



TEACHERS' VOICE

Report of ASTI Consultation with Teachers
on the Junior Cycle Reform Document
“A Framework for Junior Cycle”



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Preface from ASTI President, Gerry Breslin

ASTI members were shocked when the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn, TD, announced his proposals for reform of the Junior Cycle on 4th October last. Not only did the Minister propose to abolish two cornerstones of second level education since the foundation of the state – a terminal externally assessed examination and State Certificate at the end of Junior Cycle – he embarked on this radical policy shift without any consultation with the teaching profession.

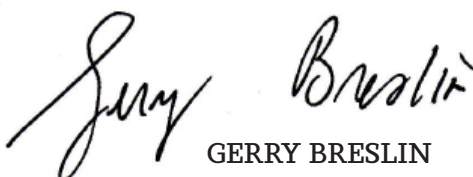
Following his announcement, the ASTI, as a democratic trade union, decided to engage in a comprehensive consultation process with all of its members in their workplace. School Stewards were asked to convene meetings to provide feedback to the ASTI on teachers' views on the Framework for Junior Cycle. All of the ASTI representative structures – from Branches to Central Executive Council - were similarly requested to take part in this consultation.

The response from ASTI members has been unprecedented. Over 320 schools out of the 521 schools in which the ASTI has members returned completed questionnaires to Head Office. This represents around 10,000 ASTI members. Many of these questionnaires had multiple additional pages. The depth and range of the response provide a rich professional perspective on the Minister's Framework. It represents the voice of teachers on the most fundamental proposals for change in second level education since the introduction of "free" second level education in 1969.

Your response must be listened to by the Minister for Education and Skills and by the Departmental officials. It is clear from your response that some aspects of the Minister's Framework have the potential to improve the educational experience of young people in Junior Cycle. However, teachers are resoundingly stating that this potential is contingent upon assessment and certification procedures which are fair and transparent and which, critically, do not undermine educational standards.

This report from the ASTI consultation process has informed the policy motions forwarded to ASTI's Annual Convention and will be debated in a special all-day session on 2nd April, 2013. From this debate, ASTI policy on Junior Cycle proposals will be adopted and we will bring this policy position to Minister Ruairí Quinn, to his Departmental officials, to parents and to other education stakeholders in order to ensure that our students are provided with an education of the highest standard.

I want to thank each and every ASTI member for their engagement with their union's consultation process. Together, we will continue to work to ensure that your voice, the voice of the professional educator, is brought to the forefront and is listened to in the decisions to be taken on curriculum reform.



GERRY BRESLIN
ASTI PRESIDENT

MARCH 2013

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The launch of *A Framework for Junior Cycle* by the Minister for Education & Skills in October, 2012 signalled a radical departure from the advice provided to the Minister by the statutory advisory body, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, in November, 2011. Neither teachers nor school leaders had been consulted on the changes presented in the Minister's policy. As a democratic trade union, the ASTI engaged in an extensive consultation with its members. The response to this consultation was immediate and unprecedented. Over 320 out of 521 second level schools in which the ASTI has members took part in the survey. This represents an estimated 10,000 teachers.

(I) **FRAMEWORK HAS THE POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Teachers consider that the Framework *has* the potential to improve learning outcomes for students. The Framework's focus on activity based learning, including the integration of key skills into all subjects and short courses could lead to better student engagement. Student engagement will also be enhanced as a result of greater choices, including short courses and modularised learning and a move away from rote learning for exams and overall less pressure on students. It could also facilitate better transition from primary school. The potential positive outcomes for weaker students and for SEN students were frequently referred to. A greater use of ICT in teaching and learning would also be a positive development. ***At the same time however, teachers are also strongly of the view that this potential remains contingent on fair, transparent and objective certification and assessment arrangements.***

(II) **FRAMEWORK HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DIS-IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Notwithstanding the broadly positive appraisal of the potential of the Framework to improve learning outcomes, teachers also have deep reservations about other potential outcomes. The Framework for Junior Cycle will remove two core quality assurance mechanisms in the second level education system, namely, the externally assessed terminal examination and the State certificate. Both serve as external benchmarks for measuring and sustaining educational standards. ***Their replacement by a school-based moderation system and a school certificate could irretrievably undermine educational standards.***

Another unintended negative consequence of the Framework is its potential to disrupt the successful progression of students to the challenging curriculum at senior cycle and the undermining of their preparedness for the "high stakes" Leaving Certificate examination. It also has the potential to deepen rather than mitigate existing inequities in second level education. ***The current Junior Certificate examination serves as a major motivational focus for young people.*** Preparation for this examination contributes to the development of important life-skills such as time management, self-discipline, information processing and establishing personal goals.

(III) REPLACEMENT OF THE STATE CERTIFICATE WITH A SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

The State Certificate examination at the end of Junior Cycle has been a permanent feature of the educational experiences of teachers and students since the foundation of the State. Its replacement by a school certificate is universally regarded as a retrograde step by teachers. They believe that this decision is fundamentally unfair to students. In the absence of external assessment or a model of external moderation, the school certificate cannot provide meaningful statements on achievement which are either reliable or comparable. *Depending on the school and its catchment area, different school certificates will carry different value and as such, undermine students' right to fairness, transparency and comparability which the current State Certificate provides.* The replacement of the State Certificate would, in this manner, deepen existing social inequities.

(IV) SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an intrinsic dimension of teaching and learning. It performs a number of functions but its primary purpose is to assist students to learn and to provide information on their progression in learning. The completion of Junior Cycle education is an important educational "milestone" in the lives of students. Students and their parents need to have objective, fair and valid statements of their educational achievement at the end of this period of education. *The current externally assessed Junior Certificate examination provides information on achievement which meets the important criteria of "consistency" and "comparability" of standards.* Consistency is about the extent to which an assessment can be trusted to give consistent information on a student's progress. Comparability refers to the level of confidence which can be placed in the assessment results across the system. Comparability is particularly important when the assessment is for an important purpose such as providing a formal statement of learning at the end of a programme of study.

Arguably, the classroom teacher is the person best placed to assess a student's progress over time. However, this does not mean that such an assessment would necessarily be perceived as fair by the students or their parents. Perceptions of favouritism could quickly emerge – leading to an erosion of trust in the assessment process itself. Relationships between teachers and students would invariably be negatively affected. Irish teachers have a deep commitment to the holistic development of their students which is manifested in inclusive school policies and practices. Their primary role is to support and sustain their students – not to serve in judgement of them. *The Framework proposals contain a model of assessment which the vast majority of teachers believe will lower educational standards and which will remove key quality assurance functions currently provided by the Junior Certificate examination.*

(V) SHORT COURSES IN THE FRAMEWORK FOR JUNIOR CYCLE

Teachers need much more information on short courses: their content and the resources that will be needed in schools to provide quality learning experiences for students. While acknowledging the educational potential of short courses, ***teachers are concerned that schools may reduce subject choice in favour of short courses which would negatively impact on existing employment posts.*** A great many responses referred to the vulnerable employment position of part-time and non-permanent teachers. Such teachers now constitute 29% of the entire second level teaching workforce.

(VI) TIMEFRAME FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FRAMEWORK

Many teachers are uncertain as to the adequacy of the timeframe proposed. Of greater concern is the lack of an implementation strategy for the introduction of the Framework. This lack of forward planning to support a major change process is deeply unsettling for schools. Schools are highly complex organisations which have to engage in systematic forward planning, taking into account current student needs, future enrolment demands and projected teacher staffing requirements. ***Schools are already struggling to implement the National Literacy and Numeracy strategy and School Self-Evaluation; both are integral to the forward planning in schools in advance of the introduction of the Framework.*** Schools' recent experiences of phased curriculum change in Project Maths has added to the sense of foreboding re the lack of a clear implementation strategy, in particular that required for teachers' professional development in advance of the introduction of the new subject specifications.

(VII) TEACHERS' RESPONSE TO CHANGE

Change is a constant in education. System change depends ultimately on the teachers for its successful implementation. Teachers consider that some aspects of the Framework have the potential to improve learning outcomes for students. At the same time, they see the potential for unintended negative outcomes. It is clear from the ASTI consultation process that teachers have read the Minister's Framework document and have found it wanting. ***They are not convinced that assessment and certification changes in the Framework will sustain standards in education.*** Instead, it will remove two core quality assurance mechanisms in the second level education system, namely, the externally assessed terminal examination and the State Certificate which serve as trusted external benchmarks for measuring and sustaining educational standards.

Fundamentally, teachers want to do what is best for their students. When teachers themselves are unconvinced as to the merits of changes to curriculum and assessment, their motivation and capacity to implement system change is deeply impaired. The Minister for Education and Skills must reflect on this reality. It is now time for meaningful consultation with teachers and school leaders on core aspects of the Framework.

Introduction

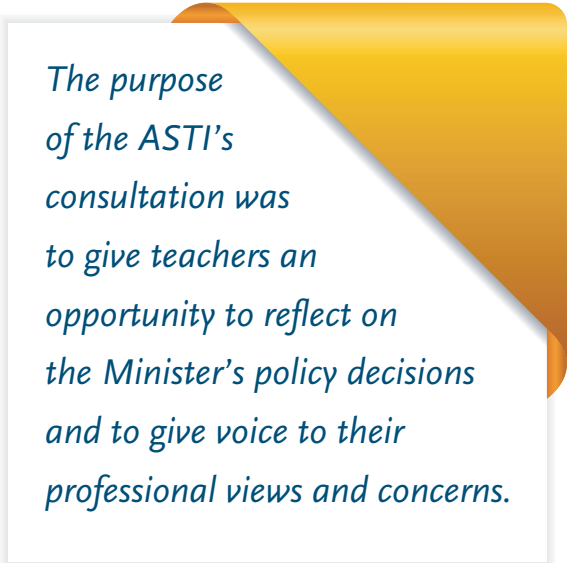
In November, 2011, the NCCA published “*Towards a Framework for Junior Cycle – Innovation and Identity*”. This document constituted the advice of the NCCA to the Minister on the reform of the Junior Cycle curriculum. This process of reform formally commenced in June 2008, when the then Minister for Education & Science, Mr Batt O’Keefe, TD, directed the NCCA Council as follows:

“It’s important that the NCCA reviews international practice in this area, examines what should be prioritised in the totality of the Junior Cycle experience and the nature and form of assessment that’d be most appropriate in the context of what’s no longer a high-stakes environment...”

“*Towards a Framework for Junior Cycle*” comprised a set of proposals with an approach to change that retained valued features of the existing Junior Cycle curriculum, in particular, a subject-based curriculum, a common assessment mode for all subjects with a key role for external assessment, and the awarding of a State Certificate to mark the end of this important stage of education.

In October, 2012, the Minister for Education & Skills, Mr Ruairí Quinn, launched “*A Framework for Junior Cycle*”. It signalled a radical departure from the advice of the NCCA in relation to the certification and assessment arrangements. The response from teachers was immediate and virtually unanimous; they had not been consulted on these arrangements which would profoundly change the teaching and learning experiences at Junior Cycle.

In response to the Minister’s decision, ASTI - as a democratic Trade Union - adopted a strategy of comprehensive consultation with ASTI members – at school level, branch level and throughout the other union structures. The purpose of this consultation was to give teachers an opportunity to reflect on the Minister’s policy decisions and to give voice to their professional views and concerns.



The purpose of the ASTI’s consultation was to give teachers an opportunity to reflect on the Minister’s policy decisions and to give voice to their professional views and concerns.

