification of the ways things are to be done and this trend, coupled with much greater demands for paperwork returns, tend to foster feelings among teachers of being more functionaries than professionals. In Ireland, teachers have a highly influential consultative voice on the formation of national curricular policy, and indeed, with regard to general education policy. At school level, the OECD has ranked Ireland as one of the countries where the highest degree of decision-making regarding curricular-type issues are taken at that level (OECD, *Education At A Glance*, 2000, Chart D.6.1., p.242). Over recent decades, there has been increasing scope for the exercise of professionalism by the teachers in Ireland, which is likely to have contributed to an improved sense of job satisfaction.

6.1.3.5 In Ireland, current national policy in promoting whole-school development planning, also emphasises the opportunities for school staffs at local level to establish their priorities and to formulate school policies in relation to the needs of their school communities. The transition from a strong sense of teacher individuality in the classroom towards the collegiality of joint planning has its difficulties, but the achievement of good school planning is likely to lead to an enhancement of individual effort and a strengthening of the school as a learning community. In this context, it is increasingly recognised that the quality of relationships between management and staff, between school leadership and staff, between staff members towards each other and between staff and pupils is crucial to the development of a community ethos which gives a sense of belonging. Many Irish teachers report that they frequently experience a lack of affirmation by school authorities of their efforts. This is probably due to a tendency to take such things for granted. But many new in-career courses for school leaders, and INSET initiatives such as the School Development Planning Initiative, should alert them to the significance of such affirmation, and equip them better for the demanding, inter-personal role they play.

6.1.3.6 Another important dimension of teacher morale in any country is the nature of the student culture which prevails. In the schooling world of today it is not surprising to learn that pupil insubordination and indiscipline, particularly in some schools, is a serious cause of stress and discouragement to teachers. This, of course, is not just an in-school issue, but is related to wider social circumstances. Teachers in Ireland periodically draw public attention to the stress factors involved, and in some schools, over a sustained period, this can be very intense. Nevertheless, on a more general level, the majority of Irish pupils indicate a good degree of motivation regarding their education. A range of schemes is now in operation to try to counter the alienation and disengagement from school purposes which a minority of pupils exhibits.

6.1.3.7 Parental support is also an important factor in sustaining teacher morale. In Ireland, the great majority of parents exhibit a high degree of interest in, and motivation for their children's education. The National Parents' Council has consultancy and negotiating rights with the Department of Education and Science. At school level, parents sit as full partners on management boards. Most schools have parent associations, and each school operates parent-teacher meetings. A tradition of genuine partnership between parents and the school system has been built up, and the support work of the School Development Planning Initiative is of great value in this context. The main problems teachers encounter regarding parental interest are in areas of socio-economic disadvantage, where some parents, often themselves alienated from schools as young people, do not operate as co-operative partners with teachers. The very successful home-school-community-liaison scheme, and some area partnership schemes in disadvantaged areas, have been bringing about improvements in this situation. The area partnerships adopt a multi-sectoral intervention approach in tackling problems in areas experiencing serious socio-economic disadvantage. Apart from difficulties such as those outlined, Irish teachers feel well-supported by parental interest, although the recent ASTI dispute with government caused teacher-parent tension.

6.1.3.8 Adverse conditions of work are another factor affecting teacher retention patterns. Pupil-teacher ratios constitute one element of this. While in Ireland pupil-teacher ratios are high by international standards, over recent years significant improvements have been made, particularly at primary level (see paragraphs 6.2.5). The greater provision of support teachers over the last few years to assist pupils with learning difficulties or with disabilities has helped relieve the professional pressures on classroom teachers (paragraphs 2.4.2). The better provision of teaching-learning aids, particularly ICT equipment, is a big improvement in the eyes of established teachers who remember a very spartan provision of teaching resources for the school system.

6.1.3.9 A fundamental concern for teachers, as for all professionals, in all countries, is the issue of salaries. This is probably the issue about which Irish teachers have been most exercised over recent years. As was indicated in section 1.6.1, Irish teachers are comparatively well paid by international standards, ranking in 7th place of the 27 countries surveyed by the OECD. However, OECD data have also indicated that Irish teacher salaries measured as per capita in relation to GDP have declined since 1994. Irish teachers have maintained that their salaries declined seriously over recent years relative to similarly qualified professionals in Ireland in the private sector, a perspective which has been sustained by the *Benchmarking Body* in July 2002. Contemporary with this relative decline in salary has been a massive increase in housing costs, particularly in urban areas. Teachers consider that their productivity has been increasing and professional demands on them expanding, but their salaries have been in relative decline. Of the many factors which have been identified as contributing to teachers exiting from the profession it is likely that, in Irish circumstances, the salary issue is the most influential. Other factors, no doubt, have contributed to teachers leaving, but in Ireland they have not been as acute as in some other countries. While Ireland does not seem to have been experiencing a major haemorrhage of personnel from teaching due to such factors, many would feel there is no cause for complacency. One of the valuable aspects of this current OECD analysis is its emphasis on the interactive, systemic elements which need to be borne in mind in sustaining and securing a high quality teaching profession for the future. It is a wise society that takes all relevant policy factors into consideration seriously and simultaneously to safeguard such an asset for its future well-being.

## 6.2 Data, Trends and Factors

### 6.2.1 Teacher salary scales

6.2.1.1 A common salary scale for all primary and post-primary teachers has been in operation for over thirty years. This is supplemented by allowances for some academic qualifications. Allowances are also added for Principals, Deputy Principals, Assistant Principals and Special Duties posts. The salary scale is a twenty five year one, with primary teachers entering on the second point of the scale and post-primary teachers beginning at the third point. There are 12 automatic annual incremental points worth an average of 3.7% additional value. There are then three further increases at points 17, 21 and 25. When this model was originally chosen these later increments were viewed as incentives to teachers to stay in classroom teaching, and as a recognition for long service. This concept has largely been lost from public consciousness. Teachers today regard the long duration salary scale as out-of-date, and some consider it inappropriate for a teaching career in contemporary circumstances.

