

Draft Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education

BACKGROUND REPORT:

Teacher Education in Ireland and Internationally

November 2010

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Introduction

The Teaching Council was established on a statutory basis in March 2006, under The Teaching Council Act, 2001, to promote, support and regulate the teaching profession. In everything it does, The Teaching Council works within the framework of the Act which confers on it significant powers with regard to teacher education.

As part of its role in shaping and developing teacher education in Ireland, The Teaching Council has set out its draft policy on the continuum of teacher education which includes initial teacher education, induction into the profession, early and continuing professional development. The policy has been developed by the Council following an extensive programme of research and consultation. This paper provides an overview of current thinking and practice in relation to teacher education in Ireland and internationally, based on the findings of the research and consultation phases. It also sets out of the evolving context of teaching and it is recommended that the Council's policy on the continuum of teacher education should be read in conjunction with this background paper.

For the purpose of setting the context for the Council's policy, the next section, *Background*, gives a brief overview of the role of the teacher in meeting the needs of students in the education system. The paper then looks at the continuum in a holistic sense, and then at the areas of initial teacher education, induction, and continuing professional development individually. The format for each area is similar, covering a definition of the concept and a summary of current thinking and practice internationally and in this country.

This document and the Council's policy paper on the continuum of teacher education are available for download from the Council's website, www.teachingcouncil.ie.

1. Background

A rapidly changing society has meant that teachers in Ireland have found themselves facing a range of new challenges in the classroom in recent years. Among the most significant, have been the inclusion of children with special educational needs into mainstream schools and the unprecedented increase in the numbers of students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. New technologies have emerged which play a central role in the way young people communicate and learn and teachers have been required to adapt their teaching to reflect the new reality. An increasingly diverse society, changing family structures and the emergence of new societal problems have added to the complexity of the teacher's role.

The pace of legislative change in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has also been significant. Green and White papers on various aspects of education, coupled with a number of OECD reports, have set the context for change and reform at all levels. A range of legislation was enacted which has fundamentally changed the education landscape. This has included the Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Equal Status Act (2000 - 2004), the National Qualifications Authority Act (2001), the Teaching Council Act (2001) and the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004) (not yet fully commenced). The influence of the EU has also been significant, with Directives in a variety of areas impacting on the role of teachers and adding a significant administrative workload.

Ireland's education system has undergone major changes since the 1990s. There have been significant changes to, and reform of, the curriculum at both primary and post-primary levels with issues such as social inclusion, the early identification of children with learning difficulties, multiculturalism, partnership with parents and ICT all coming to the forefront in recent years. Nonetheless, fragmentation of the system remains and a continuing and noteworthy challenge is the need to develop the links between the early years sector and the infant classes of primary school and between the child-centred primary sector and the more subject-based and exam-driven post-primary sector.

Teachers play a unique role within the education system in providing for the holistic development of students. In drafting this policy paper, the Council was cognisant of that unique role, and of the complex and intricate nature of teaching as it is explicated in the *Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers* published by the Council in 2007. In recent years, there have been heightened expectations in relation to the role of teachers and a major cultural shift whereby teaching now requires a much greater degree of interaction with students, colleagues, parents and other

professionals. This has implications for teacher education and, as such, provides an important context for this paper.

The problem of fragmentation across the continuum of teacher education is significant with insufficient linkages being made between the stages of the continuum. There is also the problem of the persistence of a model of teacher education which relies too heavily on initial teacher education. It has long been recognised that there is a need to bring greater coherence to provision at all stages of the continuum¹. Efforts to address this problem have been hampered by the fact that until this year, a formal induction programme was not available to all newly qualified teachers. A related problem has been the fragmented nature of the provision for continuous professional development (CPD) and the emphasis on system reform rather than teacher/school identified needs, at the CPD stage of the continuum². In recent years, new understandings of quality teacher education have emerged which need to be taken into account to ensure that teacher education is fit for purpose and sufficiently flexible to meet the demands of our changing society.

In summary, the accelerating pace of societal and legislative change and educational reform, coupled with the increasingly complex and demanding role of teachers, necessitate a thorough and fresh look at teacher education. This is essential to ensure that tomorrow's teachers are competent to meet the challenges that they face and are life-long learners, continually adapting over the course of their careers to enable them to support their students' learning.

¹ See, for example, the Government of Ireland (1995) White Paper, *Charting Our Education Future*, the Department of Education and Science

² See for example: Sugrue et al, 2001 and OECD (2009) *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments – First results from TALIS*

2. The Continuum of Teacher Education

2.1. Definition

The continuum of teacher education describes those formal and informal educational and developmental activities in which teachers engage during their teaching career. It encompasses initial teacher education, induction, early and continuing professional development and, indeed, late career support, with each stage merging seamlessly into the next and interconnecting in a dynamic way with each of the others.

2.2. International Trends in the Continuum

The continuum of teacher education has become a key policy focus for national governments, trans-national agencies and inter-governmental bodies. This is evident in the proliferation of reports focusing on teacher education over the professional life-cycle (not just initial teacher education). One such report by the European Commission, states that “even initial teacher education of the highest quality cannot provide teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for a lifetime of teaching. Teachers are called upon not only to acquire new knowledge and skills but also to develop them continuously. The education and professional development of every teacher needs to be seen as a lifelong task and be structured and resourced accordingly”³. This report and other policy studies are driven by concerns about how to respond to the challenges of globalisation, sustainable development and the knowledge society⁴.

In a nine-country study carried out on behalf of The Teaching Council, Conway et al (2009) note that many countries have made, or are in the process of implementing, major reforms to teacher education in response to these concerns. Teacher education in all the countries is seen as a continuum, going from initial teacher education to induction to early professional development to advanced or expert teacher and leader. Northern Ireland, for example, has a four-phase model comprising initial teacher education, induction (year one of teaching), early professional development (years two and three) and continuing professional development.