The response to this union consultation has been unprecedented. Over 320 out of the 521 second level schools in which the ASTI has members and 41 out of 56 Branches have returned questionnaires to ASTI Head Office. The sheer volume of the response is deeply significant. Teachers are very concerned as to the future direction of the Junior Cycle curriculum. The qualitative nature of their responses demonstrates a deep and abiding commitment to wanting what is best for their students. This extensive consultation with teachers provides a unique statement of the educators’ voice on the proposed changes at Junior Cycle. It is a voice that cannot be ignored.

OVER ARCHING THEMES

In analysing more than 320 completed school questionnaires, a number of common themes emerge. Because these themes occur so regularly and so consistently across each of the responses to the six questions in the survey, they are presented in this section in some detail. The themes relate to teachers' professional identities and their day-to-day work; the role and profile of the school in the local community, including inter-school dynamics; the importance of relationships in teaching; quality in education; responding to change processes in education.

While there is considerable overlap in these themes, nonetheless they emerge as distinctive, and provide important insights into the professional orientations and beliefs of second level teachers and explain to a large degree, their deep reservations about aspects of the Junior Cycle Framework.

1.1 TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

Teachers' professional identities are invariably based on their reasons for choosing teaching as a career. There is a remarkable homogeneity across different countries on this issue; teachers enter teaching for reasons to do with the intrinsic nature of the work. "*Making a difference*", "*doing work that they enjoy*" and "*enhancing the lives of children*" are the universal descriptors of the intrinsic rewards of teaching. It is of note that two previous ASTI research projects on discipline in schools and on teacher stress in 2004 and 2007 respectively also identified the intrinsic rewards of teaching as the most valued by teachers.

Because teachers' professional identities are so bound-up with the intrinsic dimensions of teaching, teaching is an intensely emotional practice. It is a practice primarily rooted in relationships with students – and to a lesser degree, with other members of the school community. Whether a teacher sees his or her role as that of teaching students or that of helping students learn, this role is mediated by her/his ability and motivation to do the best for students. In turn, the teacher's sense of self-efficacy or competency is sustained – or undermined – by events or experiences in the classroom which facilitate - or hinder - opportunities to do the best for their students.

These considerations are highly pertinent to the answers which the thousands of teachers have given in the ASTI survey. The literature on teacher motivation and efficacy underlines that events which occur in the classroom have the greatest impact on teachers' motivation and sense of self-efficacy. In this regard, the curriculum is of critical importance to teachers' day-to-day working lives. The curriculum not only determines what and how teachers teach; it also determines the pace, depth and intensity of their work. The curriculum therefore impacts in an immediate and concrete fashion both on their day-to-day experiences as professional educators and as employees.

1.2 TEACHERS' RESPONSE TO JUNIOR CYCLE CHANGE

It is precisely because of the centrality of the curriculum in teachers' professional lives that teachers have reacted so strongly to the Minister's policy on *A Framework for Junior Cycle*. While this reaction has not been exclusively negative – as can be seen from the analysis below – it has been an intense reaction. Teachers genuinely feel that they had not been consulted in advance of the Framework's proposals for the Junior Cycle curriculum, in particular the changes to certification and assessment. Teachers are so occupied dealing with the fall-out of the education cutbacks – reduced staffing levels, loss of resource/EAL posts, reductions in guidance service, larger classes, collapse of in-school management structures – and with implementing the new Departmental Literacy & Numeracy strategy and School Self-Evaluation, that they were not facilitated to engage at a collective level with the NCCA's "*Towards a Framework for Junior Cycle*" in any meaningful way.

Moreover, because the NCCA represents a partnership model of curriculum reform, teachers had assumed that its advice would be broadly accepted by the Minister for Education & Skills. The fact that the final policy decision of the Minister departed so radically from the NCCA's advice has, literally, stunned teachers. They feel that the Minister has sidestepped the partnership process thereby ignoring the voices of teachers and others. Moreover, they feel that the Minister's policy decision demonstrates a huge gap between the rhetoric of educational reform and the realities of school life.

This perception of a huge gap *should* be of concern to the Minister and the Department of Education & Skills. The extensive literature on educational reform has underlined that a crucial factor in transformative reform is securing the belief of teachers in the need for reform in the first instance, and secondly, in the feasibility of the particular reform project. The NCCA document, "*Leading and Supporting Change in Schools*", 2009 provides a quality paradigm for successful change in schools.

It notes among other factors, that it takes time to achieve deep change; it takes investment to achieve deep change; strategies for change must be designed for participation. Above all, it underlines that teachers *are* the key agents of change. It notes that:

"The perception of teachers on the ground is that the change agenda is often set elsewhere, with the interest of teachers as professionals well down the list of prime considerations. Realising deep educational change can only happen through teachers and school management and their interactions and relationships with the learner." (p.16)

These are, unfortunately, very apt words to characterise the response of teachers to the Minister's Framework for Junior Cycle. Moreover, the NCCA document goes on to describe another contextual dimension of change in schools; namely, the reality of teachers experiencing conflicting expectations and fragmentation:

"Teachers and schools have a strong sense of contending with multiple and sometimes competing innovations and initiatives simultaneously....The response of teachers to the idea of educational changes can, at the very least, be heavily influenced by conflicting expectations and fragmentation". (p.17)

Again, apt words to describe the current sense of "*change overload*" in second level schools.

Describing this sense of “*change overload*” is not to suggest that change in the curriculum is not desirable or even necessary. Neither does it suggest that any agency has a veto on change. Rather, it is to sound a strong word of caution about the capacity of schools and teachers to engage in major change initiatives at this point in time. In this regard, the unwillingness of policy makers to listen to the advice of the professionals working in schools – teachers, principals, and school management - is a matter of increasing concern.

It must also be stated that teacher morale has been seriously undermined by reductions in salary, changed working conditions and inequitable entry conditions for new teachers. As public servants, they have endured for some time now an ill-informed and politically motivated public invective and criticism. A further factor impinging on teacher morale is the impact of the recession on students’ lives. Anecdotal evidence indicates that more and more students are manifesting anxieties and stresses related to their families’ financial problems, strains in relationships, a parent working abroad. These pressures on students are keenly felt by teachers who, in turn, have less in-school resources such as Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, Home-School-Liaison teachers or resource teachers, to whom they can refer such students. Recently, the ESRI stated that Ireland had twice the EU rate of jobless households at 22% and that 25% of children now lived in such households. From the morale point of view alone, this is not a propitious time for radical change.

It is abundantly clear from the initial response of teachers to the Minister’s Framework decision that not enough engagement had taken place with teachers or with school leaders on the capacity of schools to engage in change. Because the Framework proposals are so radical, *so discontinuous* with existing classroom and assessment practice, there is a profound sense of shock in schools as to its imminent introduction. The Minister has a considerable job of work to put in place the necessary foundations – many of them outlined in the afore-mentioned NCCA document – in order to re-assure the second level community that the change process is feasible in the first instance and, of equal importance, will improve the learning outcomes in schools.

1.3 QUALITY IN EDUCATION

The international literature has consistently underlined the strong vocational orientation of Irish teachers as a major strength in the Irish education system. The Teaching Council’s Codes of Conduct provide a unified statement of the values and ethics underpinning this vocational orientation. Teachers’ practice is largely motivated by the best interests of their students; they want what is best for their students.

When teachers express scepticism or opposition to change, very often the source of their response is a lack of conviction that the proposed change will improve things for students. Teachers are unfairly derided as “luddite” when they express such scepticism or opposition to change. It would be more productive to ask teachers why they do not believe the proposed changes would improve learning.

A recurring theme throughout the 320 responses from schools is the concern that the Framework for the Junior Cycle will not improve the quality of teaching and learning. While there is a wide spectrum of opinion, it is clear that teachers believe that the Framework will jettison a tried and tested system – albeit with acknowledged weaknesses – in favour of an untested, unfamiliar system. The State examination at the end of Junior Cycle has been a

permanent feature of the educational experiences of teachers and students since the foundation of the State. Teachers find it hard to envisage how the new model of curriculum specifications and school-based assessment without State certification would actually work. For this reason, they are sceptical as to whether the Framework would achieve the stated goal of improving learning.

As is evidenced in the following sections, this concern for maintaining quality in education is most frequently manifested in the concern that under the new assessment model, it will be impossible to maintain standards. In the absence of an externally assessed State examination, teachers are deeply fearful that standards will vary widely at national, local and even school level. In almost every one of the 320 responses, this concern for how standards would be maintained in the Framework was expressed. Put simply, teachers are not convinced that the Framework will deliver an assessment system which can guarantee either consistency or comparability of standards at either national or local level.

Standards are central to the idea of a quality education and the reservations and doubts of the professional educators as to the potential of the Framework to sustain both must be acknowledged. For many teachers, standards *are* the ultimate yardstick by which quality in education is measured. They invest an enormous amount of energy and expertise into enabling students to reach their academic potential and to do their best in the State examinations. This personal investment in students is intrinsic to teachers' motivation and commitment to teaching. It should not be side-lined in education policy. As noted in the NCCA "Leading and Supporting Change" document, "*Sensitivity to the essential connection between the personal and the professional in the lives of teachers is a key to the success of initiatives in the area of educational change*" (p.17)

1.4 ROLE AND PROFILE OF SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS

One of the key concerns of the ASTI in all of its engagement with the NCCA's policy proposals for Junior Cycle has been that any new curriculum would not undermine the role of the school in the local community. Second level schools, unlike primary schools, are strongly subject to parental choice. This is not unusual given that the "stakes" at second level are higher in terms of preparation for further education and working life. However, it does impose pressures on schools in terms of enrolment and a sustainable catchment population. For many years, notwithstanding differences in location or school type, Ireland was – alongside Finland – noted by the OECD PISA reports for the fact that all schools were performing to a broadly similar level.

In other words, schools were mediating, or "compensating" for, social class differences between students. A universal regulatory framework for school enrolment, coupled with a strong commitment to inclusiveness and student wellbeing, means that for the vast majority of parents and young people, the local school remains the school of choice. A further dimension of community trust in schools is the consistently strong profile of teachers in public opinion polls on trust in society.

A key theme to emerge is the fear that the Framework could undermine parents' confidence in their local school. This concern was most frequently manifested in the response to school-based assessment and the replacement of the State Certificate by a school certificate. Unanimously, teachers felt that school based assessment, particularly in the absence of an external moderation

safeguard, would impose pressures on schools. Current dynamics between schools as regards enrolment and academic profile could become profoundly distorted under the new Framework.

Such a potential “unintended consequence” of education reform cannot be discounted. Indeed, policy makers should be extremely vigilant that the trend identified in the PISA 2009 study, whereby the role of the school as a mediator of social class differences had weakened over the course of the 2000- decade, does not become exacerbated by changes to the curriculum.

1.5 TEACHING IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

As noted above, people become teachers because they want to work alongside and to educate young people. It is of note that the first statement in the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers states:

“Teachers should be caring, fair and committed to the best interests of the pupils/students entrusted to their care, and seek to motivate, inspire and celebrate effort and success”.

Successful teaching and learning can only emerge in the context of strong, respectful and positive relationships between teachers and students. Schools have invested much time, energy and expertise into developing pastoral care structures to support student well-being at school. Teachers are committed to enabling students to reach their potential both as learners and as young people on the frequently difficult journey from adolescence into young adulthood. In this sense, second level-teachers have a deeply held belief that their role as teachers is to serve as their students’ advocate or guide.