6.2.1.2 Claims from teacher unions seeking improvements in pay and conditions are processed through the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme for Teachers. Direct negotiations are conducted at the Teachers Conciliation Council, at which the three teacher unions, the school management authorities and the Departments of Education and Science and Finance are represented. The Council meets once a month and is chaired by an independent Chairman. In the event of disagreement there is provision for arbitration by an agreed Arbitration Board. Of course, teacher salaries issues have formed part of the sequence of national agreements which have been in operation since 1987 (discussed in paragraph 1.1.1.3).

6.2.1.3 The basic salary scale for primary teachers (ISCED 1) (on 1 January 2002) went from a beginning salary of 24,315 Euro to 39,411 Euro after 15 years experience, to reach 44,485 Euro at the maximum. The salary scale for post-primary teachers is the same for all, and only varies minutely from the salary range of the primary teachers, as is indicated in the following. The beginning salary is 25,527 Euro, reaching 39,835 Euro after 15 years experience, and attaining a maximum of 44,909 Euro. Depending on the size of school, Primary Principals' allowances go from 6,676 Euro to 20,775 Euro, while those for Post-Primary Principals, again depending on size of school, range from 6,676 Euro to 27,524 Euro. Allowances for Deputy Principals in primary schools go from 2,703 Euro to 13,092 Euro. Post-Primary Deputy Principals range from 2,703 Euro to a maximum of 17,014 Euro. Smaller allowances are payable to Assistant Principals and those exercising other posts of responsibility (special duties).

6.2.1.4 About 25% of staff in primary schools benefit from Principal or Deputy Principal allowances, while a further 25% benefit from Assistant Principal or Special Duties allowances. Thus, about 50% of primary teachers are in receipt of some such allowance. In the case of post-primary schools, the size of school tends to be larger, but the number of principalships available is smaller. This is why only about 6% of the post-primary teaching force benefits from Principal or Deputy Principal allowances. But, on the other hand, about 47% are in receipt of Assistant Principal and Special Duties allowances. This means that about 53% of the post-primary teaching force have some allowance of this kind payable to them.

6.2.1.5 A range of allowances for academic qualifications from primary degree to doctorate, is also payable to teachers. For example, holders of an Honours degree are paid 3,527 Euro, of an Honours Higher Diploma in Education 886 Euro and an Honours Masters Degree 3,941 Euro. A teacher is entitled to benefit from just two of such academic qualification allowances. Allowances are payable to teachers holding Diplomas for teaching of the deaf and the blind. Other relatively small allowances are paid to teachers teaching through the medium of Irish (1,135 Euro) or teaching on islands (1,321 Euro). Extra allowances were also negotiated in 2002 for teachers who volunteer for a set amount of substitution and supervision in schools.

6.2.1.6 Once entered on the common salary scale, following successful probation, progression up the incremental ladder is automatic, unless some grave problem emerges which might call for a special enquiry by the inspectorate or others. It is only in the rare cases of teacher dismissal for grave inefficiency or unprofessional conduct that a teacher's entitlement to salary is terminated.

6.2.1.7 The common salary scale pertains to all qualified, permanently employed teachers. They neither suffer any salary diminution for below average performance nor benefit from any bonuses for what might be regarded as outstanding work. There is a very strong adherence by the teacher unions to the existing salary scheme. There has been no indication of a policy change being envisaged in the salary arrangements, except that a special allowance is being considered to support teachers in designated disadvantaged schools. The only areas of public debate on teacher salaries are the amounts of salary being paid and the long duration of the salary scale.

## **6.2.2 *Teacher evaluation and promotion***

Evaluation of individual teachers has been a stronger tradition in primary education than in post-primary. Primary teachers are evaluated by the inspectorate in their probationary year and periodically thereafter. With the move towards whole school evaluation, the emphasis is shifting more towards the evaluation of the staff as a school team, promoting the school plan. Very few post-primary teachers are formally evaluated in their probationary year. The school principal testifies to general satisfactory performance of duties. Once probated and in a permanent position, tenure is normally secure for a teacher, as explained in section 5. School principals have an obligation to promote the quality of education in the school, which is expected to include monitoring of staff performance. However, in Ireland, the syndrome of the teacher being "king or queen of the classroom" has been strong. It is rare for principals to observe the teaching and learning taking place in school classrooms. Nevertheless, most principals have means of establishing whether teachers are proving satisfactory or not. In the case of grossly inefficient teaching performance, chronic absenteeism or very inadequate class control, principals tend to take a variety of courses of action. Sometimes it will be the provision of in-service training or encouraging the teacher to seek counselling or other forms of personal assistance. The principal will usually apply discretion on the timetabling of such a teacher. On occasion, the school inspectorate will be called in to assist in the case by providing an evaluation for the school board of management, who, as employer, has primary responsibility.

However, as was explained in section 2.3.7, there is an inadequacy in the processes and criteria in place which can satisfactorily deal with the chronically inefficient teacher. Rule 161 sets out the procedures for inspectors when a primary teacher's performance is no longer regarded as 'satisfactory', and involves an elaborate and extensive sequence of actions including appeal procedure, before resolution by the Minister. Since 1993, 48 teachers have been inspected within the framework of Rule 161 and 28 of these voluntarily resigned, took early retirement or were dismissed. Circular No.43/85 relates to inspectorial procedures in the case of unsatisfactory performance by vocational teachers, involving a final decision by the Minister. Protective support by teacher unions frequently prolongs the investigative processes. While there is an admirable humaneness in the usual way teachers experiencing such problems are dealt with, it can be argued that the lack of agreed, comprehensive, and also humane measures, may involve problems for pupils, the teacher involved and the professional morale of the teacher's other colleagues. The general belief is that the number of chronically inefficient teachers is quite limited. It may well be that the Teaching Council, which is expected to be set up by January 2004, may help in devising satisfactory procedures for dealing with such instances as do exist.