In a number of countries, (e.g. England, Scotland, Northern Ireland) competency frameworks have been used to bridge the various stages of the continuum by defining the competences required for teachers at each stage, from beginner to advanced teacher. However, there has been much

³ European Commission and OECD, 2010, p.12

⁴ Conway et al, 2009, p. xiii

criticism to the effect that they have been used in an overly prescriptive and constricting way in some cases, as opposed to using them in a way that maximises their potential as a tool for development⁵.

In some countries, progression paths have been established which span the continuum. In Singapore, for example, teachers can advance along one of two tracks, either as leaders (principals, heads of departments, etc.) or as senior specialists within their own subject or area of teaching. This means that there are opportunities for advancement for those who do not wish to move into administrative areas. It also means there are incentives to engage in CPD⁶.

In Poland, The Teachers' Charter sets out the career structure for teachers. This has four stages which are salary-linked, and progression depends on satisfactory evidence of CPD. As in some other countries, this means that there is scope for recognition of teachers' increasing professional capabilities within the classroom⁷.

2.3. The Continuum in Ireland

For many years in Ireland, there has been a recognition of teacher education as a continuum.

In its White Paper, *Charting Our Education Future* in 1995, the Department of Education and Science noted that "As with other professions, and because of changing social and economic circumstances, initial teacher education cannot be regarded as the final preparation for a life-time of teaching"⁸. The paper recognised teacher education as a continuum and emphasised "...the long-term importance of quality pre-service education, well-managed induction procedures, in-career development programmes throughout the teaching career, as well as conditions of service which facilitate flexibility and adaptability, in response to curricular and societal change"⁹.

Similarly, the *Report on the National Education Convention* recorded wide support for the view of "... the teaching career as a continuum involving initial teacher education, induction processes and in-career development opportunities, available periodically throughout a teacher's career"¹⁰.

In launching *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (OECD 2005), the then Minister for Education and Science made reference to "a very real continuum" and said that "over the course of their careers, good teachers are engaged on a journey of ongoing

⁵ Conway et al, 2009, p. 97

⁶ Ibid., p. 102

⁷ Ibid., p. 104

⁸ Government of Ireland, 1995, p.126

⁹ Ibid., p.126

¹⁰ Coolahan, 1994, p.85

learning and discovery. They are responding to the changing world around them, the developing frontiers of knowledge, new forms of learning, changing student profiles and the vast range of other external factors that impact on the classroom environment"¹¹.

This view of teacher education as a continuum was reflected in the mid 1990s in the establishment of the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills. The Teacher Education Section assumed responsibility for the work which had previously been undertaken by the Department's In-Career Development Unit and Colleges Section. The rationale for the administrative change was to ensure cohesion in teacher education policy and practice across all phases of the teaching career.

Despite this, as outlined earlier, the problem of fragmentation of the continuum has remained significant in Ireland and it is now widely recognised that there is a need to bring greater coherence to provision at all stages of the continuum. Among the biggest challenges to achieving this is the fact that there has been an overreliance on initial teacher education in a context where, up until very recently, a formal induction programme has not been in place for the majority of newly qualified teachers. A related challenge at CPD stage is the fact that the emphasis has tended to be on system reform rather than teacher/school identified need.

¹¹ Extract from the Minister's speech as published on www.education.gov.ie

3. Initial Teacher Education

3.1. Definition

Initial Teacher Education refers to the foundation stage of learning to be a teacher when aspiring teachers are engaged in a recognised teacher education¹² programme provided by a higher education institution.

3.2. International Trends in Initial Teacher Education

The Council's knowledge of international practices and trends in initial teacher education has been informed by the OECD Report, *Teachers Matter*, (2005) and the research undertaken by Conway et al (2009) on behalf of the Council. Some relevant findings from those reports are summarised below.

3.2.1. Nature of provision

The structure of initial teacher education differs markedly across countries although, broadly speaking, teaching is a graduate profession with both concurrent and consecutive programmes being provided. Concurrent models are common in preparing primary teachers whereas consecutive models tend to be more common in preparing secondary teachers¹³.

The length of initial teacher education programmes varies substantially among OECD countries, with primary programmes being 3.9 years in length on average, lower secondary teacher education programmes being 4.4 years on average and upper secondary teacher education programmes being 4.9 years on average. The overall range is from three years (e.g. for some primary teachers in Ireland and Spain) up to 6.5 years for some teachers in Germany, seven years in some programmes in the Slovak Republic, and eight years for some secondary teachers in Italy. The general trend internationally in recent years has been for the length of initial teacher education to increase¹⁴.

Another notable international trend, as a response to teacher shortages and the need to introduce new skills into schools, has been the provision of alternative forms of initial teacher education. These alternative routes facilitate entry to teaching for individuals with professional experience gained outside of education. Most of these programmes are provided by "traditional" teacher

¹² *The Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations, 2009* prescribe the various teacher education qualifications which are recognised for the purposes of admission to the Register of Teachers

¹³ The term 'secondary' teachers reflects the international usage and is used co-terminously with 'post-primary' teachers.

¹⁴ OECD, 2005, p 105.

education institutions, although often with a considerable change in approach. In Chile, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden, for example, distance learning is used to facilitate access for those for whom on-campus full-time teacher education is not an option. The Netherlands, England and Wales use school-based programmes that enable mature entrants to start earning an income while studying¹⁵. However, there have been criticisms of some of these school-based programmes. Conway et al¹⁶ cite the *Troops to Teachers* programme in the USA and note that alternative programmes are “typically shorter, involve minimal coursework and focus on immediate concerns via a ‘tricks of the trade’ approach to the curriculum for pre-service teachers. They emphasise the need for ‘practical’ focus in preparing teachers, with an implied need for much more time in schools relative to time studying in ... university”. Other critics have argued that such programmes risk providing the schools with inadequately prepared teachers¹⁷.