They are deeply uncomfortable with the idea that, under the Framework, they would now be required to simultaneously serve as a “judge” of the same students. The analysis below of teachers’ responses to the questions on school based assessment and the school certificate is replete with concerns about the potential of both to undermine not just the quality of student/teacher relationships but also the position of trust in which the school is held by parents and the wider community.

It would be wrong to blithely dismiss these concerns about the role of the teacher. They reflect deeply held beliefs about the nature of student/teacher relationships. The Framework requires teachers to depart from these beliefs about what works in the Irish classroom with Irish teenagers. There is at present an enormous gap between what is proposed in the Framework and what teachers feel is best professional practice. Such a gap – left un-addressed – does not bode well for the success of the reform process.

CONSULTATION WITH SCHOOLS

Each of the 320 school and 41 branch questionnaires were individually read prior to being uploaded to an electronic database. From this database, answers to each question were printed off, key issues were identified and categorised. Similarly, key issues were incorporated from the submissions from the ASTI's Equal Opportunities, Community and Comprehensive, Principals and Deputy Principal's committees. The core concerns highlighted at the special ASTI Central Executive Council meeting on the 12th January, 2013 are also presented in the analysis. The final analysis was prepared by the ASTI's Education Committee. The responses to the survey are presented below with an introductory statement, followed a representative selection of statements from schools and branches and the key issues therein analysed. The numbers after the quotations refer to an archiving code system used by ASTI Head Office. Each comment is contained in an individual school response. [Responses from branches have a B before the number; CEC statements are indicated as (CEC)].

CONSULTATION WITH BRANCHES AND CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The ASTI Central Executive Council consists of the elected ASTI Officers and the regionally elected members of Standing Committee plus a total of 185 representatives from the 56 ASTI Branches. A special CEC was organised on the afternoon of Saturday, 12th January to discuss the Minister's Framework for Junior Cycle. The meeting commenced with a comprehensive chronological presentation by the President on the ASTI's response to the review of the Junior Cycle curriculum initiated by then Minister for Education & Science, Batt O'Keefe, TD, in June, 2008. This was followed by contributions to the debate by CEC members: many of these have been incorporated into the quotations under the various questions in section 3.

CONSULTATION WITH ASTI COMMITTEES

In addition to the ASTI branches and the Central Executive Council, the following ASTI representative structures contributed to the consultation process: Equal Opportunities Committee; Community and Comprehensive Schools Advisory Committee; Principals and Deputy Principals Committee. The final report was prepared by the ASTI's Education Committee.

This section presents the key findings from the consultation. Schools, branches, and ASTI committees were asked to provide feedback in relation to the following questions contained in a questionnaire:

QUESTION 1:

What are your views on the way the Framework might improve the learning outcomes for your students?

QUESTION 2:

In what ways might the Framework dis-improve the learning outcomes for your students?

QUESTION 3:

What are your views on the Framework's proposals for school-based assessment?

QUESTION 4:

What are your views on the replacement of the State Certificate at the end of Junior Cycle with a School Certificate?

QUESTION 5:

What are your views on optional short courses in the Framework?

QUESTION 6:

What are your views on the timeframe for the introduction of the Framework?

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE WAY THE FRAMEWORK MIGHT IMPROVE THE LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR YOUR STUDENTS?

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The responses to this question can best be described as spanning a very wide spectrum ranging from the viewpoint that the Framework would not improve in any manner students' learning outcomes at one end to the viewpoint that it would significantly improve outcomes. In between, there is an inevitable wide set of views – expressing caution in some instances, enthusiasm in others. These views are grouped under the headings below:

Negative perception of capacity of Framework to improve learning outcomes

“Framework will not improve learning outcomes. Students are too young.” (225)

“Framework will have different rather than better learning outcomes.” (53)

“Deterioration in learning outcomes and prospects for many students.” (227)

“No improvement in learning outcomes.” (202)

Main reasons for negative perception of capacity of Framework to improve learning outcomes

“Young students need more direction than older students and the Framework will not facilitate this.” (204)

“Negative impact on students – depth of knowledge will decrease.” (233)

“Won't help – students will find the LC much harder.” (245d)

“No objectivity. Most teachers unsure of the Framework. Teachers strongly disagree with correcting own students' work.” (B29)

Negative perception tinged with positive

“Lack of clarity re learning outcomes. Framework mirrors Leaving Certificate Applied – may help weaker students but at what cost to stronger ones?” (257)

“Some teachers in our school feel that students' accountability, personal responsibility, confidence will improve: other teachers disagree.” (91)

Not enough information

"We need to know more." (236)

"Lack of clarity re objectives of the JC Framework." (250)

"Not enough information to make informed response. Improved learning outcomes will depend on level of resources available and the practical input of teachers."(262)

"Can't have views on outcomes – must teach it first."(67)

Need reform but ...

JC needs reform but a pilot scheme should be in place first."(230)

"Idea to reform JC is good - however it is imperative that there is a State exam with external marking by State Exams Commission."(26)

"Change is needed but problems arise in assessment/examinations – not in the curriculum outcomes. Plenty of scope to achieve desired outcomes by changing (existing) exam." (48)

"Could be useful but requires staff to be totally on top of the situation – not like Project Maths."(31)

"Framework recognises that there is curriculum overload. Other modes of assessment could be possible but national standards need to be set and externally assessed and moderated." (B24)

Positive perception tinged with negative

"In ideal conditions, classes could explore more and do portfolios and projects. But there is a danger of dumbing down." (97a)

"Would increase students' work ethic; lack of external moderation could impact negatively on students' commitment." (203)

"Continuous assessment may encourage students, improvement for some students. However common level reduces standards." (255)

Positive perceptions of capacity of Framework to improve learning outcomes

“Varied methods of learning could benefit some students; change is not a problem for teachers as we are continually doing so to benefit our students.” (96f)

“Continuous assessment is worth-while; short-term achievement goal is great incentive to motivate learning, for example, LCA programme. Absenteeism could also improve.”(242b)

“More creativity – less rote learning; students taking responsibility for own learning; key skills relevant to society; students more engaged – become critical thinkers.”(46)

“Removal of focus on a terminal examination for Junior Certificate as the (main) evaluation form; change the sense of (learner) identity in the school; not an exam driven (curriculum).”(B9)

ANALYSIS

N A L Y S I S

At the outset, it must be strongly stated that it is evident that teachers have engaged with the Framework document at school level. This is an important development and one which was largely precipitated by the ASTI’s decision to consult with its members in the schools. Looking at the responses from 320 schools, there is a broad consensus that the Framework *has* some potential to improve learning outcomes for students. Apart from the quotations above, teachers also referred to more emphasis on activity based learning, including a focus on key skills; better student engagement – as result of greater choices, including short courses and modularised learning and a move away from rote learning for exams; better transition from primary school; less pressure on students. The potential positive outcomes for weaker students and for SEN students were also frequently referred to. Many of the responses noted that school attendance might improve through better engagement with learning. A number of responses also referred to the greater use of ICT in teaching and learning.

However, a significant number of responses under this question entirely disagreed that the Framework would improve learning outcomes. The main reasons stated included decreased depth of subject coverage (i.e., minimum of 200 hours for all subjects except Irish, English and Maths); lack of State examination would lower standards; lack of continuity with Senior Cycle curriculum, and in particular the Leaving Certificate examination. These, and other reasons, are analysed in some detail under Question 2 below, *“In what ways might the Framework dis-improve learning outcomes for students in your school?”* Quite a number of replies to Question 1 were non-committal such as *“don’t think so”, “can’t tell”, “hard to take a concrete position due to lack of information”, “may be improved”*. Overall, however, the majority of teachers see the potential of the Framework for improving aspects of teaching and learning in schools, contrary to the sometimes tendentious claim that teachers don’t want change. At the same time, the majority of teachers are also strongly of the view that this potential remains contingent on fair, transparent and objective certification and assessment arrangements.

IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT THE FRAMEWORK DIS-IMPROVE THE LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR YOUR STUDENTS?

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Notwithstanding the broadly positive appraisal of the potential of some aspects of the Framework to improve learning outcomes, it is evident that teachers also have deep reservations about other potential outcomes from the Framework. What is highly significant in the responses to this Question is that the vast majority of teachers who, while seeing the potential for improvement, simultaneously have significant reservations about the Framework.

For example, the teachers in school number 242 stated under question 1 that *“Continuous assessment is worthwhile; short-term achievement goal is great incentive to motivate learning, for example, LCA programme. Absenteeism could also improve”*. However, under question 2, the same teachers also stated that *“Continuous assessment could cater for majority rather than the diversity of the group. Students won’t reach their potential. Assessment could mean a greater strain on contact with students”*.

Similarly, teachers in school number 1 stated under question 1, *“Emphasis on quality of learning-not on quantity. More hands-on approach”* and under question 2, stated *“No preparation for the Leaving Certificate examination. No help for able students. Expectations lowered by narrowing educational outcomes”*. This pattern of reservations, doubts, concerns is consistently repeated throughout the vast bulk of the replies to question 2.

This “conflicted” response of teachers is neither unexpected nor unusual. The NCCA *“Leading and Supporting Change in Schools”* document referred to teachers’ experience of fragmentation and conflicting expectations. For better or for worse, a pre-eminent perception or measure of a “good teacher” is someone whose students can achieve to their best in the current system. The Framework for Junior Cycle will remove two established certainties in the second level education system, namely, the externally assessed terminal examination and the State Certificate. The most powerful metaphor that comes to mind is that of *“the rug being pulled out from underneath teachers’ feet”*. A minority of teachers may experience this as a liberating experience! The vast majority feel unsure about the merits of the reform agenda and its impact on quality in education. The key issues for teachers are:

Lack of standardisation in school-based assessment

“Standards will drop – discrepancies between schools in absence of (State) exams. Parents – open minefield.”(58)

“(School-based assessment) will lack standardisation; de-motivation for students; dumbing down outcomes to make them easier to measure.”(62c)

“Inaccurate reflection of pupils’ ability. Lose out on skills for LC. Danger of grade inflation, inconsistency between schools. (May make) employers biased. Create a dumbed-down education system; should include provision for external assessment.”(112)

“(Assessment) becomes more subjective – focus on personality. Lack of standardisation of assessment – standards will fall. Extra pressure on teachers.” (241b)

Impact of school-based assessment on student engagement, motivation

“Will remove motivation that Junior Certificate exam provides. Will students demand/expect teachers to do coursework?” (242)

“Students may struggle with less-structure, loss of subjects. Not same breadth of learning. (Danger of) students’ perception that new assessment model is not objective.”(3)

“Current system leads to better student motivation.” (41)

“High achievers may be negatively affected as they may not be challenged enough. Common paper will lower standards.” (56)

“The absence of a clearly defined curriculum has huge potential for discipline. Discipline in schools is the biggest problem.” (B6)

Will not prepare students for progression to Senior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examination

“Will dilute the value of (terminal) examination; Junior Certificate is seen as a “mock exam” for the Leaving Certificate and mentally prepares students. Changes (implied) at Senior Cycle?”(95)

“Unclear objectives, loose structure. Preparation for Leaving Certificate?” (59)

“Short courses (do) not prepare students for Leaving Certificate.”(228)

“Lack of focus and clarity. Students less prepared for Leaving Certificate.” (257)

“Less preparation for the Leaving Certificate; common paper in subjects (will) impact on subject (choice) at Leaving Certificate.” (71)