As was indicated in 6.2.1, about 50% of all teachers benefit from some form of allowance linked to a post of responsibility in a school. Apart from the post of Principal, seniority in a school has a major influence on promotion. Other factors are relevant such as competence, extra qualifications, but despite DES efforts to open up the promotion system, seniority continues to be a very influential factor, and is favoured by the teacher unions. There are no other systems in operation, apart from promotion posts, for recognising and rewarding teacher performance. The common salary scale and a common, agreed scale of allowances for qualifications and the exercise of responsibility exists for all teachers. There are no publicly expressed plans to change the existing procedures, and if there were it would require a great deal of negotiation to change the status quo.

### **6.2.3 School absences**

Comprehensive data are not available to give a clear picture of these trends. Recent figures released by the Minister for Education and Science in parliament indicated that sick leave among teachers is higher than the national average for business (*Irish Independent*, 1/2/03). Primary teachers are out sick for an average of 8.5 days in the 37 week school year, while teachers in voluntary secondary schools average 6.5 days on sick leave. About two-thirds of primary teachers were absent due to sickness in 2001, half of them for 1-5 days, a further 2,635 for 6-10 days, and just over 4,000 others for longer periods. The vast majority of teachers in voluntary secondary schools took sick leave for 1-5 days. Teacher unions point out that teachers are more open to infection than many other workers due to their contact with children and their associated illnesses.

### **6.2.4 Teacher leave**

6.2.4.1 A variety of schemes exist in relation to teacher leave. A particularly important one is the scheme for career breaks. This scheme was introduced in the school year 1985-86. The schemes facilitate serving teachers who wish to take time off for purposes such as further study, domestic responsibilities, starting a business or a stay abroad. School managerial authorities can authorise a

career break, without pay, for up to a maximum of five years. Posts vacated by teachers taking career breaks may be filled on a temporary basis from school year to school year. Leave without pay does not count for superannuation purposes nor for normal incremental credit. The teacher's right to resume a teaching post is absolute, but his/her right to resume the post in the same school is qualified by a clause which provides for application of any redeployment scheme in operation at the date of resumption. The career break scheme is reputed to be popular. It provides a valuable opportunity for teachers to broaden their experience. For those who return to the classroom it can bring enrichment to their work. Others find the experience of another career track fulfilling and decide to leave teaching. However, it probably also contributes to the shortage of qualified teachers at primary level. Statistics on the total number of career breaks and of return patterns are not available. Figures relating to primary level indicate the number on career breaks have grown from 72 in 1994/95 to 192 in the year 2000/01. This is, however, a very small fraction of the teaching force. Nevertheless, the scheme provides an outlet for fresh career experience for those who wish to avail of it. A disadvantage of the career break scheme is that it can hold up permanent positions for up to five years, with school managements relying on temporary substitution.

6.2.4.2 Another scheme which facilitates teacher retention is the job-sharing scheme which has been in operation since 1998. Under certain conditions it allows teachers to split the demands of a full-time job, allowing them half-time release for other commitments or interests. Under the Carers Leave Act, 2001, it is possible for teachers to be allowed unpaid leave, up to a maximum of 65 weeks. It is available to allow a teacher to assist a person requiring full-time care and attention, as verified by the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs.

6.2.4.3 A total of five days paid compassionate personal leave may be granted by school management to a teacher during the course of the school year. In certain exceptional circumstances, extra leave may be granted, i.e. bereavement. *Force Majeure* Leave is another scheme which allows for paid leave for a maximum of 3 days in each period of 12 months. This leave covers situations where for urgent and immediate family reasons the presence of the teacher is indispensably required at the place where the family member is.

6.2.4.4 Teachers who get married during the school term can benefit from seven consecutive calendar days, including the marriage date. A Maternity Leave Scheme exists for pregnant teachers. It involves paid leave for 18 consecutive weeks. At the end of this period a teacher has the option of taking a further 8 consecutive weeks of unpaid leave.

6.2.4.5 Under the terms of the Parental Leave Act of 1998, a parent who is the natural or adoptive parent of a child is entitled to unpaid parental leave for a period of up to 14 weeks. The purpose of the leave is to enable a parent to take care of his/her child, under the age of five years. Each parent has a separate entitlement to parental leave but the leave is not transferable, e.g. the mother cannot take the father's leave or vice versa. Since 1 January 2001 a Paternity Leave Scheme has been introduced. This allows for 3 days of paid leave to fathers of children born after this date. The leave must be taken within four weeks of the birth of the baby, or within four weeks after adoption.



6.2.4.6 In the case of illness, certified by medical certificate, paid sick leave is available for a period or periods which in the aggregate do not exceed twelve months in any period of four consecutive years. In the case of shorter illnesses a medical certificate needs to be forthcoming after three consecutive days to secure paid sick leave.

6.2.4.7 For teachers with distinguished sporting prowess a paid Sport Leave Scheme operates. Such sport leave needs the formal approval of the school management and the DES, and is only normally approved in circumstances where a teacher is participating at an international type event. In this instance, the teacher must arrange for the employment of an acceptable substitute at his/her own expense. A Study Leave Scheme facilitates teachers undertaking approved, full-time academic or professional courses. On certain conditions, they are allowed paid study leave, but they are liable for the payment of the replacement, substitute teacher.