3.2.2. Models of initial teacher education

Internationally, the promotion of reflective practice has become a key feature of teacher education. At ITE stage, this is increasingly being complemented by an emphasis on promoting an inquiry/research stance in student teachers as evidenced in the use of portfolios in some countries and the completion of a substantial thesis as part of the ITE programme in others¹⁸.

3.2.3. Entry requirements

The ease of entry into initial teacher education and into teaching as a profession varies between countries, and sometimes even within countries. The point of selection also varies, with some countries (including Ireland, Scotland, Singapore and Finland) selecting at entry to initial teacher education and others (including England and certain states in the USA) requiring graduates from programmes of initial teacher education to pass additional tests before they can begin to teach. Where there is a rigorous selection process, the majority of graduates from initial teacher education courses go on to enter the teaching profession¹⁹.

The McKinsey Report, in its analysis of the best-performing school systems, instances Finland and Singapore as having stringent entry requirements²⁰. They are also among the countries whose students perform best in international comparisons such as PISA. In Finland, teaching enjoys a high status and places on initial teacher education programmes are highly sought-after. Consequently, the calibre of candidates is high. Nevertheless, Finland introduced a national first (qualifying) round in its selection process from 2007, checking the literacy, numeracy and problem-

¹⁵ OECD, 2005, pp. 109 – 111.

¹⁶ Conway et al, 2009, p.111

¹⁷ See for example Darling-Hammond, 1999, as referenced in OECD 2005, p. 111

¹⁸ Conway et al, p. xviii

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 112

²⁰ McKinsey & Company, 2007, p.17

solving skills of candidates before they begin their initial teacher education. The top-scoring candidates enter a second round of selection run by individual universities, which includes both assessments of their academic abilities (written tests, academic record) and of their suitability for teaching (interview). Singapore also has strict controls over entry to teaching at both school-leaving and graduate levels. Candidates must show they are highly qualified academically, must pass tests of literacy unless exempt (e.g. by already having a degree in English) and an interview, which may include a practical element. In Poland, as well as possessing the *Matura* (school leaving) certificate, candidates, in some circumstances, are required to sit a competitive entrance examination set by the university. In England since 2002, candidates for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) must pass skills tests in numeracy, literacy and ICT before they can be recommended for the award of QTS by their initial teacher education provider. Most countries also require some form of character reference, which may include a police check, before graduates are permitted to teach.

A common means of controlling entry to teacher education is for the relevant government department to limit the number of places available, usually by limiting funding and/or by insisting on basic selection criteria for candidates. Where places are limited in this way, it usually means candidates are of a high calibre academically, provided, that is, that teaching is seen as a desirable profession. Their suitability for teaching is assessed during the course, during teaching practice, and finally during the probationary period.

Some countries also give credit for previous teaching experience to people applying for teacher education courses. There is concern that this allows for and encourages unqualified people to teach in schools. In Poland, for example, students on programmes of initial teacher education are, by law, only allowed to observe and not to teach during placement in the first two years of their course. Only in their final year are they allowed to actually teach a class. In contrast, Singapore encourages those who have been accepted for initial teacher education to gain experience in schools, albeit under the supervision of experienced teachers, on the grounds that this will help them to decide whether they are suited to a teaching career.

3.2.4. Components of initial teacher education

Most teacher education programmes offer some combination of coursework in: subject matter; teaching methods; child/adolescent development; psychology, sociology, history and philosophy of education; and curriculum studies together with a period of teaching practice²¹. Variations can be found, however, in the emphasis placed on each of these components, and the relationship between the components has been widely debated over the last twenty years.

²¹ OECD 2005, p. 107.

In England, for example, so called 'foundation' courses have been increasingly marginalised over the last twenty years in a political process in which responsibility for initial teacher education has shifted markedly from higher education to schools. In contrast, in the USA, while there has been considerable debate about their role, they have been reconfigured rather than marginalised²². Debates have centred on two key issues: (i) the role of foundation courses in initial teacher education; and (ii) the relationship between coursework (foundations and methods courses) and teaching practice/field placement(s). Both of these issues have been intertwined with debates about the nature of the theory-practice relationship. Peterson, Clark and Dickson (1990), for example, note that the teaching of foundation courses "in teacher education has rested on certain classic but typically unquestioned psychological assumptions about the learning of the prospective teacher and the transfer of that learning to teaching"²³.

Contemporary learning theorists²⁴ emphasise the situated nature of knowledge and have provided substantive evidence that knowledge is inextricably linked to the situations in which it has been acquired and used. For example, while Anderson et al (1995)²⁵ acknowledge the value of the foundation courses, they question the conventional content (a psychology of individual differences, rather than one of situations and a learning community) and delivery (via lecture) of such courses, advocating a move toward teaching them "in a form that renders them useful". They argue that, for example, educational psychology courses ought to focus on providing student teachers with a psychological perspective focused on "the analysis of an action in teaching situations". They nominate two ideas as core to a contemporary psychological perspective: (i) "the image of learners as active and social constructors of meaning"; and (ii) "the image of learning as an act of construction through social interaction in many contexts".

These contemporary understandings of the nature of learning and cognition have spurred the reconfiguration of the relationships between the components of initial teacher education and this has significant implications for overall teacher education programme design, module design and delivery, collaboration between teacher education staff (and school staff) in module design and assessment modes (i.e. coursework, assignments and examinations).