Impact of school-based assessment on relationships with students

“Parental pressure – nightmare for teachers. Need to guard against inter-school competition. Teachers’ role as mentor/advocate – difficult to combine that with “judge.” (30)

“(School-based assessment) will de-value the Junior Certificate as students will see it as just another school test.” (32)

“Continuous assessment could lead to strain on student/teacher contact.” (242b)

“Pressure on teacher to give good grades so that they are not seen as a “poor” teacher.” (91)

Status and relevance of school certificate

“Students will not respect the school certificate; current Junior Certificate (exam) gets students to engage with subjects.” (75)

“Less at stake – so students will not be motivated.” (79)

“(School certificate) could lack credibility and fall into disrepute.” (256)

“School certificate not objective so it will not receive international recognition. No formal State Certificate for early school leavers. Open to subjective interpretation – too vague.” (258)

Impact on overall quality of education

“Diluted content (in subjects) – students will know much less going into Leaving Certificate; (potential) problems of discipline, attendance.” (51)

“Reduced (subject) specifications and common levels may reduce standards. (Students) not prepared for Leaving Certificate.” (223)

“No coherent plan or resources. Therefore, it is difficult to see how learning outcomes could improve.” (B14)

“Inconsistency of assessment; reduction in the validity of subjects. Does not retain the good bits of the existing system.” (215)

“Nobody has thought out the practicalities (of Junior Cycle change) such as resources in schools, timetabling over the school year, the workload of teachers and how they are supposed to have time for cross-moderation and consultation about (literacy and numeracy) targets in each subject area.” (CEC)

Impact on what students learn

“No set curriculum apart from core subjects. This could lead to a very narrow-based curriculum which would dis-improve the broad based curriculum already in place.” (250)

“Superficial knowledge if they follow short courses. No links with Leaving Certificate.” (261)

“No skills for Leaving Certificate. Common level not good idea. Better students won’t be challenged. Some subjects appear to be more important than others.” (236)

Exacerbate existing inequities between schools

“No consistency (of standards) throughout the country; inequality will come to the fore.” (242c)

“Poorly funded, could lead to absolute chaos.” (245a)

“Money will be an issue – advantages to better-off schools.” (248)

“Discrimination (in school certificate) between disadvantaged and affluent schools.” (240)

“Short courses – equity (issues) – two-tier system?” (89)

Short courses

“Short courses provide less “scaffolding” for the Leaving Certificate.” (48)

“Short courses may be fragmented.” (84)

“Short courses (lead to) curriculum overload will not prepare for the Leaving Certificate.” (211)

“Short courses will not allow students to reach their learning potential.” (232)

ANALYSIS

N A L Y S I S

Many of concerns identified above appear under questions 3 and 4, i.e., school-based assessment and the school certificate. Therefore this analysis will focus on those other issues which teachers believe could be unintended or, indeed, direct consequences of the Framework. A key concern of teachers is the potential for the Framework to disrupt the current continuity of learning experience between Junior and Senior Cycle. Teachers are very concerned that a number of aspects of this experience may be negatively affected by the Framework and could have significant consequences for students in what is a highly demanding curriculum at Senior Cycle and a high-stakes end-of second level education examination. The issues raised by teachers included:

- 1 Will the reduction of content in the subject specifications for all subjects except Irish, English and Maths impact on students' capacity to engage with the depth of coverage required in subjects at Senior Cycle and in the Leaving Certificate examination?
- 2 Similarly, will the reduction in the recommended number of hours for all subjects except Irish, English and Maths from the current 240 hours to 200 hours per annum impact on students' capacity to engage with the depth of coverage required in subjects at Senior Cycle and in the Leaving Certificate examination?
- 3 Will the experience of common level papers in all subjects except Irish, English and Maths affect students' capacity to engage with the depth of coverage required in subjects at Senior Cycle and in the Leaving Certificate examination?
- 4 How will the life-skills currently developed by Junior Cycle students in preparation for the Junior Certificate such as time management, effective study skills, self-management and managing information be cultivated? These are critical skills for the high-stakes Leaving Certificate examination.
- 5 Short courses – will there be follow-on short courses for Senior Cycle? Are short courses too “bitty”? Do they provide the depth of study that students need at Senior Cycle? Will students who take short course have less subject choice at Senior Cycle?

However, the most frequently cited and urgent concern of teachers was the disruption of the experience of students of having a State examination at the end of Junior Cycle not just as an end in itself but, of equal importance, as a precursor to their experience of the Leaving Certificate examination. Because the latter is such a high stakes examination, with significant consequences for progression to further/third level education and working life, teachers are extremely fearful that the new Framework

will undermine the capacity of students to engage with the learning and assessment requirements of Senior Cycle. They are equally concerned that these well-founded fears for students' educational wellbeing are not being addressed by the policy makers.

Almost on a par with the issue of the potential negative impact of the Framework on progression to Senior Cycle was that of its potential to exacerbate current inequities in the system. These concerns have been presented in Section 2 above but are worth reiterating here. The cumulative effect of school-based assessment, of the replacement of the State Certificate by a school certificate, coupled with the differential capacity of schools to innovate and in particular, to introduce short courses, could very possibly consolidate current inequities.

The role of second level schools in our society is complex and of an enduring nature. Outside of the family, schools are among the most influential socialising institutions for young people. Education policy must therefore be extremely vigilant that it does not consolidate existing social and economic inequalities. To do so would not only undermine core societal projects such as social inclusion, respect for diversity, equality and citizenship. It would represent a moral failure to current and future generations of young people.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Assessment is an intrinsic dimension of teaching and learning. It is the process whereby the learner and the teacher can evaluate progress or achievement in the development of a particular skill, or in the understanding of a particular area of knowledge. Second level teachers have traditionally established a clear distinction between formative, summative and diagnostic assessment deployed on a daily and termly basis in classrooms and the assessment process to record the achievement of students at the end of Junior and Senior Cycle education.

The current model of an externally assessed State examination has been the only model of assessment at these two key “milestones” in the education of young people since the foundation of the State. There are many merits inherent in this model. These include the fact that the current Junior Certificate examination:

- provides an extensive statement of students' learning over the course of the Junior Cycle
- provides a goal and a focus for students' learning during the three-year programme
- is characterised by critical quality assurance factors such as transparency, validity and objectivity of the assessment process
- is characterised by fairness and equity in the assessment process; (the anonymity of candidates is important in this regard)
- retains a high degree of trust from parents, students and educators

Education and schooling are culture-bound activities. It could be argued that one of the defining characteristics of Irish society is its “clientalist” rather a “rights based” approach to the distribution of social goods and status. The school system, while reflective of the wider structures and mores of society, has to a large degree committed to an inclusive model of education, predicated on the right of each child to reach their potential and holistic in its approach to the child's educational and on-going social and personal development. Teachers are extremely fearful that this ethos, or characteristic spirit, of second level schools *will* be undermined by a model of assessment which is exclusively school-based. This legitimate and widespread concern is typically expressed by teachers in referring to the potential for the latter form of assessment to lead to parental “pressures” on teachers and schools to award marks which do not represent an accurate statement of their children's achievement. This concern is sometimes traduced by external observers who seek to undermine teacher professionalism by claiming that teachers fear being open to “corruption” in a school-based model of assessment. The main concerns of teachers as regards the Framework proposals are identified as follows:

Impact on student motivation

"(It's) positive that not everything will be exam-based or based on one exam but spread over three years – (better) distribution of work." (243)

"(School-based assessment) will be treated like house exams." (73)

"Less at stake so students not motivated." (79)

"Could benefit weaker students." (264)

Impact on educational standards at school and national level

"I fail to see how an effective standardisation could be achieved. There will be nothing comparable to the national examination and the objective verification of (the) achievements of students." (18)

"Some school-based assessment is OK; more credible though if marked outside of school." (116d)

"How will standards be set between school subject departments in any given school? And between schools in the catchment area?" (11c)

"Grade inflation is the likely outcome due to competition between schools." (116d)

"Common papers are very problematic – no differentiation. (Will lead to) dumbing down." (83)

"Could be good but dangers of skewing marks; teachers need training." (205c)

"Disgusted, horrified and angry at this suggestion. An A grade in one school could be a D grade in another school." (112c)

"Very difficult to see how school-based assessment could be fair or transparent. Will result in inequality." (B14)

Impact on progression to Senior Cycle

"Pupils (will) lose out on skills for the Leaving Certificate; only two years to prepare." (112a)

"Less preparation for Leaving Certificate – (especially) with common paper in most subjects." (71)

"Will not prepare students for Leaving Certificate academic subjects; results may be artificial." (60)

"(Students will) lack of motivation to prepare for Leaving Certificate." (69)

"Students have to do exams at Leaving Certificate and in third level. Why take away the opportunity to learn how to do exams?" (B23)

Impact on student: teacher relationships

“This will lead to a “distancing” of teachers from their students. This distancing and decoupling of the teacher-as-advocate relationship traditionally enjoyed by teachers and students may have a dramatic effect on the school environment.” (13a)

“Students may claim favouritism.” (242a)

“(Will) change dynamic between parents, students and teachers. We cannot be advocate and judge. Very difficult to fail your own students.” (206)

Challenges for teachers

“Teachers are first and foremost human beings who in their daily dealings with students cannot possibly be objective with even the best will in the world.”(11a)

“Difficult to satisfy students and parents whilst retaining integrity. Teachers (will be) vulnerable.” (120)

“Perceptions of bias – will be very difficult for teachers to grade their own students, especially if living in local community. This perception of bias would be very difficult to counter, especially if only one teacher teaching that subject in the school.” (19)

“Different teachers have different marking standards: would low marks mean you are a bad teacher or that your course is too hard? Would high marks mean that your course is too easy or you are marking papers too soft? Teachers are capable of assessing our own students but there is a fear of accusation and hearsay. It will create a poor (school) community environment.” (126)

Impact on teaching

“Less time on teaching and learning – more time on marking.” (82)

“Internal assessment – who is responsible for the moderation of results? For co-ordination of moderation systems? Who is going to set the test, correct the test? Special needs students – will they have a laptop or a scribe? The list of questions is endless...” (CEC)

“We feel that this is just a money-saving scheme in which teachers will be forced to take on a huge workload on top of their already packed schedule.” (13b)

“Everything else in (education policy) seems to be much more important than teaching. We will have to produce all kinds of statistics, monitor results, compare results, devise programmes... I don't want to be a statistician; I don't want to be a monitor. I want to teach.” (CEC)

Impact on relationships with parents and wider community

“We oppose school-based assessment as it is un-regulated and open to abuse. Its objectivity is questionable and there is no national standardisation.”(121)

“Retention in schools in disadvantaged areas may be negatively affected.” (212)

“Parents (will) question the validity of the assessment.”(260)

“The confidence the public has in the assessment process will disappear and this will pave the way for comparisons of schools in league tables”. (CEC)

ANALYSIS

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The issue of educational standards was by far and away the most consistent concern of teachers in response to the proposals for school-based assessment. Teachers are genuinely very troubled as to the capacity of such a system to sustain educational standards in the Junior Cycle. Apart from the fact that assessment of students for certification has never been part of the professional practice of teachers, the Framework itself does not contain information on how an internal moderation system would work in practice. This is a major flaw in the Framework. It is abundantly clear from teachers' responses that the Framework proposals contain a model of assessment which the vast majority of teachers believe will lower educational standards and will undermine important features of the current Junior Certificate examination.