### **6.2.5 Secondments**

6.2.5.1 While there has been a long tradition of teacher secondments to undertake public service roles, such as members of parliament (An Dáil), over recent years teacher secondments have become much more common and linked to educational initiatives. These include a variety of initiatives aimed at combating educational disadvantage; initiatives for school development planning and school leadership; new schemes to promote the integration of ICT in schooling; support teams to assist in the implementation of curriculum innovations. Teachers have also been seconded to education centres, teacher education colleges, research programmes in university education departments, and to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Agencies such as teacher unions and sporting organisations have also benefited from the services of teachers on secondment. The Education Act of 1998 identified teacher secondment as a specific means of supplying personnel to agencies such as the inspectorate and NCCA and “to other bodies that the Minister, in the future might set up” (Section 54). Section IX of the Act stated:

A person, seconded or transferred to a body established under Section 54, shall not, while in the service of that body, receive less remuneration or be subject to less beneficial conditions of service, than the remuneration to which that person was subject prior to such secondment or transfer (55.2).

Apart from this statutory guideline, there is no formal, published DES policy with regard to teacher secondments.

6.2.5.2 Secondment arrangements are worked out firstly between the individual teacher and the agency to which secondment is being arranged (seconding body). In many instances, the initiative is taken by the seconding body to contact an individual teacher who has the skill, experience and a track record which seem to suit the secondment post. The individual then seeks to obtain release from his/her school management board. There is a lack of detailed regulation in relation to secondment arrangements. Secondment contracts are often on an annual, renewable basis.

6.2.5.3 There is no upper limit to the number of years for which a teacher may be seconded. This involves a climate of uncertainty for the seconded teacher, the school, and the substitute teacher. Teachers on secondment accumulate incremental credit and pension credit. The salary arrangements usually involve the teacher retaining normal salary and allowances, with the addition of a supplementary allowance which varies with the nature of the work. Depending on the secondment, a teacher may be required to work longer than the school year, and more in line with holiday arrangements applicable to the seconded service. As the seconded teacher is usually an experienced professional with acknowledged skills, schools often are at a disadvantage in seeking to obtain adequate substitutions, and this may be particularly difficult for some subject areas. No arrangement exists between the seconding body and the school and no form of compensation exists for the loss the school may incur for the staff expertise which has been released on secondment.

6.2.5.4 The following table sets out the number of teachers in the primary and post-primary (excluding VEC) sectors who were on secondment in the year 2000-01, and the type of projects to which they were seconded. Accurate statistics for the vocational sector are not readily available, but it is calculated that about 100 teachers are on secondment in that sector, giving a total of about 500 teachers on secondment. It is likely that the total has increased since the school year 2000-01.

#### TEACHERS ON SECONDMENT

	Primary	Post Primary	Total
Educational Programmes (School Development Plan etc.)	64	82	146
Curriculum Development (NCCA, CDU etc.)	59	12	71
Educational Establishments (Universities etc.)	27	11	38
NCTE/FETAC	16	10	26
Area Partnerships	4	4	8
European Schools	4	4	8
DES (Inspectorate)	1	4	5
Trustees (Education Officers)	7	12	19
Teacher Unions (Officials)	3	5	8
Management Organisations	1	3	4
Sporting Organisations	3	7	10
Employee Assistance Schemes		3	3
Dáil Deputies	12		12
Other	9	8	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>402</b>

Source: Tuohy, Lodge, "The Secondment of Secondary Teachers," Report for the DES, 2002, p.21, Clare Education Centre

6.2.5.5 The recent (2002) research study by Tuohy and Lodge on the secondment of teachers in Ireland, point to many values for the individual teachers involved including job enrichment, broadening experience, developing self-concept, opportunities for career diversification. However, in line with similar research studies in other countries, the authors found that returning to school, or contemplating a return to the classroom, was not a preferred option for many of their respondents who were on

secondment. This can be due to a variety of reasons, including greater scope for professional initiative, more affirmation from their peers and other agencies, the exercise of more responsibility, and greater scope for creativity in the planning and execution of their work on secondment than they might experience in school. They are also more likely to be working in an area of special interest to them in the seconded situation. Of course, some teachers do return to the classroom with enriched experience and new skills for school work. However, from the point of view of teacher retention in general teaching, the secondment experience, while usually very beneficial for the individual teacher may not be very helpful to a policy on teacher retention for classroom teaching. Yet, it should be borne in mind that many seconded teachers continue to contribute to the broader education system and that their classroom experience is being drawn upon in seconded capacities.

6.2.5.6 In their study of the Irish experience, Tuohy and Lodge point out that even for some of those who return to general school teaching their enriched experience is not always drawn upon by the school authorities. A weakness of the secondment system in Ireland is the lack of attention to the process of re-entry to the school. This is often haphazard and unstructured, so that the potential benefits are not realised by the teacher or the school. In the conclusion to their study Tuohy and Lodge make the convincing recommendation:

A clearer policy on the management of secondments be developed, to promote career development and enhancement prospects for teachers, to maximise the return on investment in individual projects and to protect the interests of seconded individuals, their schools and the education system (Tuohy and Lodge 2002, p.70).

### **6.2.6 Aspects of teachers' working conditions**

6.2.6.1 Primary teachers are obliged to be present for teaching for 5 hours and 40 minutes each day, and primary schools are required to be open for instruction for 183 days a year. The actual teaching contract hours per annum have been calculated at 915. This is well above the OECD average of 792 hours per annum (OECD, *Education At A Glance*, 2002, p.342). There is no compulsion on a primary teacher to remain on school premises after the end of the formal school day. In practice, teachers spend varying, but unspecified, amounts of extra time, outside the formal school day at work-related activity, depending on their individual responsibility — administration, posts of responsibility, class preparation activity, informal pupil contact (games, clubs) meetings — either on or off the school premises.