²² Conway et al, 2009, p.115

²³ Peterson et al, 1990, as referenced in Conway et al., 2009, p. 116

²⁴ Sawyer, 2006; Greeno et al, 1996; Bruner, 1996; Collins, 2006 as referenced in Conway et al,2009, p.116

²⁵ As referenced in Conway et al, 2009, p.116

3.2.5. The school placement element

A European Commission communication (2007) referred to "...the need for [teachers] to have sufficient practical experience in real classrooms as a part of their initial education". In their response, Ministers of Education in 2007 agreed 'to endeavour to ensure that teachers hold a qualification ... which strikes a suitable balance between research-based studies and teaching practice'. Returning to this theme in 2009, Ministers recognised that: "Teacher education programmes ... need to be of high quality, relevant to needs and based on a well-balanced combination of solid academic research and extensive practical experience' and agreed that initial teacher education should have a 'strong practical component'"²⁶.

Most initial teacher education programmes include a school placement element and the OECD has noted a tendency to increase opportunities for actual classroom practice and to provide such opportunities from the beginning of the course. "A significant practice component is now seen as an essential element to teacher preparation in order to help future teachers understand the dynamics of classroom teaching and the principles underlying it..."²⁷. It further notes evidence that "student teachers who receive increased amounts of field experience remain in the profession at significantly higher rates than those prepared through largely campus-based programmes"²⁸.

The duration of the practicum varies widely with some programmes including brief periods of classroom experience and others including year-long internships with regular teaching obligations. Most often, teaching practice occurs following coursework near the end of the teacher education programme. However, this training is increasingly being incorporated throughout the entire teacher education programme, especially in concurrent programmes as its scope is being broadened. Student teachers are asked to participate in school activities, observe classrooms, tutor young people and serve as teacher aides, prior to classroom teaching.

3.2.6. School-university partnerships in initial teacher education

Internationally, the development of mentoring in schools in conjunction with university-school partnerships has become a key feature of re-designed initial teacher education over the last decade²⁹. It is common for formal partnership arrangements to be developed between higher education institutions and schools to provide structured support and a gradual increase in classroom responsibility for student teachers. The nature of such arrangements varies considerably along a continuum from the school playing a host role (work placement model) to shared responsibility between the school and the higher education institute (partner model) to the

²⁶ European Commission, 2009, p.1

²⁷ OECD, 2005, p.108

²⁸ Fleener, 1998 as quoted in OECD, 2005, p.108

²⁹ See, for example, OECD, 2005; Scottish Executive, 2004

school providing the entire training (training school model)³⁰. In most developed countries, recognised schools are required to provide student placements (OECD, 1991).

3.2.7. Accreditation of initial teacher education

Accreditation is a means to ensure that teacher education programmes meet prescribed standards and is a major issue in countries with highly decentralised systems where there is a large number of initial teacher education providers. A number of countries are finding that teacher profiles are a useful mechanism for clarifying expectations of what systems of teacher education and professional development should aim to achieve (OECD, 2005, pp 112 - 113).

3.3. Initial Teacher Education in Ireland

3.3.1. Nature of provision

Initial teacher education programmes for primary and post-primary teachers are facilitated through a range of consecutive and concurrent programmes.

There are five state-funded Colleges of Education which offer programmes of teacher education for primary teachers through a concurrent three-year course leading to a Bachelor of Education degree³¹. Four of the colleges offer an 18-month Graduate Diploma in Education. The latter is also offered by a private college as an online, blended course.

In November 2010, the Minister for Education and Skills, Mary Coughlan, T.D. published for consultation a Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools entitled *Better Literacy and Numeracy for Children and Young People*. In that document, the Minister indicated her intention to increase the duration of the BEd programme for primary teaching to become a four-year programme, at least an aggregate of one year of which would involve school-based professional development experience. Although not explicitly referenced in the consultation document, it is understood that the Minister also intends to extend the duration of the Graduate Diploma in Education to two years.

³⁰ Maandag et al, as referenced in Conway et al, 2009, pp 118 – 119

³¹ Two of the colleges (St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Mary Immaculate College, Limerick) offer three year concurrent programmes at Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), while the remaining three (Church of Ireland College of Education, Marino Institute of Education and Froebel College of Education) offer three year programmes at Level 7 on the NQF, with the option to pursue a further year and be awarded a Level 8 qualification. The Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations, 2009 require that, from April 2013, where a person wishes to be registered on the basis of a primary teaching qualification, such a qualification must be at Level 8 on the NQF.

For post-primary teachers, the concurrent route to a teaching qualification is offered for a wide range of programmes, typically those with practical, laboratory and workshop elements³². The post-primary consecutive route is the one-year post-graduate diploma in education and entry requirements include a degree in at least one subject which meets the criteria for registration with The Teaching Council³³. At further education level, a requirement to have a teacher education qualification is expected to be in place in the coming years and the design and structure of that qualification is currently the subject of ongoing deliberations between The Teaching Council and relevant stakeholders.

The 1970s and early 1980s saw the redevelopment and expansion of teacher education programmes. Then in the 1990s, fresh opportunities and fresh ideas for developmental initiatives in initial teacher education were provided³⁴. In particular, the 1991 OECD report, *Reviews of National Policies for Education, Ireland and Charting Our Education Future*, the 1995 White Paper on education, pointed out that initial teacher education should be seen in the context of induction and continuing professional development. This was echoed in two major reports on initial teacher education in Ireland which placed initial teacher education under the lens for scrutiny³⁵. One of these, by Kellaghan, produced significant recommendations on the length, content and structure of programmes and on student selection and assessment. The report has been influential in shaping thinking and developments in primary teacher education: some of its recommendations have already been addressed; others remain to be implemented.

3.3.2. Entry Routes

There seems to be general satisfaction at present with the current mode of selection and recruitment in Ireland, in that teachers in general are not in short supply and teaching is still seen as a desirable career choice. However, there are some concerns about how well membership of the teaching profession reflects society more broadly. For example, high-achieving males do not seem to be attracted into teaching especially at primary level (only 18% of primary teachers were male in 2005³⁶) and there is some concern at the under-representation of people from disadvantaged and minority ethnic backgrounds which will need to be addressed.³⁷

³²Further information is available from The Teaching Council's List of Recognised Post-primary Programmes and Gleeson, 2004

³³ In November 2010, the Minister for Education and Skills, Mary Coughlan, T.D. published for consultation a Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools entitled *Better Literacy and Numeracy for Children and Young People*. In that document, the Minister indicated her intention to increase the duration of PGDE programmes to two years.