Teachers repeatedly asked how consistency and comparability of standards would be maintained not just between schools but also within schools. Consistency is an imperative in any assessment system. Consistency is about the extent to which an assessment can be trusted to give consistent reliable information on a student's achievements or progress. Comparability refers to the level of confidence which can be placed in the assessment results across the system. Comparability is particularly important when the assessment is for an important purpose such as providing a formal statement of learning at the end of a programme of study.

The classroom teacher is indeed arguably the person best placed to assess a student's progress in each subject area over time. In any relationship, personal feelings come into play – and these feelings invariably affect the decisions one makes. Moreover, even if a teacher's assessment is fair, it may not be perceived as fair by the students

or parents. Perceptions of favouritism or victimisation could quickly emerge – leading to an erosion of trust in the assessment process itself. Relationships between teachers and students would invariably be negatively affected.

Teachers also consistently expressed concern as to how school-based assessment could negatively impact on successful progression to Senior Cycle and the “high-stakes” Leaving Certificate examination. Because the Junior Certificate examination serves as a good predictor of students’ strengths as they enter the Leaving Certificate programme, it influences important decisions such as the subject choices and subject levels (Higher or Ordinary) which students make. These decisions are significant for post-school education and career plans. It is not realistic to expect that all parents would be willing to accept teacher assessment if the latter is perceived to have had an unfavourable repercussion for their child. Teachers also trenchantly expressed their view that such a system is inherently unfair for students.

Moreover, teachers believe that the great advantage of externally assessment is that it is not subject to political or family influence. We should value highly this impartiality in our current Junior Certificate examination. Regrettably, the lessons of political and economic life over recent years have demonstrated the dangers of such influence.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE REPLACEMENT OF THE STATE CERTIFICATE AT THE END OF JUNIOR CYCLE WITH A SCHOOL CERTIFICATE?

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

As noted elsewhere, the State Certificate examination at the end of Junior Cycle has been a permanent feature of the educational experiences of teachers and students since the foundation of the State. The Framework will abolish that examination and the State Certificate and replace it with a radically different, unfamiliar and un-tried system. It is no surprise therefore, that there is unanimous unease among teachers as to the latter's merits, its feasibility and its potential impact on all areas of school life, including the role and status of the school in the local community. The concerns which teachers expressed are grouped as follows:

Widen inequities in education

"Competition between schools may influence assessment results." (4)

"Inequality will rear its ugly head. School certificate from disadvantaged area will have no credibility (compared) to (that) of a school in an affluent area." (242c)

"Unfair comparisons between schools – based on perceptions not facts." (65)

"Totally opposed to any deviation from the national independent examination which is beyond reproach. Schools will be tempted to give inflated grades to entice new students to enrol." (B28)

Impact on student motivation

"Do not think that the current State certificate is fit for purpose and can cause unnecessary stress which inhibits learning and student progress." (96d)

"Students will have no work ethic for Leaving Certificate examination." (210)

"Ill-thought out. Students don't care about school-based exams – so things will get worse." (112c)

"What is the point if there is nothing to show for (students') work at the end of three years?" (6)

"Unfair on students not to have their studies credited by the State. Junior Certificate is a State exam and is the main reason, incentive and motivation for our young people to learn, study and reach their potential."(293d)

Impact on progression to Senior Cycle

“If similar model at Leaving Certificate, system would be chaotic. Need matriculation at third-level to impose (educational) standards.” (88)

“Dilute the value of an examination; no preparation for Leaving Certificate.” (95)

“Unacceptable – students will reach 18 years of age before sitting an examination.” (253b)

Impact on teaching

“While there may be potential for unfair pressure to be put on teachers, there is merit to it. Could be time-consuming – time will be spent on bureaucracy rather than teaching.” (96e)

“School-based assessment is a good idea if adequate resources are provided upfront. Teachers need time to meet – reduction in class contact time may be necessary.” (97d)

“Lack of facilities (in schools) such as teachers’ office is problematic. Pressure (on teachers) for grades.” (97c)

“Workload (issues); bureaucracy with assessment. Teaching will suffer.” (97a)

Impact on educational standards at school and national level

“Destruction of a rich educational tradition.” (66d)

“How to determine standards? Too much subjectivity. Backward step.” (73)

“Qualifications of teachers to assess?” (70)

“No national guide on standards; standards will vary from school to school.” (245d)

“Junior Certificate examination becomes just another summer test; I worked in New Zealand where parental pressure was able to change a result”. (286a)

“The State has an important role in maintaining national (educational) standards and (we) thereby condemn the retreat of the State Examinations Commission from the examination system (in the Framework for Junior Cycle).” (CEC)

Impact on relationships with parents

“Schools will become more accountable to parent/students in regards to assessment.” (222)

“Pressure from parents to achieve results. Impartiality and professionalism of teachers will be questioned.”(37)

“Pressure from parents – accusations of bias.”(62c)

“Lacks fairness, transparency, anonymity. Parental pressure to get inflated results. Divisive in and between schools.” (76)

Status of school certificate for students

“Lack of incentive for students – impact on classroom behaviour.” (9d)

“Achievement would be diminished. (Students) deserve recognition of the State for the work they do. Students are the future and we should encourage them.” (242b)

“Will not motivate students in less academic schools. (They) will have huge difficulties when they reach Leaving Certificate.” (253c)

“Worthless as no external monitoring; no value to early school leavers.” (23)

“Ridiculous. School logo will determine the value of the certificate.”(B 31)

Status of school certificate for wider society

“School certificates won’t have much credibility; grades will be meaningless; standards not comparable/standardised. A certificate from one school will carry more weight than another.” (256)

“Unfair to students; employers will have no value on the (school) certificate.” (113)

“Valueless as it will totally depend on the reputation/perception of the school.” (116d)

“Experience of Leaving Certificate Applied shows that employers do not “buy into” school certificates.” (97c)

“The exam system is only thing left in this country that cannot be or has not been corrupted and that’s a fact. It is seen as impartial; it is seen as fair. The examiners do not know the students.”(CEC)

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS

Most of the issues raised by teachers under this question mirror to a great degree the concerns expressed in the section on school-based assessment. Indeed, it would be true to state that the issue of external assessment and a State Certificate are almost synonymous for teachers. At both Junior and Senior Cycle, both have been the prime “structuring” forces of the curriculum and school life. They represent important thresholds in the young person’s journey through adolescence, denoting as they do increased levels of personal responsibility and maturity. The proposals to remove two such influential processes from the system in a matter of years is simply mind-boggling to teachers.

Teachers feel aggrieved that they were not consulted in any meaningful fashion on these proposals. At a more profound level, they feel that their expertise, their knowledge, their professional wisdom has been unsought, side-lined. This is not a realistic situation in which to introduce a major innovation in schools.

The most widely voiced concern related to the status of the school certificate for students, parents and the wider society and allied to this, the potential implications for the profile of the school, its catchment population and enrolment projections. Teachers simply do not believe that a school certificate will have the same motivational role for students which the current State Certificate plays. More fundamentally, they believe that the replacement of the State Certificate by the school certificate is fundamentally unfair to students. In the absence of external assessment or a model of external moderation, the school certificate cannot provide meaningful statements on achievement which are either reliable or comparable. From their responses, it is clear that teachers believe that different school certificates will carry different value and as such, undermine students’ right to fairness, transparency and comparability which the current State Certificate provides.

Of comparable concern for teachers is the potential for this proposal to widen current inequities in our education system. Put simply, teachers are fearful that the lack of a standardised external assessment or moderation process could lead to one school’s certificate as being seen as inferior to one from another school. As noted in Section 1, teachers are deeply worried that the Framework proposals would impose pressures on schools to retain their profile as high-performing educational institutions. Current dynamics between schools as regards enrolment and academic profile could become profoundly distorted under the new Framework and the perception of the school in the local community could be undermined.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON OPTIONAL SHORT COURSES IN THE FRAMEWORK?

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

It is immediately evident from teachers' responses to this question that there is a need for more information to be made available on the proposals for short courses in the Framework. Very many teachers have apprehensions that short courses could lead to a displacement of subjects already provided in schools. It is clear that the proposed optional nature of short courses is not self-evident. The concerns which teachers expressed are grouped as follows:

Positive response to optional short courses

"Fine – assuming they are well planned and well structured." (5)

"While it is not possible to comment as they have not been introduced yet, short course in themselves are not necessarily a bad thing." (13a)

"We are positive about their introduction but confused about the logistics of implementation." (14)

"Some teachers have no problem as long as there is proper inservice and templates. Others are very sceptical and feel that they will not be of much benefit to students. Courses will not provide a link to the Senior Cycle curriculum. (Could be) excellent for cross-curricular work. Great opportunity for active links between subject departments creating a springboard for dynamic, creative and imaginative teaching."(132)

"(Teachers have) generally positive ideas of short courses, may be useful for students and teachers with a special interest in an area, and perhaps increase teacher passion! Could be very interesting but must be prepared with integrity and expertise. Language teachers see positives in that short courses could be helpful in giving students a choice of a second modern language." (129)

Negative response to optional short courses

“Half-baked idea. No clear information.” (88)

“Huge amount of work for teachers. Capacity and equity issues in introducing short courses.” (6)

“(Short courses) are suitable for Transition Year only. Will “dilute” education further.” (24)

“Lack of facilities compromises our ability to provide short courses. Who will teach courses such as Chinese language and digital and media literacy? Could have a knock-on effect on enrolment and student numbers.” (190)

“Extra work for teachers and timetabling difficulties; inequality (of resources) between large and small schools (in terms of) pool of expertise to teach short courses and finances available; concerns about grading esoteric courses.” (130)

“Students get flavour of everything and nothing concrete.” (201)

Implications for teaching

“Potentially good but devising, implementing, delivering and renewing (short courses) is time consuming.” (11b)

“Potentially progressive; where will they fit into the time-table? (9d)

“Fine in theory but if we look at how students now engage with these types of courses, e.g., CSPE, SPHE, we know that they do not take them as seriously as subjects.” (11a)

“Logistics - students take weeks to get used to options and would use that as an excuse to waste time, especially if there are several modules. Massive increase in workload on teachers. Timetabling nightmare.” (133)

“Good if handled properly but content must be meaningful. May be timetabling difficulties.” (B 20)

Role of teacher in curriculum design

“Experience of Project Maths underlines the need for extensive supports for change.” (8a)

“Little value if drafted by teachers who don’t have (appropriate) experience.” (62b)

“We are trained to teach and not to generate courses.” (13b)

“Short courses (are) particularly valuable in addressing the needs and interests of students and providing new opportunities for teachers. (Could facilitate the) expression of talents not facilitated in existing curriculum.” (223)

Resource in schools

“(Schools) in socially deprived areas will not be able to offer the same course as those in affluent areas.” (12)

“Could be exciting but need lot of work in design. In theory wonderful but issues of resources, time?” (84)

“Availability of resources, schools with more money (will) have more resources. Where will money come from to fund these courses?” (269)

“No resources for their development from the DES. However, they may have some merit in assisting the transition from primary to second level schools and allow students to study different areas.” (B 26)

Implications for subject choice

“Implications for subject (take-up) – especially history, geography? How will they link to Leaving Certificate (curriculum)?” (82)

“Undermines (status of) subjects.” (63)

“Is this a way of ending the Transition Year programme? Will lead to a decrease in teacher numbers.” (19)

“Too short to cover subject areas for Leaving Certificate.” (37)

Curriculum and teacher numbers in schools

“Jobs? Impact on part-time teachers? (Will short course) displace the Transition Year?” (82)

“(Will) lead to further casualisation of the teaching profession.” (70)

“Our staff would have positive views on short courses as long as they do not affect subject choice for the Leaving Certificate and do not cause redundancies.” (30)

“Choices of short courses (will be) made by management; teachers will have no say.” (204)

“Status of some subjects could be lowered if provided as short courses (leading to) loss of teaching posts in these subject areas”. (B32a)

ANALYSIS

N A L Y S I S

As noted above, many of the responses to this question were more in the form of questions rather than answers. Teachers need much more information on the content of short courses and the resources that will be needed in schools to provide quality learning experiences for students. Of particular concern to teachers is how would short courses be integrated into already complex school timetables? Many teachers expressed concern that they did not have the qualifications or skills to design short courses. The issue of progression to Senior Cycle and preparedness for the Leaving Certificate is also prominent. How would short course “link” to the Senior Cycle curriculum? Would taking a short course at junior cycle limit students’ subject choices at Senior Cycle?