6.2.6.2 At post-primary level, a teacher's contractual teaching hours are organised over the working week in accordance with the school's time-tabling arrangements, and time spent on school premises may vary from day to day. A practice has arisen whereby time spent on school premises may not necessarily be continuous through the day. As with their primary teaching colleagues, many teachers spend longer than contracted hours (usually about 22 hours per week), either on or off the school premises, engaged in various teaching-related, or culture-related tasks, but this time is unregulated. Post-primary schools are required to be open for 179 days per annum. However, as these schools are deemed to be open during the period of the state certificate examinations (12 days), they are in effect

open for instruction for 167 days. The DES has calculated that post-primary teachers at both junior cycle and senior cycle teach for about 775 hours per annum. The OECD average for lower secondary education is 720 hours per annum, but that for upper secondary is less, at an average of 648 hours (OECD, *Education At A Glance*, 2002, p.343, and Table D.71, p.349). Thus post-primary teachers in Ireland also teach above the OECD average hours.

6.2.6.3 In Ireland, while the required actual teaching time is specified for teachers, there are no state regulations regarding other aspects of the teacher's work such as class preparation, correction of pupil tests, contributions to school planning, extra curricular educational activities. Such matters are left to the schools' and to the individual teacher's discretion. There has been a tradition of teachers devoting a good deal of non-teaching time to games, debates, musical events, outward bound activities, on a voluntary basis, or for limited financial reward. Representatives of school management and principals' associations suggested that this tradition may be changing. Because of the lack of specification in teacher contractual conditions for any activity other than specific teaching hours, it is proving difficult for school administrations to organise time outside class-contact hours for such things as school planning activities, parent-teacher meetings and in-service teacher education. In recent discussions on the payment of the Benchmarking Body's recommendations the government is seeking far more flexibility on teacher attendance at parent-teacher meetings, outside school hours.

6.2.6.4 The average class size in Irish primary schools is 24.8 pupils while the average class size for the OECD is 22 pupils. In most OECD countries the class size for lower post-primary schools tends to be higher than that of primary. In Ireland, however, it is less at 22.7 pupils, slightly less than the OECD average of 24 pupils (OECD, *Education At A Glance*, 2002, Chart D. 2.1, p.287).

6.2.6.5 In the year 2000, the OECD country mean for the ratio of pupils to teaching staff, at primary level, expressed in full time equivalents is 18 pupils per teacher. In Ireland the ratio in the year 2000 was 21.5 pupils per teacher. At post-primary level, the average across OECD countries was 14 pupils per teacher, while in Ireland it was 15.9: 1 (OECD, *Education At A Glance*, 2002, pp.292, 293). Thus, on the OECD mode of calculating such statistics, both in terms of class size and pupil teacher ratios, the pattern in Ireland is higher than the OECD average, except for class size at junior cycle.

6.2.6.6 Over recent years, the State has invested substantial resources in support services for teachers and pupils. A proportion of such support staff has been allocated across the system as a whole, to meet the needs of all schools. Over and above this, targeted supports have been focussed on schools experiencing particular difficulties arising from socio-economic factors. Some of the expansion in such services has also been stimulated by the implementation of the policy for the integration of pupils with disabilities, as far as possible, in mainstream schooling. Thus, there has been a significant expansion of Resource Teachers for special needs and of Learning Support positions for pupils experiencing learning difficulties (see 2.4.2). A visiting teacher scheme, whereby teachers visit pupils, exists to respond to the needs of children with particular disabilities. Extra personnel have been allocated to a variety of schemes aimed at combating educational disadvantage. One of the longer established of such schemes is the Home-School-Community-Liaison Scheme, whereby experienced teachers, with special training are allocated to assist disadvantaged parents to support the education of their children and to

liaise in satisfactory ways with schools. In general, the scheme aims to promote active co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of children.

6.2.6.7 The government has been expanding the educational psychology support services for schools. The service has been re-organised as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). It is planned that NEPS will have 200 psychologists by the end of 2004. NEPS provides a psychological service to all post-primary schools and to approximately 1500 primary schools. It is anticipated that as additional psychologists are appointed, the service will be expanded to all schools. There is also a scheme providing school guidance counsellors to post-primary schools. Currently, there are about 600 whole-time equivalent guidance counsellor posts in post-primary schools. While the guidance priorities of individual schools are a matter for school's management, it is expected that these would reflect educational policy priorities, and in particular, focus on the needs of at-risk pupils and also be available to assist senior pupils on personal, educational and career decisions.

6.2.6.8 As was set out in section 4 of this report, there are a range of support services in operation which assist schools in the implementation of new curricular policies, school planning processes and school leadership. The overall INSET programme is regarded as of central importance in supporting schools to achieve the educational reform agenda. Under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, a National Educational Welfare Board has been established which deals with issues relating to pupil attendance and truancy.

6.2.6.9 In general, the conditions of work for teachers are linked to traditional practices which evolved over the years and are shaped through periodic negotiations which take place between the key partners involved. The arrangements regarding pupil teacher ratios are decided by the Department of Education and Science, following consultation with the social partners. Average class sizes are linked to pupil teacher ratios, but are also influenced by decisions and circumstances at school level. The contractual arrangements for teachers emerge from multilateral negotiations between the key partners involved — the DES, Department of Finance, teacher unions and school managements. The existing arrangements are mainly based on the required teaching contact hours, and have been in place for a long time. Commentators consider that they are out of congruence with changed educational circumstances. However, the highly organised teacher unions would be very opposed to changes, unless they formed part of a more comprehensive remunerative package. Current negotiations on increased productivity and modernisation in return for the award of the Benchmarking Body's recommended salary increase may point the way to future negotiation trends. The teaching career has traditionally been a rather flat one, but in recent years, significant improvements have been made in the number and role of posts of responsibility in schools, over and above classroom teaching. At present, about 50% of teachers benefit from some such posts.

### **6.2.7 Safeguards for teacher well-being in schools**

6.2.7.1 Legislation in recent years such as the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and agreements between teacher unions and management have greatly strengthened the rights of members of the

school community to an environment free from harassment and intimidation. Among measures which have been developed is a policy on sexual harassment in school. Sexual harassment is understood as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on a person's sex which affects the dignity of men and women at work. A tight framework setting out responsibilities and procedures for redress of experienced harassment is in place, and significant court proceedings have developed case law in this field.