³⁴ Coolahan, 2007

³⁵ Kellaghan, 2002 and Byrne, 2002

³⁶ Taken from the *Education Personnel* section of Department of Education and Skills website

³⁷ Conway et al, 2009, page 114

Another complication is the fact that the number of places on the Graduate Diploma in Education programmes at primary level is tightly controlled by the Department of Education and Skills. The number may vary from year to year, and the uncertainty this causes poses difficulties for providers in terms of their ability to plan strategically. The uncertainty regarding availability of places also poses difficulties for potential entrants to the programmes.

While the majority of student teachers are selected through the CAO process (i.e. on the basis of their academic record), the selection process for a number of post-graduate entry teacher education programmes involves interview.

3.3.3. Components of initial teacher education

In the Irish context, over the last decade the problems associated with the current configuration and delivery of initial teacher education components have been addressed in the Byrne and Kellaghan reviews of teacher education and by a number of teacher educators³⁸.

In the case of primary education, the Kellaghan Report (2002) addressed the function of course components and their lack of integration in some detail, highlighting that:

“...in considering aspects of teacher preparation programmes that are unsatisfactory, it may be noted that the components of programmes seem to be inadequately integrated. When it is largely left to students to integrate knowledge from academic courses, foundation studies, and curriculum methods, and to determine their relevance to teaching, many students are likely to experience difficulty”.³⁹

The basis for the criticisms of the lack of linkage between the coursework components (especially foundation courses) and teaching practice is that coursework is premised on “assumptions that principles, concepts and theories can be learned first out of context and then retrieved and applied when a practical problem is encountered”.⁴⁰ From the perspective of learning, the issue of transfer is at the heart of the ‘foundational’ metaphor underpinning the belief that student teachers apply or use ideas (or propositional knowledge) learned in foundation courses (such as psychology and sociology).

³⁸ Goodson, 1998; Sugrue, 1998; Leonard & Gleeson, 1999.

³⁹ Kellaghan, 2002, *Preparing Teachers for the 21st Century: Report of the Working Group in Primary Pre-service Teacher Education* P.56

⁴⁰ Anderson et al, 1995, p. 143 as referenced in Conway et al, 2009, pp 115-116.

3.3.4. School Placement Element

The Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations, 2009 prescribe the principal requirements with which programmes must comply, for registration purposes. With regard to the teaching practice element of the programmes, the requirements provide that programmes of primary teacher education must include practice in teaching under supervision in a recognised primary school. For the purposes of fulfilling that requirement, an applicant for registration must have spent a minimum of 18 weeks directly teaching a class or classes across the range of subjects in the curriculum. The practice in teaching must have been directly supervised by the university or college concerned.

Programmes of post-primary teacher education must include practice in teaching in a recognised second level school. For the purposes of fulfilling that requirement, an applicant must have an overall school experience of circa 200 hours duration, and a minimum of 100 hours must involve personal experience of directly teaching a class or classes in one or more approved subjects. The practice must have been mentored and supervised by the university or college concerned.

3.3.5. Accreditation of initial teacher education

There is now a need to look closely at the components of initial teacher education and, in particular, the model of teaching practice which currently exists in Ireland.

In accordance with Section 38 of *The Teaching Council Act, 2001*, The Teaching Council is empowered to review and accredit programmes of initial teacher education and that process commenced in 2009. It is envisaged that all programmes will be reviewed every five to seven years, having regard to the inputs-processes-outcomes framework which has been developed by the Council in consultation with the partners in education.

4. Induction

4.1. Definition

Induction may be defined as a programme of teacher education which takes place during that critical period at the beginning of the newly qualified teacher's (NQT's) career, usually the first year after qualifying as a teacher. The purpose of an induction programme is to offer systematic professional and personal support to the NQT. The support is school-based and is given at school level by an experienced teacher, called a mentor, in collaboration with colleagues and initial teacher education providers. It lays the foundation for subsequent professional and personal growth and development. Induction, therefore, is a particularly significant phase in building a seamless continuum in teacher education.

4.2. International Trends in Induction

In their nine-country cross-national study, Conway et al note that "... there is increasingly a consensus that learning to teach effectively cannot happen in ITE alone ... Increasingly, teacher induction is viewed as a necessary and critical element in any teacher education reform agenda and is an important element in retaining beginning teachers and assisting them to build productively on the early teaching foundations of ITE"⁴¹.

At an informal meeting of European Ministers of Education convened on 24 September 2009 by the Swedish Presidency of the European Union, there was broad agreement on the need to introduce arrangements to ensure that every beginning teacher has access to an effective induction programme⁴².

While the main purpose of an induction programme for NQTs is to support new entrants to the profession, there can be many attendant benefits for schools and for the teaching profession as a whole. International examples reveal that the induction process has implications for the dominant learning practices in schools. School leadership has a major role to play in creating a mentoring culture for all teachers, but particularly for NQTs. Mentoring of NQTs moves the school's interest in high quality teaching and learning to a more prominent place in its busy workload. This in turn promotes the idea of the school as a professional learning community, where mentoring and the sharing of ideas for good practice become normal features of teachers' professional work.

⁴¹ Coolahan, J 2003, Arends & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Kelley, 2004; Youngs, 2002; OECD, 1998, OECD, 2005 as referenced in Conway et al, 2009, p. 126.