The issue of resources also featured prominently in teachers’ responses. There is considerable apprehension that, notwithstanding the potential of short courses to diversify the curriculum, some schools will simply not have the financial resources to provide them. Many of the responses referred to the costs inherent in providing school-generated modules in the Transition Year programme. In this regard, equity between schools is a paramount concern.

It is significant that in the responses to this question above all others, practical trade union concerns came to the fore. Allied to their concerns re subject choice, teachers expressed fears that schools would drop subjects in favour of short courses, thereby impacting on existing employment posts. A great many responses referred to the vulnerable employment position of non-full time teachers in this regard. Such teachers now represent 29% of the entire second level teaching workforce.

Quite a number expressed concern that the provision of short courses at Junior Cycle would negatively impact on the Transition Year programme. Would schools drop this programme given the high degree of similarity between its structure and aims and aspects of the proposed new Junior Cycle curriculum?

It is clear from the responses that much more guidance is required around the role of short courses in the Framework, particularly in relation to the fact that schools will have the option of providing CSPE, SPHE and PE as short courses. In particular, schools require guidance on the introduction of short courses. Many teachers expressed concerns that they may not be consulted in advance of schools’ decisions and this could have very direct consequences for their weekly timetable and indeed their employment. Many of the responses stated that the ASTI must be vigilant to ensure that the introduction of short courses does not accelerate the casualisation of the profession that is already underway.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE TIMEFRAME FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FRAMEWORK?

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

There is considerable diversity of views on the timeframe for the introduction of the Framework. Overall, the majority of teachers feel that it is too rushed; this perception is greatly substantiated by the fact the consultation did not take place with teachers prior to the Minister's publication of the Framework document. This lack of consultation has resulted in both confusion and concern around the implementation strategy for change, in particular, the necessary programme of inservice or the up-skilling of teachers. The key issues for teachers on the timeframe are:

Diversity of views

"Perhaps too drawn-out." (14)

"Fine – gives teachers time to assimilate ideas." (283b)

"If training provided to all (teachers) – great; resources needed to back up theory." (205c)

"Phased-in approach needed; training needed. Class sizes should be reduced. Implementation date very tight – 2014." (211)

"Too soon – no planning, no inservice. Lack of consultation. (Framework) not in line with NCCA proposals." (128)

Support for teachers and schools

"Seems to be disorganised; models need to be given to schools." (22)

"Not enough lead-in time. Confusing for teachers and logistics have not been thought-out." (64)

"May be difficult to get up and running but staggered introduction of subjects, while understandable, means that it will be years before (Framework) becomes the Junior Cycle (curriculum)." (283a)

"They will not have time to train us to a high enough standard to be comfortable with this." (103h)

Consultation

“Given failure to consult with teachers - who are key to this proposal – timeframe is totally unrealistic.” (30)

“Foisted upon teachers – little or no consultation with teachers...and teachers are at the heart of change (in schools).” (115)

“Too short – teachers feel uninformed and lacking guidance.” (23)

“As usual, we will be overloaded with changes that we will have to adapt to with zero consultation.” (274e)

Impact on schools

“(Timeframe) is unrealistic; involves total revamp of timetabling, personnel, planning and training of all staff. Difficult to get students to produce work on time. Additional heavy workload at a time when pay is low. Improvement in core subjects at primary level would be more beneficial.” (275)

“All details (are) so vague around content of new course - it is impossible and unrealistic for schools to do any planning in terms of staffing and informing prospective parents of the (new) curriculum.” (291e)

“Short, lack of consultation with professionals. Department is very poor at inservice provision as it is. Teachers will end up ticking boxes instead of teaching.” (286c)

Project Maths

“Bringing change in piece-by-piece (was) a disaster with Project Maths. Bring change in when teachers have been trained and start with First Years.” (34)

“Phased introduction of subjects will cause chaos. (This) approach in Project Maths (was) very difficult for students and teachers.” (261)

“Teachers need CPD before it goes ahead. As we have already seen with Project Maths, adequate resources were not made available, students were unable to comprehend changes and marking schemes had to be adjusted accordingly. Trial and error is not the right approach to teaching or the education of our future generations.” (103)

“I wish for once the Department had allowed time for one new initiative to be fully implemented before foisting another on (teaching) staff. Project Maths will not be fully embedded by 2016/17.” (274f)

ANALYSIS

N A L Y S I S

The over-riding conclusion from teachers' responses to this question is one of uncertainty about the implementation of the Framework. While this undoubtedly arises in large part from the failure of the Minister to engage in consultation with teachers, it is also attributable to the fact that the Framework was *not* accompanied by an implementation strategy. This lack of forward planning to support a major change process is deeply unsettling for schools. Schools are highly complex institutions which must, on a daily basis, serve the needs of hundreds of young people.

Timetabling is a key dimension of this institutional complexity. It requires school management to match the qualifications and expertise of teachers to various levels of programme and subject choice to meet students' educational needs. There is also the requirement to allocate additional supports such as learning support/resource teaching; guidance and counselling; home-school-liaison; chaplaincy; school-completion/school retention; English-as-a-second language supports. In addition to these requirements, school management and teachers must collaborate with external support services such as the National Council for Special Education; the National Educational Psychological Service; the School Completion Service and the National Educational Welfare Board. Schools also have extensive engagement with HSE services for students with special educational needs and in relation to the safeguarding of young people.

Schools cannot therefore operate on the basis of contingency. They must engage in continuous forward planning, taking into account current student needs, future enrolment demands and projected teacher requirements. It is precisely because of this requirement for schools to continually engage in systematic forward planning that the lack of an implementation strategy is so unsettling. As noted at the outset, schools are struggling to meet the requirements of other major Departmental initiatives, namely, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and the related 3-year cycle of School Self-Evaluation. Both of the latter are integral to the forward planning in schools in advance of the introduction of the Framework.

If schools are already having difficulties coping with these initiatives, it is difficult to see how they will meaningfully engage with the introduction of the Framework which would require new timetable models, a focus on bridging from primary school in First Year and the processing of detailed school reports on all new enrolments, the introduction of annual standardised testing, the optional introduction of short courses, not to mention the logistical arrangements which would accompany the proposed new assessment process.

It is of note that the experiences of students, teachers and schools in relation to the phased introduction of Project Maths figured prominently in the replies to this question. Irrespective of teachers' views on the curriculum for Project Maths, there was unanimity that the manner of its introduction was extremely stressful for schools. Whether the model for the introduction of the Framework will be similar or not to Project Maths is not yet clear. What is abundantly clear is that teachers felt that they had not received enough inservice training in advance of the introduction of Project Maths and that the experience of teaching different syllabi to different years across the Junior and Senior Cycle was universally experienced as extremely stressful.

As noted in Section 2, teachers want to do what is best for their students. When teachers themselves feel that they are not fully on top of the changed methodologies, changed learning outcomes, changed syllabus content, they are deeply uncomfortable. Many teachers reported how students sensed a lack of structure or familiarity with the new model of mathematics teaching and stated that many students continue to experience difficulties in getting engaged with the new methodologies, subject content, etc.

All of this should serve as strong warning note to the Department of Education & Skills. There is a palpable lack of confidence among teachers that the Department of Education & Skills has an implementation strategy; that it will deliver timely and sufficient in-service; that it will give the necessary guidance to schools on how best to introduce short courses; that it will reduce the teaching workload to enable teachers to engage in planning and collaboration for key skills, proposed assessment processes and the requirements of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. The NCCA document *Leading and Supporting Change* eloquently summarises these requirements as follows:

“Resources play an important role in nudging and incentivising people towards engaging with change. But they are also more intrinsic to the process of change than that. Investing in people, in the learning environment, in aspects of schools as learning organisations is fundamental to establishing a momentum for change”. (p.14)

Appendix 1 - List of Schools who participated (320)

County	School Name	No. of Members
Carlow	Presentation College, Askea, Co. Carlow	35
Carlow	Presentation College, Old Oak Road, Bagenalstown, Carlow	31
Carlow	St. Mary's Academy CBS, Station Road, Carlow	37
Cavan	Royal School, College Street, Cavan	23
Cavan	St Clare's College, Virginia Road, Ballyjamesduff, Cavan	32
Cavan	St. Patrick's College, Cavan, Co. Cavan	34
Clare	C.B.S. Secondary School, Ennistymon, Co. Clare	12
Clare	Coláiste Mhuire, Harmony Row, Ennis, Clare	41
Clare	Kilrush Community School, Kilrush, Co. Clare	23
Clare	Mary Immaculate Secondary School, Lisdoonvarna, Clare	24
Clare	Rice College, New Road, Ennis, Clare	42
Clare	St. Anne's Community College, Killaloe, Clare	17
Clare	St. Caimin's Community School, Tullyvarraga, Shannon, Co. Clare	44
Clare	St. John Bosco Community Collage, Kildysart, Ennis, Co. Clare	15
Clare	St. Joseph's Secondary School, Spanish Point, Co. Clare	20
Cork	Ballincollig Community School, Innishmore, Ballincollig, Co. Cork	41
Cork	Bishopstown Community School, Bishopstown, Co. Cork	15
Cork	Boherbue Comprehensive School , Boherbue, Mallow, Co. Cork	13
Cork	Carrigaline Community School, Waterpark Road, Carrigaline, Co. Cork	61
Cork	C.B.S. Secondary School, Mitchelstown, Co.Cork	25
Cork	Christ King Secondary School, South Douglas Road, Cork	68
Cork	Clonakilty Community College, Clonakilty, Co. Cork	18
Cork	Coláiste an Phiarsaigh, Gleann Maghair, Co. Cork	41
Cork	Coláiste Chríost Rí, Capwell Road, Cork	43
Cork	Coláiste Mhuire, Buttevant, Co. Cork	6
Cork	Coláiste Muire, Bishop Street, Cobh, Co. Cork	44
Cork	Coláiste Mhuire, Crosshaven, Co. Cork	27
Cork	Coláiste na Toirbhirte, Ard Aoibhinn, Bandon, Co. Cork	40
Cork	De La Salle College, Macroom, Co. Cork	21
Cork	Deerpark CBS, St. Patrick's Road, Cork	28
Cork	Glanmire Community College, Brooklodge, Glanmire, Co. Cork	37
Cork	Loreto Secondary School, College Road, Fermoy, Co. Cork	45
Cork	Maria Immaculata Community College, Dunmanway, Co. Cork	19
Cork	Mercy Heights Secondary School, Skibbereen, Co. Cork	29
Cork	Midleton CBS, Midleton, Co. Cork	33
Cork	Millstreet Community School, Coolmegare, Millstreet, Co. Cork	11
Cork	Mount Mercy College, Model Farm Road, Cork	49
Cork	Mount St. Michael, Rosscarberry, Co. Cork	30
Cork	Nagle Rice Secondary School, Doneraile, Co.Cork	20
Cork	North Presentation Secondary School, Farranree, Cork	29
Cork	Patrician Academy Mallow, Co. Cork	32
Cork	Pobalscoil na Trionóide, Frogmore, Youghal, Co. Cork	40
Cork	Presentation Convent, Mitchelstown, Co. Cork	23
Cork	Presentation Secondary School, Joe Murphy Road, Ballyphelane, Cork	22
Cork	Regina Mundi College, Endsleigh, Douglas Road, Cork	29
Cork	Sacred Heart Secondary School, Clonakilty, Co. Cork	31
Cork	St. Aloysius College, Main Street, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork	51
Cork	St. Aloysius School, St. Maries of the Isle, Shannon, Crawford Street, Cork	23
Cork	St. Angela's College, Patrick's Hill, Cork	36
Cork	St. Colman's College, Fermoy, Co. Cork	31
Cork	St. Fachtna's - De La Salle College, Skibbereen, Co. Cork	20
Cork	St. Mary's Secondary School, Charleville, Co. Cork	26
Cork	St. Mary's Secondary School, Convent of Mercy, Macroom, Co.Cork	21
Cork	St. Mary's Secondary School, Convent of Mercy, Mallow, Co.Cork	46
Cork	St. Patricks College, Gardiner's Hill, Cork	28
Cork	St. Vincent's Secondary School, St. Mary's Road, Cork	20
Donegal	Coláiste Choilmcille, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal	29
Donegal	Pobalscoil Chloich Cheannfhaola, An Fálcarrach, Co. Donegal	31
Donegal	Rosses Community School, Dungloe, Co. Donegal	21
Donegal	Scoil Mhuire Secondary School, St. Oran's Road, Buncrana, Co. Donegal	42
Donegal	St. Columbas College, Stranorlar, Co. Donegal	55
Dublin	Alexandra College, Milltown, Dublin 6	32
Dublin	Árd Scoil Rís, Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9	30
Dublin	Ardgillan Community College, Castleislands, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin	12
Dublin	Árdscoil La Salle, Raheny Road, Raheny, Dublin 5	26