6.2.7.2 It is also well recognised that persistent bullying in school can be extremely damaging to the health and well-being of the recipient. Bullying is defined by the Health and Safety Authority as follows:

Bullying in the workplace is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against a person or persons. Bullying is where aggression or cruelty, viciousness, intimidation or a need to humiliate dominates the relationship.

In May 2002, the Health and Safety Authority announced details of a new Code of Practice on the prevention of Workplace Bullying. This provides advice and guidance on bullying and on how to create efficient and effective procedures for dealing with complaints. This Code is being promoted in schools to improve the character of the working and living environment.

6.2.7.3 With the changes in social, leisure and domestic environment in which schools operate it is to be expected that schools would be encountering disciplinary and good order problems. The raising of the school leaving age to 16, the expansion of pupil numbers and the retention of about 81% of the age cohort to the completion of the post-primary, usually at 18 years of age, have highlighted a certain clash of cultures between what the school seeks to promote and what youth culture relates to. It is generally accepted that there has been a decline in the influence on young people exercised by many of the traditional social institutions — family, church, police, political figures. In general, there has been a heightening of the resort to violence in social, peer group and domestic settings. Influenced by advertising, media and youth sub-cultures, many young people have been engaging in alcohol abuse, other drug abuse and sexual experimentation at younger ages. It is also the case that many pupils engage in a good deal of part-time work to supplement pocket money for a leisure life and forms of clothing and footwear which are popular, but expensive.

6.2.7.4 Teachers are well aware of the backwash effects which social changes and manifestations of contemporary youth culture have on school life. Surveys conducted by teacher unions testify to the difficult disciplinary problems which arise in schools and the consequent stress experienced by some teachers. While serious difficulties do arise, often linked to a high level of external problems being encountered by pupils in the non-school environment, in most Irish schools there has been a tradition of good order. Corporal punishment was abolished for all schools in 1982, and official policy lays great stress on policy procedures and personnel to establish and sustain a pastoral and caring environment in the schools, with an emphasis on the quality of relationships. There was a major research study on school discipline (Martin, 1997), sponsored by the DES. From time to time, the DES issues guidelines on school discipline. Schools are encouraged to prepare their codes of discipline on best practice lines,

including inputs from pupils. Following the Education Act, (1998) and the Education Welfare Act (2001) procedures have been more formalised regarding pupil expulsion for indiscipline, and a formal appeal structure has been put in place for involved pupils and their parents.

6.2.7.5 However, the main emphasis of both national policy and schools' policy has been on preventative measures. Among key elements of this, as well as codes of discipline, have been the establishment of year heads and class tutor systems, the operation of parent-teacher associations, the expansion of the school guidance counselling service, the availability of the expanded schools' psychological service, the development of the Home-School-Community Liaison Scheme, the activities of area-partnership schemes (multi-sectoral interventions in socially disadvantaged areas), the operation of such things as breakfast and homework clubs. These and some other measures, such as special in-service programmes on discipline issues and conflict resolution, have been a support to teachers and they are appreciative of them. However, it would be unrealistic to expect that problems of indiscipline would not occur. These very rarely involve pupil violence, but verbal abuse, disobedience and general insubordination do occur, and if carried out in a repeated pattern can be very upsetting and stressful for teachers. In some instances, they contribute to teacher burn-out, or disability, but there are no available statistics on the extent of this. Schools come under the terms of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act of 1989. Schools are required to prepare safety statements and teachers are encouraged to elect safety representatives.

#### **6.2.8 Teacher retirement**

6.2.8.1 The percentage of teachers who left their position in schools in 2001, for retirement and other reasons, is calculated at about 6%, an increase from 3% in 1997. Compulsory retirement age for teachers is 65 years, i.e. teachers must retire no later than the end of the school year in which they reach their 65th birthday. A disability pension is payable to a teacher who is a member of the superannuation scheme who retires (with no less than five years pensionable service) where the Minister is satisfied that due to infirmity the teacher is not capable of performing his/her duties, and the infirmity is likely to be permanent. A teacher who is a member of the superannuation scheme may voluntarily opt to retire on pension at age 60 or any time thereafter. Such a teacher would receive a pension based on the number of years of pensionable service. A scheme of voluntary early retirement also exists under which teachers of younger years may seek approval to retire. Significant conditions, (strands 1, 2, 3), apply to this scheme such as the teacher consistently experiencing verified professional difficulties or where the retirement of the teacher would provide an opportunity to enhance the education service by the school by facilitating change such as the introduction of new skills and curriculum review, or teachers who are in posts which are surplus to requirements. Over the last five years it is interesting to note that retirement on age grounds for primary teachers averaged 64 per annum. However, over the same period, voluntary retirement averaged a much higher 265 per annum. Early retirement on conditions of the three strands was introduced in 1996-97, and has been drawn upon by an average of 44 primary teachers per annum from then to the year 2000-01. This is less than had been anticipated, but the conditions attached, as outlined above, tend to make this option unattractive to many teachers.

6.2.8.2 Overall, the number of post-primary teachers in posts, expressed as whole-time teacher equivalents, increased from 23,244 in 1996-97 to 24,543 in the year 2000-01. Over the last five years an average of 58 teachers retired on age from voluntary secondary and community and comprehensive schools, while an average of 116 took voluntary retirement per annum. A further average of 62 retired on disability grounds, while an average of 93 retired early on the basis of strands 1, 2 and 3. Thus, it is quite clear that retirements on normal age grounds are greatly outnumbered by voluntary retirement, retirement on disability and early retirement under special circumstances. This might indicate increased stress levels due to the greater demands being made on post-primary teachers in recent years. Similar data on vocational teachers are not available.