⁴² Summary of the informal meeting of Ministers for Education available on www.se2009.eu

Currently, the quality and content of induction programmes vary widely as does the extent to which participation in induction is mandatory. In many countries, full registration as a teacher is linked to the requirement to complete induction while in others induction is less formal. The neighbouring jurisdictions of Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales have well-developed induction programmes available to all NQTs and satisfactory completion is a requirement for full registration with the relevant General Teaching Council. Induction is also compulsory in countries further afield such as Poland, New Zealand, Singapore, France, Greece, Israel, Japan, Korea, Switzerland, some states in Australia and many states in the USA. In general, countries that have developed induction programmes allow a reduced teaching workload for NQTs and mentors. The United States school districts of Cincinnati, Toledo and Rochester, for example, managed to reduce beginning teacher attrition by more than two-thirds by having expert mentors with release time coach beginning teachers in their first year⁴³.

In one-third of the countries studied by the OECD, formal programme of induction are not available at all.⁴⁴

4.3. Induction in Ireland

Until recently, there was no provision in Ireland for all NQTs to access a formal induction programme. The National Pilot Project for Teacher Induction (NPPTI) which catered for approximately 20% of NQTs was established in 2002. The primary aim of the NPPTI was to develop proposals for an effective national programme of induction for NQTs in primary and post-primary schools.

Feedback from the project showed that NQTs value and acknowledge the importance of having someone to provide professional and personal support throughout that crucial first year. Mentors also frequently referred to the benefits which they gained as a result of working in close collaboration with NQTs⁴⁵.

The TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) survey was carried out by the OECD in 2007 and 2008⁴⁶ and the TALIS National Report for Ireland included the following recommendation:

“Schools should be supported by The Teaching Council and other relevant bodies in providing high quality induction to all newly qualified teachers, drawing on a model such as

⁴³ OECD, 2005, p.117

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.119

⁴⁵ Killeavy and Murphy, 2006; Killeavy and Moloney, 2009

⁴⁶ OECD, 2009

the National Pilot Project for Teacher Induction. Schools should provide appropriate induction to teachers who have transferred from another school”⁴⁷.

Section 7(2)(f) of The Teaching Council Act, 2001 provides that the Council shall “establish procedures in relation to the induction of teachers into the teaching profession”. In advance of this section being commenced, the Council is continuing to prepare for its role in this area.

In September 2010, a Department of Education and Skills Circular⁴⁸ set out interim arrangements whereby an induction programme will be available in Education Centres for all newly qualified teachers with immediate effect. The programme will provide professional support and advice in areas such as classroom management skills, planning and preparation of work, the use of teaching methodologies suited to the learning needs of students, assessment of student progress and managing relationships with parents. The programme may be delivered in a variety of modes including face-to-face sessions, workshops and seminars, online support and self-help groups. At present, participation by NQTs in the national induction programme is voluntary.

⁴⁷ Gilleece et al, 2009

⁴⁸ Circular number 0058/2010

5. Continuing Professional Development

5.1. Definition

Continuing professional development (CPD) refers to lifelong teacher learning and comprises the full range of educational experiences designed to enrich teachers' professional knowledge, understanding and capabilities throughout their careers.

5.2. Background

The rationale for CPD stems from growing national and international awareness that teacher quality is inextricably linked, not only to the quality of initial teacher education, but also to the provision of high quality CPD. Such provision is deemed critical in the context of higher learning expectations for students on the part of society; an increasingly diverse student body; expanding fields of knowledge and new ways of thinking about learning; higher social expectations of schools; new types of responsibilities; and the recognition of teaching as a complex activity involving uncertainty, professional judgement, and negotiation. It follows that, during the course of her/his career, the teacher must nurture and develop her/his: pedagogic and subject knowledge-bases; capacity for moral and civic leadership; cultural understanding; professional judgement; capacity for collaboration; and expertise as a reflective learner, researcher and problem-solver. It is through such formative engagements that teachers are enabled to cultivate nourishing environments of learning, teaching and assessment amid circumstances of ongoing cultural and social change.

Unlike induction and early professional development, which span a relatively short period in the continuum of a teaching career, CPD is required to support all of the remainder of the professional life of a teacher. As such, it seeks to address the learning needs of teachers over what is for the majority in excess of three decades of professional practice. International research on teacher career experiences⁴⁹ suggests that teachers pass through five broad phases, during which their needs, wants and levels of engagement with the profession may vary considerably:

1. Launching a career
2. Stabilisation and consolidation
3. New challenges
4. Professional plateau
5. Final phase.

⁴⁹ See, for example Huberman, reviewed in Day et al, 2004; Granville, 2005, p. 50

It is not surprising then that research on CPD demonstrates that there is no single model that fits all schools or all teachers⁵⁰. CPD has to recognise the different selves of teachers: the personal, the professional, the classroom teacher and the member of the school community. It also has to balance the immediate individual needs of the teacher against those of the school and in particular the needs of students.

In light of this, the model of the teacher as the autonomous professional working in a classroom isolated from peers is clearly obsolete. Teaching is not a solo survival journey but a shared professional endeavour. Differentiated learning opportunities are needed. A comprehensive, coherent and multi-level approach to CPD is necessary to engender the long-term capacity-building that is now needed in the system.

5.3. International Trends in Continuing Professional Development

As stated previously, the lifelong learning and career development of teachers is emerging as a key priority internationally and within the EU. CPD, in particular, is perceived as critical in ensuring that teachers are prepared to meet the challenges of expanding fields of knowledge, diverse student populations, higher social expectations of schools and new types of responsibilities. Sustained opportunities to reflect on the processes of learning, teaching and assessment (through ongoing engagement with content, pedagogy, innovation, research and the social and cultural dimensions of education) are seen as central to ensuring quality in the development of a profession which is responsive to emerging needs, and to school improvement. In a number of countries (including Finland and some US states such as Michigan), CPD is mandatory for teachers and a credit accumulation towards higher degrees or the award of Chartered Teacher Status (as in Scotland) may form part of this. The best systems would appear to tend towards increasingly more participant-led and less provider-driven CPD, allowing considerable teacher autonomy in choice (although this is not unfettered and there is also an expectation that supported CPD should address school and system needs). This international context has implications for national policies on teacher education.