County	School Name	No. of Members
Dublin	Assumption Secondary School, Kilnamanagh Road, Walkinstown, Dublin 12	22
Dublin	Ballinteer Community School , Ballinteer, Dublin 16	21
Dublin	Beneavin De La Salle College, Beneavin Road, Finglas East, Dublin 11	36
Dublin	Blackrock College, Blackrock College, Co. Dublin	54
Dublin	Caritas College, Drumfin Road, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	25
Dublin	Castleknock College, Castleknock, Dublin 15	39
Dublin	Catholic University School, 89 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2	29
Dublin	C.B.S. Secondary School, Synge Street, Dublin 8	23
Dublin	Chanel College, Coolock Village, Malahide Road, Dublin 5	39
Dublin	Clonkeen College, Clonkeen Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin	31
Dublin	Coláiste Choilm Christian Brothers School, Swords, Co. Dublin	41
Dublin	Coláiste Eanna Christian Brothers School, Ballyroan, Dublin 16	37
Dublin	Coláiste osagáin, Bothar Stigh Lorgain, Blackrock, Co. Dublin	27
Dublin	Coolmine Community School, Clonsilla, Dublin 15	37
Dublin	De La Salle College, Upper Churchtown Road, Churchtown, Dublin 14	20
Dublin	Dominican College, Sion Hill, Blackrock, Co. Dublin	26
Dublin	Donabate Community College, Main Street, Donabate, Co. Dublin	25
Dublin	The Donahies Community School, Streamville Road, Dublin 13	22
Dublin	Drimnagh Castle CBS, Long Mile Road, Dublin 12	35
Dublin	Gaelcholáiste Reachrann, Donaghmeade, Dublin 13	16
Dublin	Gonzaga College, Sandford Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6	32
Dublin	Hartstown Community School, Hartstown, Dublin 15	40
Dublin	Loreto Abbey, Dalkey, Co. Dublin	39
Dublin	Loreto High School, Grant Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14	34
Dublin	Luttrellstown Community College, Mill Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15	8
Dublin	Malahide Community School, Broomfield, Malahide, Co. Dublin	69
Dublin	Manor House School, Watermill Road, Raheny, Dublin 5	53
Dublin	Marian College, Lansdowne Road, Dublin 4	34
Dublin	Maryfield College, Glandore Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9	43
Dublin	Mater Christi Secondary School, Cappagh, Finglas, Dublin 11	20
Dublin	Mean-Scoil Chroimghlinne, 314/318 Crumlin Road, Dublin 12	8
Dublin	Mount Anville Secondary School, Mount Anville Road, Dundrum, Dublin 14	36
Dublin	Mount Carmel Secondary School, Kings Inn Street, Dublin 1	29
Dublin	Mount Temple Comprehensive, Malahide Road, Dublin 3	41
Dublin	Moyle Park College, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	42
Dublin	Muckcross Park College, Donnybrook, Dublin 4	40
Dublin	Notre Dame Secondary School, Upper Churchtown Road, Churchtown, Dublin 14	12
Dublin	O'Connell's CBS, North Richmond Street, Dublin 1	31
Dublin	Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, Dublin 24	47
Dublin	Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont, Dublin 9	23
Dublin	Our Lady's Grove, Jesus & Mary College, Goatstown Road, Dublin 14	18
Dublin	Patrician College, Deanstown Avenue, Finglas, Dublin 11	18
Dublin	Phobalscoil Iosalde, Palmerstown, Dublin 20	12
Dublin	Pobalscoil Neasáin, Baldoyle, Dublin 13	39
Dublin	Portmarnock Community School, Carrickhill Road, Co. Dublin	42
Dublin	Presentation College, Terenure, Dublin 6W	17
Dublin	Presentation Secondary School, Clarence Mangan Road, Warrenmount, Dublin 8	24
Dublin	Rathdown School, Glenageary, Co. Dublin	25
Dublin	Rockford Manor, Stradbroke Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin	23
Dublin	Sancta Maria College, Ballyroan, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16	36
Dublin	Sandford Park School, Sandford Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6	14
Dublin	St. Dominic's High School Santa Sabina, Sutton, Dublin 13	39
Dublin	Scoil Chaitríona, Mobhi Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9	27
Dublin	St Andrews College , Booterstown, Blackrock, Co. Dublin	47
Dublin	St. Aidan's Community School, Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24	18
Dublin	St. Benildus College, Upper Kilmacud Road, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin	42
Dublin	St. Columba's College, Whitechurch, Dublin 16	16
Dublin	St. David's CBS, Artane, Dublin 5	42
Dublin	St. Declan's College, Nephin Road, Cabra, Dublin 7	40
Dublin	St. Dominic's Secondary School, Kylemore Road, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	28
Dublin	St. John's De La Salle, Le Fanu Road, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	31
Dublin	St. Joseph's College, Presentation Convent, Lucan, Co. Dublin	53
Dublin	St. Joseph's of Cluny, Bellevue Park, Ballinclea Road, Killiney, Co. Dublin	27
Dublin	St. Joseph's Secondary School, Stanhope Street, Dublin 7	25
Dublin	St. Kilian's Deutsche School, Roebuck Road, Clonskeagh, Dublin 14	21
Dublin	St. Laurence College, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin	41
Dublin	St. Louis High School, Charleville Road, Rathmines, Dublin 6	43

County	School Name	No. of Members
Dublin	St. Mary's Secondary School, Baldoye, Dublin 13	18
Dublin	St. Mary's Secondary School for Deaf Girls, Dominican Convent, Cabra, Dublin 7	22
Dublin	St. Michael's College, Ailesbury Road, Dublin 4	35
Dublin	St. Michael's Holy Faith School, Wellmount Road, Finglas, Dublin 11	42
Dublin	St. Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School, St. Patrick's Close, Dublin 8	13
Dublin	St. Paul's CBS, Christian Brothers, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7	25
Dublin	St. Pauls College, Sybil Hill, Raheny, Dublin 5	29
Dublin	St. Pauls, Kimmage West, Greenhills, Dublin 12	48
Dublin	St. Raphaela's Secondary School, Upper Kilmacud Road, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin	36
Dublin	St. Tiernan's Community School, Park Vale, Balally, Dundrum, Dublin 16	31
Dublin	St. Vincent's C.B.S., Glasnevin, Dublin 11	25
Dublin	Stratford College, Zion Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6	11
Dublin	Tallaght Community School, Balrothery, Tallaght, Dublin 24	8
Dublin	The Teresian School, 12 Stillorgan Road, Donnybrook, Dublin 4	14
Dublin	Willow Park School, Rock Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin	16
Dublin	Wesley College, Ballinteer, Dublin 16	54
Dublin	Rosary College Crumlin, Crumlin, Dublin 12	19
Dublin	Sutton Park School, St. Fintans Road, Sutton, Dublin 13	17
Galway	Ardscoil Mhuire, Mackney, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway	39
Galway	Calasanctius College, Oranmore, Co. Galway	56
Galway	Coláiste Chroí Mhuire Gan Smál, An Spidéal, Co. Galway	20
Galway	Coláiste Einde, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, Galway	52
Galway	Coláiste Mhuire, Ballygar, Co. Galway	16
Galway	Dominican College, Taylors Hill, Galway	46
Galway	Dunmore Community School, Dunmore, Co. Galway	23
Galway	St. Joseph's College, Garbally Park, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway	35
Galway	Glenamaddy Community School, Glenamaddy, Co. Galway	24
Galway	Gort Community School, Ennis Road, Co. Galway	21
Galway	Jesus & Mary Secondary School, Threadneedle Road, Salthill, Co. Galway	40
Galway	Méan Scoil Mhuire, Clochar na Trócaire, Newtownsmith, Galway	22
Galway	Our Lady of Mercy College, Woodford, Loughrea, Galway	18
Galway	Portumna Community School, Portumna, Co. Galway	21
Galway	Presentation College, Currylea, Tuam, Co. Galway	32
Galway	Presentation College, Athenry, Co. Galway	32
Galway	Presentation College, Headford, Co. Galway	56
Galway	Presentation Secondary School, Presentation Road, Galway	22
Galway	Seamount College, Kinvara, Co. Galway	18
Galway	St. Brigid's School, Convent of Mercy, Tuam, Galway	29
Galway	St. Jarlath's College, Tuam, Galway	37
Galway	St. Joseph's College, Nun's Island, Galway	35
Galway	St. Mary's College, St. Mary's Road, Galway	30
Galway	St. Raphael's College, Loughrea, Co. Galway	28
Kerry	St. Mary's CBS, The Green, Tralee, Co. Kerry	46
Kerry	Tarbet Comprehensive School, Tarbert, Co. Kerry	27
Kerry	Intermediate School, Killorglin, Co. Kerry	47
Kerry	Mercy Secondary School, Mercy Mounthawk, Tralee, Co. Kerry	77
Kerry	Presentation Secondary School, Miltown, Co. Kerry	36
Kerry	St. Brendan's College, Killarney, Co. Kerry	35
Kerry	St. Brigid's Secondary School, New Street, Killarney, Co. Kerry	32
Kerry	St. Joseph's Secondary School, Doon Road, Ballybunion, Co. Kerry	18
Kerry	St. Patrick's College, College Road, Castleisland, Co. Kerry	11
Kildare	Clongowes Wood College, Naas, Co. Kildare	18
Kildare	Coláiste Chiaráin, Pobail Scoil Léim An Bhradáin, Co. Kildare	23
Kildare	Cross and Passion College, Kilcullen, Co. Kildare	38
Kildare	Gael-Choláiste Chill Dara, Naas, Co. Kildare	15
Kildare	Holy Faith Secondary, Newbridge, Co. Kildare	46
Kildare	Kildare Town Community School, Dunmurry Road, Kildare, Co. Kildare	46
Kildare	Naas CBS, Naas, Co. Kildare	49
Kildare	Patrician Secondary, Newbridge, Co. Kildare	44
Kildare	Salesian College, Maynooth Road, Celbridge, Co. Kildare	46
Kildare	Scoil Mhuire, Clane Community School, Co. Kildare	36
Kildare	St. Mary's College, Convent of Mercy, Sallins Road, Naas, Co. Kildare.	52
Kildare	St. Wolstan's Community School, Celbridge, Co. Kildare	44
Kildare	Coláiste Lorcaín, Castledermot, Co. Kildare	7
Kilkenny	Castlecomer Community School, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny	38
Kilkenny	Meánscoil na mBráithre Criostaí, Sráid Séamais, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny	43
Kilkenny	Presentation Secondary School, Loughboy, Kilkenny	39