### 6.3. Policy Initiatives and Their Impact

#### 6.3.1 *Need for research on teacher retention*

As was discussed in section 6.1, teacher retention in general, has not been a pressing policy issue in Ireland. There is a lack of research on teacher attrition which makes it impossible to establish the pattern and characteristics of the attrition which is taking place. Over recent years, principal teachers have drawn attention to shortages they experience in recruiting and retaining teachers in subject areas such as Construction Studies, Engineering, Materials Technology, IT, when there was strong demand for graduates in such areas in the non-school job market. While the contemporary good supply of well qualified and motivated applicants for the teaching career is a comforting factor in relation to teacher demand and supply issues, it is in the interest of the education system that teacher retention issues get more serious research and policy attention. There is an investment cost by individuals and society in the education and training of skilled and well-motivated teachers and efforts need to be made to retain well-trained and experienced teachers within the school system.

#### 6.3.2 *Policy options towards teacher retention*

While not necessarily designed as teacher retention policy measures, many of the supports and provisions which have been introduced for the teaching career do serve to encourage teachers to remain in the profession. As well as the underlying issues of public confidence and regard, discussed in section 6.1.3, many measures are supportive of teachers' engaging effectively in their work throughout their career span. The following sections briefly review some of the key initiatives undertaken, and make suggestions as to how they might be improved as part of policy options for future policy development in retaining effective teachers. When considering retention issues it is important not to just concentrate on later career issues. Research indicates that experience in the first few years helps determine whether a teacher will have a long career (OECD, *Education Policy Analysis*, 2002, p.82). Thus, consideration needs to be given to career-span issues.



### **6.3.3 Initial and induction teacher education**

Ireland has had a long established and well respected initial, or pre-service teacher education tradition. As has been noted in paragraphs 4.3.1 to 4.3.4, reviews of both primary and post-primary teacher education have been recently concluded, evaluating the quality and appropriateness of the existing system for the changing school context. The implementation of what is regarded as valuable in the recommendations of these review bodies is desirable in laying good foundations for a teaching career. It has long been government policy that a “3 Is” policy — initial, induction and inservice education — should underpin the teaching career. As has been reported in this Country Report, the induction aspect of the tripartite approach has been neglected, although the current pilot projects may indicate a change of policy. It is well established by research that experiences in the early years of teaching have long term effects. It is now incumbent on policy formulators to draw on the current pilot projects on induction in the formulation of a general policy of teacher induction, in the immediate years ahead. A further advantage of a well structured induction system is the opportunity provided for mentoring, which would appeal to some established teachers as they assist new entrants to the profession.

### **6.3.4 Continuing professional development**

Over the last decade significant progress has been made in the provision of continuing professional development support. As was noted in paragraphs 4.2.14, 4.2.15, the work of the ICPU, the Education Centres and the various support teams has been an essential element in enabling teachers to adapt to curricular and pedagogic changes, and to changed aspects of school development. Without such support, it is likely that the level of teacher frustration would be very high. In schooling for the future, policy-makers need to accept that the provision of continual, professional support, of varying kinds, needs to be in-built as an on-going, regular feature of education budgets. Much of the emphasis of the forms of INSET just mentioned has been on content up-dating and skill development relating to current changes in school programmes. As has been pointed out in section 4.3.5, there is now a need for a more comprehensive strategic policy on INSET, which takes a broader view of in-career development, in line with the policy recommended in the Report of The National Education Convention (1994), and enunciated in the White Paper of 1995. In particular, it is desirable that teachers who wish to undertake certificated courses in universities and colleges of education for professional and personal development should get greater assistance to so engage. The evaluation by teachers of such courses testify to their re-energising effect and the fresh sense of direction it gives to their work. The graduates of such courses also provide a pool of talent available for other forms of INSET with their peers, which the graduates tend to find to be a very professionally fulfilling experience. The resources of teacher education colleges and university departments of education should be fully utilised for the continuing professional development of teachers.

Research also indicates that teachers’ professional needs and interests vary at different stages of the career cycle, which for many involves a span of forty or more years. From the perspective of teacher retention it is desirable that attitudinal studies should be conducted among the teaching force to seek to establish their INSET preferences, and the rationale behind these. There is a strong tradition for policy-makers to identify the needs of the system regarding INSET; it is timely to consider more

carefully the views of practitioners in the system, and to respond to these. Teachers have been calling for an independent review of allowances payable on the award of extra qualifications attained by teachers. The current scheme is over thirty years in existence, and has not taken cognisance of many changes which have occurred subsequently.

### **6.3.5 Career breaks and secondments**

The introduction of career breaks and the expansion of secondments have been of benefit to teachers, and have also been of benefit to elements of the education system. It is true that some loss of personnel to the classroom occurs through the operation of such schemes, but they also offer opportunities to teachers to broaden their experience which leads to enrichment of their work. The schemes also allow for “new blood” within the schooling system, which can be beneficial in the context of an ageing profession. Improvements could be made which would enhance the value of these schemes. In particular, some who have taken such career breaks have expressed the view that more attention should be paid to the re-entry process to the school context. They consider that if a career break occurs for a five year period there ought to be facilitating processes in place to assist teachers to re-engage and also to draw upon worthwhile aspects of the experience gained for the benefit of the school. As was pointed out in paragraph 6.2.4, the arrangements for teacher secondment tend to be too ad hoc and lack elements needed to yield their full potential to the system. In particular, school management has argued, the needs of the school from which the expert teacher is seconded should be considered more carefully, as well as re-entry processes for the secondee. Many of the other forms of leave for teachers are properly humane and family friendly. It is likely that they assist in teacher retention, and should be retained.