There have been significant developments in thinking in relation to learning, assessment, and leadership which have important implications for schools and for teachers' practice. Key among these beliefs are: opportunities to learn are inseparable from context, relationships and views of valued knowledge⁵¹; formative assessment is crucial to learning⁵²; all teachers are leaders and

⁵⁰ Sugrue et al, 2001

⁵¹ Guttierrez and Rogoff, 2003, Wenger, 2008

⁵² Black and Wiliam, 1998

where leadership is distributed, it thus extends the professional responsibilities of all teachers⁵³. These ideas highlight a further concept, that of communities of practice which refers to the ways in which individuals participate in shared practices and extend their expertise through their participation⁵⁴. These developments challenge traditional practices and they require shifts in teacher thinking that in turn necessitate rich opportunities for teacher learning. It follows, therefore, that teachers should be supported in taking responsibility for their own learning, that self and peer evaluation should be encouraged, and that communities of practice should be recognised.

The OECD report, *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Retaining and Developing Teachers* (2005), notes that there are three broad strategies internationally for ensuring that all teachers are lifelong learners and for linking individual teacher development to school needs. The first of these is entitlement-based and generally results from collective bargaining agreements that stipulate that teachers are entitled to certain amounts of release time and/or financial support to undertake recognised professional development activities. The second is more incentive-based, linking professional development to needs identified through a teacher appraisal process, and/or recognising professional development as a requirement for salary increases or taking on new roles. The third broad strategy is more school-based, and links individual teacher development with school improvement needs. The report notes that the three strategies are not necessarily mutually exclusive, although the starting points of the entitlement and incentive-based approaches tend to be the individual teacher rather than the whole school. It adds that a comprehensive approach to professional development would encompass all three strategies.

However, the report notes that “although professional development is now receiving more policy attention, it often seems to be fragmented and limited in scope. The three broad strategies ... attempt to stimulate the demand for professional development activities, but they are not always matched by reforms on the supply side. In a number of countries the use of public funding for professional development activities is restricted to programmes provided by a few organisations (teacher education institutions or agencies specialising in professional development). Especially in those countries where participation in professional development is mandated, this can reduce the incentives for innovation and quality improvement”⁵⁵.

The report recommends “the development of clear teacher profiles and standards of performance at different stages of the teaching career...” and notes that “effective professional development is ongoing, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up

⁵³ Spillane, 2006

⁵⁴ Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991

⁵⁵ OECD, 2005, p.136

support". It should also "involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students, and encourage the development of teachers' learning communities". It concludes that "there is a growing interest in ways to build cumulative knowledge across the profession, for example by strengthening connections between research and practice and encouraging schools to develop as learning organisations".

The TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) survey, which was carried out by the OECD in 2007 and 2008, found that in participating countries, an average of 89% of teachers in lower secondary education engaged in professional development. However, a significant proportion of teachers surveyed considered that the professional development they received did not meet their needs, with more than half saying that they wanted more than they received during the 18 months prior to the survey. The aspect of their work that teachers most frequently identified as an area where CPD is required was "teaching special learning needs students" followed by "ICT teaching skills" and "student discipline and behaviour". The main reason cited by teachers for unfulfilled demand was conflict with their work schedule⁵⁶.

The report concluded that there is a need for better support for teachers to participate in professional development, and for policy makers and school leaders to ensure that the development opportunities available are effective to meet teachers' needs.

5.4. Continuing Professional Development in Ireland

The Teacher Education Section (TES) of the Department of Education and Skills has official responsibility for CPD, including the provision of support for national priorities such as school development planning, school leadership and management, the introduction of new and revised curricula and syllabi and particular projects and initiatives related to priority areas such as disadvantage and inclusion, education for students with special educational needs, positive behaviour management and language support for newcomer students. The Education Centre network plays a significant role in such provision. Generic and more targeted CPD programmes are provided by the Colleges of Education, universities and other third level bodies, as well as by a range of private providers.

The main focus of state-provided CPD programmes has been on knowledge-for rather than knowledge-in or knowledge-of practice – "participants agree that, in their experience, professional learning provision has been more successful in communicating cognitive knowledge than

⁵⁶ OECD, 2009

impacting positively on competences and skills"⁵⁷. The evaluation of the impact and experience of the Second Level Support Service (SLSS) found that, "while the rhetoric of policy has adopted CPD as a core concept in the understanding of the teacher as professional, neither the term, or more importantly its meaning have yet achieved purchase in the working lives of teachers. The SLSS is almost invariably seen as in-service support for the implementation of mandated change"⁵⁸. Noting "the heavy leaning towards the technical adjustment of practice rather than a deeper change in professional mindset" in a context where "what works is what is important", Granville concludes that, while there is "greater evidence of demonstrable achievement in respect of teaching practice than of mindset change", there is a basis for further growth. This report highlighted a need for greater coherence and clarity around CPD and for greater acknowledgement of the integral relationship between "national policy implementation and individual professional needs".

In an unpublished report on the Primary Curriculum Support Programme, Murchan et al acknowledged the success of that programme in 'enhancing teachers' knowledge and understanding of the content of the curriculum'⁵⁹. However, they found 'relatively less evidence of teachers' deeper understanding of new teaching methodologies or of changes of their classroom practice' and suggested that future decisions regarding CPD should be firmly based on research evidence and should transcend subject-based provision to include areas such as special needs, problem solving, ICTs, collaborative learning, student assessment and classroom management⁶⁰.