County	School Name	No. of Members
Laois	Heywood Community School, Co. Laois	45
Laois	Mountmellick Community School, Mountmellick, Co. Laois	25
Laois	Mountrath Community School, Dysart Beigh, Mountrath, Co. Laois	31
Laois	Scoil Christí Rí, Borris Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois	40
Leitrim	Ballinamore Post Primary School, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim	13
Leitrim	Carrick-on-Shannon Community School, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim	31
Leitrim	Mohill Community College, Mohill, Co. Leitrim	14
Leitrim	St. Clare's Comprehensive, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim	19
Limerick	Ard-Scoil Rí, North Circular Road, Limerick	40
Limerick	Coláiste de agus Iosef, Abbeyfeale, Limerick	38
Limerick	Colaiste Mhichill, CBS, Sexton Street, Limerick	32
Limerick	John the Baptist Community School, Hospital, Co. Limerick	34
Limerick	Laurel Hill Secondary School, Laurel Hill, Limerick	26
Limerick	Presentation Secondary School, Sexton Street, Limerick	39
Limerick	Salesian College, Copse Wood, Pallaskeenry, Co. Limerick	28
Limerick	Scoil Mhuire agus de, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick	27
Limerick	Scoil Pól, Kilfinane, Co. Limerick	17
Limerick	St. Clements College, South Circular Road, Limerick	30
Longford	Cnoc Mhuire, Secondary School, Granard, Longford	24
Longford	Lanesboro Community College, Lanesboro, Co. Longford	3
Longford	Moyne Community School, Moyne, Co. Longford	24
Longford	St. Mel's College, Longford Town, Longford	31
Louth	Ardee Community School, Ardee, Co. Louth	39
Louth	Coláiste Rís, Chapel Street, Dundalk, Co. Louth	6
Louth	De La Salle Secondary School, Castleblayney Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth	36
Louth	Our Lady's Presentation College, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth	55
Louth	Sacred Heart Secondary School, Sunnyside, Drogheda, Co. Louth	33
Louth	St. Joseph's CBS, Newfoundwell Road, Drogheda, Co. Louth	36
Louth	St. Louis Secondary School, Castletown Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth	37
Louth	St. Mary's College, St. Mary's Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth	45
Mayo	Coláiste Cholmáin, Knock Road, Claremorris, Co. Mayo	25
Mayo	Balla Secondary School, Castlebar, Co. Mayo	27
Mayo	Ballinrobe Community School, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo	20
Mayo	Coláiste Muire, Tourmakeady, Claremorris, Co. Mayo	18
Mayo	Jesus and Mary Secondary School, Gortnor Abbey, Crossmolina, Co. Mayo	29
Mayo	Our Lady's Secondary School, Belmullet, Mayo	21
Mayo	Rice College, Castlebar Road, Westport, Co. Mayo	37
Mayo	Scoil Muire agus Pádraig, Swinford, Co. Mayo	29
Mayo	St. Colman's Claremorris, Co. Mayo	25
Mayo	St. Gerald's College, Newport Road, Castlebar, Co. Mayo	34
Mayo	St. Joseph's Secondary School, Marist Convent, Charlestown, Co. Mayo	19
Mayo	St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar, Co. Mayo	31
Mayo	St. Mary's Secondary School, Ballina, Co. Mayo	41
Mayo	St. Muredachs College, Sligo Road, Ballina Co. Mayo	27
Meath	Eureka Secondary School, Convent of Mercy, Kells, Co. Meath	47
Meath	Ashbourne Community School, Deerpark, Ashbourne, Co. Meath	52
Meath	Franciscan College, Gormanston, Co. Meath	20
Meath	Scoil Mhuire, Convent of Mercy, Trim, Co. Meath	34
Meath	St. Ciarán's Community School, Kells, Co. Meath	32
Meath	St. Joseph's Secondary School, Convent of Mercy, Navan, Co. Meath	41
Meath	Loreto Secondary School, St. Michael's Loreto, Navan, Co. Meath	37
Monaghan	Largy College, Clones, Co. Monaghan	15
Monaghan	Monaghan Collegiate School, Corlatt House, Monaghan	13
Monaghan	Patrician High School, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan	29
Monaghan	St. Louis Secondary School, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan	36
Monaghan	St. Macartan's College, Monaghan Town, Co. Monaghan	42
Offaly	Coláiste Choilm CBS, Tullamore, Co. Offaly	35
Offaly	Sacred Heart Secondary School, Tullamore, Co. Offaly	49
Offaly	St. Mary's Secondary School, Edenderry, Co. Offaly	51
Offaly	Mercy Secondary School, Dublin Road, Kilbeggan, Tullamore, Co. Offaly	28
Roscommon	Abbey Community College, Boyle, Co. Roscommon	8
Roscommon	Castlerea Community School, Barracks Street, Castlerea, Roscommon	29
Roscommon	CBS Roscommon, Abbeytown, Co. Roscommon	24
Roscommon	Scoil Mhuire, Convent of Mercy, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon	32
Sligo	Coláiste Mhuire, Ballymote, Co. Sligo	22
Sligo	Jesus & Mary Secondary School, Enniscrone, Co. Sligo	22
Sligo	Sligo Grammar School, The Mall, Co. Sligo	25

County	School Name	No. of Members
Sligo	St. Attracta's Community School, Tubbercurry, Sligo	34
Sligo	St. Mary's College, Ballisodare, Co. Sligo	26
Sligo	Summerhill College, Sligo	45
Sligo	Ursuline College, Finnskin, Sligo	48
Tipperary	The Abbey School, CBS, Tipperary Town	26
Tipperary	Cashel Community School, Co. Tipperary	43
Tipperary	CBS High School, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	46
Tipperary	Cistercian College, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary	16
Tipperary	Coláiste Dún Iascaigh, Co. Tipperary	21
Tipperary	Colaiste Phobáil, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary	12
Tipperary	Loreto Secondary School, Coleville Road, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary	28
Tipperary	Our Lady's Secondary School, Templemore, Co. Tipperary	35
Tipperary	Patrician High School, Fethard, Co. Tipperary	12
Tipperary	Presentation Secondary School, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary	39
Tipperary	Presentation Secondary School, Ballingarry, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	19
Tipperary	Scoil Mhuire, Greenhills, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary	31
Tipperary	St. Joseph's CBS Secondary School, Summerhill, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary	31
Tipperary	St. Mary's School, Newport, Co. Tipperary	29
Tipperary	St. Mary's Secondary School, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary	39
Waterford	CBS Secondary School, Mitchell Street, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford	21
Waterford	Coláiste Na Maighdine, Presentation Secondary School, Canon Street, Waterford	30
Waterford	De La Salle College, Newtown, Waterford	70
Waterford	Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge, Bishop's Court, Waterford City, Waterford	6
Waterford	Newtown School, Newtown Road, Waterford	23
Waterford	Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School, Ozanam Street, Waterford	38
Waterford	St. Angela's Secondary School, Ursuline Convent, Ballymuckla Road, Waterford	57
Waterford	St. Augustine's College, Abbeyside, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford	47
Waterford	Stella Maris, Pond Road, Tramore, Co. Waterford	31
Waterford	Waterpark College, Park Road, Co. Waterford	20
Westmeath	Coláiste Mhuire, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	42
Westmeath	Loreto College, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	48
Westmeath	Marist College Athlone, Retreat Road, Athlone, Co. Westmeath	30
Westmeath	Moate Community School, Moate, Co. Westmeath	30
Westmeath	La Sainte Union Des Sacre Coeur, Our Lady's Bower Athlone, Co. Westmeath	41
Westmeath	St. Finian's College, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	28
Westmeath	Wilson's Hospital School, Multyfarnham, Co. Westmeath	26
Wexford	St. Mary's C.B.S., Millpark Road, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford	47
Wexford	Coláiste Bride, Convent of Mercy, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford	46
Wexford	CBS Secondary School, Thomas Street, Wexford	43
Wexford	FCJ Secondary School, Bunclody, Co. Wexford	50
Wexford	Good Counsel College, New Ross, Co. Wexford	52
Wexford	Gorey Community School, Gorey, Co. Wexford	47
Wexford	Loreto Secondary School, Spawell Road, Wexford	44
Wexford	Meánscoil Gharmán, 4 The Meadows, Brownswood, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford	6
Wexford	Presentation Secondary School, School Street, Wexford	45
Wexford	St. Mary's Secondary School, Irishtown, New Ross, Co. Wexford	38
Wexford	St. Peter's College, Summerhill, Wexford	42
Wicklow	Coláiste Chill Mhantáin, Wicklow Town, Wicklow	27
Wicklow	Dominican College, Wicklow Town, Wicklow	31
Wicklow	Dublin Oak Academy, Kilcronea, Bray, Co. Wicklow	5
Wicklow	East Glendalough School, Station Road, Wicklow Town, Wicklow	26
Wicklow	St. Brendan's College, Woodbrook, Bray, Co. Wicklow	25
Wicklow	St. Killian's Community School, Ballywaltrim, Bray, Co. Wicklow	21
Wicklow	St. Mary's College, Arklow, Co. Wicklow	32
	Total numbers of members who participated.	10001
	33 Forms returned un-named	

Appendix 2 - Branches who returned completed forms. (41)

1 Athlone	15 Dublin South West	29 Monaghan
2 Carbery	16 Dundalk	30 Navan
3 Carlow	17 Dungarvan	31 Nenagh
4 Carrick-on-Shannon	18 East Cork Branch	32 New Ross
5 Cavan	19 Enniscorthy	33 Portlaoise
6 Clare	20 Fermoy	34 Sligo
7 Cork North	21 Fingal	35 Stillorgan
8 Drogheda Sean Higgins	22 Galway	36 Tullamore
9 Dublin North Central	23 Kerry	37 Waterford
10 Dublin North East	24 Kildare	38 West Mayo
11 Dublin North West	25 Laois	39 West Waterford
12 Dublin South 2	26 Limerick North	40 Wexford Tony Boland
13 Dublin South Central	27 Limerick South	41 Wicklow
14 Dublin South County	28 Longford	



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