### **6.3.6 Employee assistance scheme for teachers**

As in most walks of life, personnel in teaching experience crises and difficulties which affect their performance and sometimes result in their leaving the career. Because of the nature of the work, the teaching force forms a large part of the public service workforce in all countries. It is very people-centred work, and can be stressful. The impact of certain events or conflicts may be of a temporary character, whereby timely and skilled support and intervention may enable individual teachers to overcome difficulties and regain their full professional prowess. In Ireland, the existence of the Employee Assistance Scheme for Teachers aimed at assisting teachers experiencing difficulties such as depression, alcoholism, loss of confidence, stress conditions, is a valuable resource. The scheme benefits from operating in a low profile manner, but it may be under-utilised because of insufficient awareness of its existence and role. A review of the scheme’s operation, currently in five pilot areas, would prove valuable and could yield suggestions as to how it might be utilised to its optimum.

### **6.3.7 Teacher retention in disadvantaged schools**

It has been established that teacher turnover in schools serving severely disadvantaged areas is high, and at primary level such schools experience shortages in qualified teaching staff. Despite many state schemes, including better pupil teacher ratios, which support disadvantaged schools, it is the case that the teacher’s role can be very stressful in such schools, and, over time, contribute to teacher burnout.

Such schools often attract very committed teachers, but it can be very difficult to sustain energy and enthusiasm over a long time-period. The Minister for Education and Science has indicated that he is considering special supports for teachers in designated disadvantaged schools. Among possible supports would be extra allowances for teachers in such schools and/or the institution of a scheme of sabbatical leave for such teachers, at regular intervals.

#### **6.3.8 Teacher retention in the context of school rationalisation**

During the consultative process for the Country Background Report, stakeholders drew attention to the need for more careful planning regarding staff in the context of school rationalisation at post-primary level. With the upcoming decline in post-primary pupil numbers, the process of school amalgamation and rationalisation is set to gather momentum. For older teachers school rationalisation can be a difficult process. This is particularly the case when what is involved is the amalgamation of schools from different traditions, e.g. a boys' secondary school, a girls' secondary school and a co-ed vocational school. During the consultative process, it was reported that if sufficient care is not put into the planning of the process, with sufficient attention to the personnel perspectives of those involved, the process often gives rise to teacher disillusion, sometimes resulting in a decision to withdraw from teaching.

#### **6.3.9 Retirement and teacher retention**

A scheme for early retirement has been introduced, mainly aimed at those whose departure might not involve a real loss to the system, and the conditions for taking this option are designed with this in mind. All teachers with 40 years service can retire on full pension benefit. This option is increasingly being taken by primary teachers, most of whom will have begun their teaching careers at age 20 or 21. At a time when there is a shortage of qualified primary teachers, some stakeholders have argued that it might be a useful policy option to provide some incentives for such teachers, if able-bodied, to continue for longer in the service. The INTO has also raised the consideration as to whether the option should be opened up for teachers retiring at the compulsory retiring age of 65, to continue in the service if they so desired, a scheme which was utilised at earlier periods when teacher shortages were experienced.

#### **6.3.10 The retention of ineffective teachers**

While a policy on teacher retention is naturally aimed at keeping as many as possible of the competent teachers within the school system, it does not mean retaining all teachers, at any cost. The quality of the school system has to be the underlying concern of all policy measures. Where chronically inefficient teachers are identified it is neither in the interests of the individual involved, of the pupils they encounter or of the school communities of which they form a part, that they be retained in the system. While all due care respecting the rights of individual teachers needs to be respected, and all appropriate guidance and support be made available, procedures should be in place which deal more satisfactorily with these situations. The dismissal of ineffective teachers is recognised as a difficult issue but that does not mean it should not be tackled. There is a need for a more developed policy to be efficiently operated to deal with this situation.

### **6.3.11 Salary and teacher retention**

It is accepted that teacher salary scales have an intimate connection with teacher retention patterns. When salary levels drop in relation to the levels which pertain for similarly qualified personnel this gives rise to teacher dissatisfaction which, if unresolved, can cause long-duration difficulties and lack of morale. This relative decline has happened in many countries, including Ireland, over recent years. In Ireland, the government is seeking to redress this on the recommendations of the report of the Benchmarking Body, in July 2002. The new social partnership agreement, Sustaining Progress, has provision for improvements linked to some greater productivity from teachers. From a variety of perspectives the establishment of appropriate salary provision for teachers will have short-term and long-term effects on teacher retention patterns.

As has been noted elsewhere in this Report, another cause of dissatisfaction of teachers in Ireland is the length of the salary scale, which is a 25 year span. The teacher unions have sought an incremental scale of 10 annual points and 2 long service points. This claim has not been conceded. But the general issue of an unduly long incremental salary for teachers does need attention in the interests of the attractiveness of the teaching career.

### **6.3.12 Conclusion**

In this chapter's review of features of the teaching career affecting the retention of teachers within the system it has been pointed out that there are many factors in the Irish context which provide a favourable framework for retaining teachers. This framework can be improved upon which would help ensure the continuation of a favourable trend in this regard. Ireland is not coming to this problem from a crisis position. It is often in such relatively favourable circumstances that long-term strategic, proactive measures can be most effective. While many of the improvements recommended are on the supply side, it should be borne in mind that factors such as pupil-teacher ratio and average class size are higher in Ireland than the OECD average. It was noted in section 1.6 of the report that, in Ireland, the proportion of current educational expenditure applied to teacher salaries, at about 76%, is much higher than the EU average. Traditionally, expenditure on other qualitative inputs into schooling, other than the teaching force, has been low. It may well be that a new paradigm for expenditure on the schooling system may have to be envisaged, in keeping with the very changed and crucial role schooling plays in the knowledge society. Schooling is also a key element for realising many national policy goals in contemporary society. Investment in schooling's most precious resource — its teachers — is vital for the overall human resource development policy of Irish society. The maxim of a great Irish patriot of the nineteenth century, Thomas Davis, that a nation's wealth is its people, is particularly true for contemporary circumstances. Policy measures aimed at ensuring the retention of effective teachers in schools and of promoting their effectiveness while there, are integral to the maintenance of a high quality, vibrant and effective school system.

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