Both of these external evaluation reports suggest that "apart from accredited elective courses and programmes, current professional learning provision can be located predominantly within [the] conception of ... teachers sharing and re-casting craft knowledge"⁶¹.

These Irish-based studies were confirmed by the OECD TALIS survey, carried out in 2007/8. While the report for Ireland⁶² found that the participation rates of Irish teachers in professional development (90% in the 18 months prior to the TALIS survey) were on a par with other countries surveyed, the courses attended related to changes in subject syllabi and the implementation of national programmes, with relatively little emphasis on the professional development needs of individual teachers and schools. TALIS identified the most significant professional development needs of Irish teachers in terms of teaching students with special learning needs, ICT teaching skills, student counselling and teaching in a multi-cultural setting.

⁵⁷ Sugrue et al, 2001, p.115

⁵⁸ Granville, 2005, p.52

⁵⁹ Murchan et al, 2005, p.8

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.10

⁶¹ Sugrue et al, 2001, p.115

⁶² Gilleece et al, 2009

Irish teachers were well below the TALIS average with regard to: the average number of professional development days; the number of observation visits to other schools; participation in mentoring and peer observation; individual or collaborative research, and pursuing additional qualifications. More than 40% of Irish teachers cited conflict with work schedule as a barrier to participating in more professional development with nearly half giving the absence of suitable opportunities as a reason for non-participation. A related finding was that Irish teachers were more likely to engage in exchange and coordination for teaching (e.g. swapping teaching materials, setting common assessments) rather than professional collaboration such as observing and giving feedback to colleagues.

Consistent with other studies such as OECD (1991), Lyons et al (2001), Smyth et al (2003), the TALIS report found that the instructional beliefs of Irish lower secondary teachers were more transmission-based and less focused on the quality of the learning experienced by students than their counterparts in most other jurisdictions. These beliefs were also strongly reflected in the prevailing pedagogical practices with teachers expressing a clear preference for structuring practices such as summarising earlier lessons, homework review and checking exercise books rather than student-oriented practices such as co-determination of lesson content and individualised tasks, or enhanced activities such as debates and assigned projects. This reflects the experiences of Hogan et al who noted that, prior to their involvement in the TL21 project⁶³ “most of the participant teachers reported that their conversations in school on pedagogical issues were infrequent, unstructured and rarely informed by ideas of active professional collaboration on teaching and learning issues”⁶⁴. Noting that teachers were particularly reticent to “share accounts of successful innovations in one’s own practice with colleagues outside of one’s own subject area”, they suggest that such reluctance ‘highlights the prevalence of professional insulation and isolation in the inherited cultures of post-primary education in Ireland’.

While there is an urgent need for significant investment in teacher development and for the development of a coherent policy across the teaching career, any such developments must recognise that teachers’ beliefs and practices are circumscribed by the prevailing culture. As Sugrue et al concluded, “teachers’ identities at post-primary level are shaped significantly around subject specialisms [with the result that] the significance of pedagogy is down-played in favour of subject expertise, while public examinations too may be a significant constraint on the development of, or experimentation with, more creative pedagogies”⁶⁵. Another important aspect of

⁶³ See www.nuim.ie/tl21/ for further information

⁶⁴ Hogan et al, 2007, p 32ff

⁶⁵ Sugrue et al, 2001, p.99

the context is that TALIS found that Irish levels of both external and school self-evaluation and school-based teacher evaluation were well below average.

Despite the limitations and challenges identified above, a number of recent developments in relation to CPD would suggest that the situation may be changing for the better.

Firstly, there is a growing recognition of the importance of schools and teachers identifying their own needs and participating in collaborative networks which may offer optional accreditation pathways. There have been a number of notable initiatives in this area, e.g. the TL21 and Bridging the Gap⁶⁶ projects. Also relevant here is the work of the Education Centres in designing, in consultation with local schools, generic and targeted professional development courses of varying durations to meet identified local needs at both primary and post-primary level.

Some of the recent national programmes and support services, e.g. PPDS, while continuing to provide professional development programmes in response to system priorities, were primarily concerned with the provision of customised support to schools and teachers. This development is reflected in an unpublished evaluation by De Paor of a locally based approach to primary level CPD (2007), which concluded that the support was effectively balancing local and system needs: "...while the support responds to local teacher and school needs, it has also continued to reinforce the core principles and methodologies of the Primary School Curriculum"⁶⁷. In his report, De Paor commended the support as being reflective of the key principles of effective CPD, those being "experiential, teacher-driven, collaborative, connected to children's learning, sustained and integrated with other school change"⁶⁸.

Secondly, there would appear to be efforts underway to bring greater coherence to provision and it is acknowledged that the Department of Education and Skills has been moving to rationalise the support services and national programmes. In that context, the establishment of the cross-sectoral Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) in September 2010 is significant.

Thirdly, the finding of Sugrue et al in 2001 that "more than 500 students were completing a Master's programme in education during that academic year"⁶⁹ provides cause for considerable optimism in a context where seven HE institutions are currently providing structured/taught doctorates in Education.

⁶⁶ See www.nuim.ie/tl21/ and www.ucc.ie/bridgingthegap/ for further information

⁶⁷ De Paor, 2007, p.11

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11

⁶⁹ Sugrue et al, 2001, p.78

In light of the foregoing, the role of The Teaching Council in addressing the limitations and challenges which have traditionally been associated with CPD provision in this country, while building on more progressive recent developments, will be of major importance. The functions of The Teaching Council are set out in Section 39 of The Teaching Council Act, 2001, which states that it shall:

- promote the continuing education and training and professional development of teachers
- conduct research into the continuing education and training and professional development of teachers
- promote awareness among the teaching profession and the public of the benefits of continuing education and training and professional development
- Review and accredit programmes relating to the continuing education and training of teachers, and
- Perform such other functions in relation to the continuing education and training and professional development of teachers as may be assigned to the Council by the Minister”.

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